The discursive construction of Black British women graduates' in-groups and out-groups: a corpus-informed intersectional analysis

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Abstract

'Black' as a racial identity is marked by diverse peoples in many settings who each have differing intersecting identities, status and lived experiences. Despite this, Black voices are often marginalised in predominantly white societies like Britain (Mowatt *et al*., 2013); such marginalisation is often compounded for Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). To interpret the nuanced ways in which Black British women discursively construct social identities within their educational experiences, this paper develops a novel theoretical framework of intracategorical intersectionality (McCall, 2005), etic and emic approaches (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), and in-group/out-group theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986). By employing bottom-up corpus-assisted discourse analysis, we propose that Black British women graduates construct complex social identities in two main ways: 'diversity within Blackness as a racial category', and 'differences in terms of gendered experiences'. The analysis also unearths a pattern of in-group self-evaluation that is predicated on perceived views of the out-group towards the in-group. The study thus contributes to discourse-analytical intersectional studies and to emic understandings of Black women's voices in the context of their educational experiences and journeys, while also making a theoretical contribution to in-group and out-group theory.

Keywords

Black women graduates, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, in-group/out-group, intersectionality

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1. Introduction

This study analyses interviews of Black[3] British women graduates reflecting on the full educational trajectory of their formative personal, educational experiences from primary school to (undergraduate) university.[4] To capture and examine these considerations, our primary research question is:

> What in-groups and out-groups are discursively constructed by Black British women graduates?

The preceding question, while seemingly straightforward, yields other questions and issues which, to varying degrees, inform the study, due to the complex identity of the category 'Black British women graduates':

(*a*) Are certain single categories more salient or fundamental than others?
(*b*) To what extent do members of a group see themselves and others as being members of the same group, and in what contexts might shifts in such positioning occur?

While the above questions are of academic interest, they are embedded in a societal reality, one where we might ask, why should the analysis of some groups' discourse be assumed to have inherent worth? Is there an ethical imperative to analyse the discourse of groups who are often deemed marginalised, if not invisible? Mowatt *et al*. (2013: 645), *inter alia*, argue, '*Invisibility* is a fundamental aspect of being Black in a white-dominated society' (original emphasis), one that is compounded when the Black person is a woman.

To situate Black British women graduates in the literature, we explore how Black British identities are discursively constructed, pinpointing a gap in such studies. Next, the concept of intersectionality is critically appraised, and we explain why an intracategorical as opposed to an intercategorical approach is appropriate for this study. We then propose a novel theoretical framework which is applied in the analysis: intracategorical intersectionality (McCall, 2005), etic and emic approaches (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), and in-group/out-group theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986). Methodologically, we use a corpus-assisted discourse analysis that operationalises our theoretical

[3] In line with American conventions and consistent with Pennant's broader work, the 'B' in *Black* and *Blackness* is capitalised to recognise 'Black' as more than just a colour, but as an identity that encompasses diverse cultures and peoples. This choice aims to emphasise the significance of Black as both a cultural and social construct. Pennant does not capitalise *white* or *whiteness* in her work, aiming to decentre it and prioritise the centring of Black identities (Howell *et al*., 2019; and Laws, 2020).

[4] The authors acknowledge the differences in education systems across Britain and the UK. However, the focus of this research, from which the data is drawn, is specifically on the education system in England, as it is most relevant to the scope of the study.

framework. Following corpus analysis of relevant linguistic items, we examine two emergent areas relating to the research question: 'differences within Blackness as a racial category' and 'differences in terms of gendered experience'. Finally, in the discussion, we critically evaluate our theoretical framework, the import of our findings, and briefly examine the benefit of combining emic/etic analysts' perspectives.

2. Theoretical framework

We propose a three-pronged theoretical framework embodying intra-categorical intersectionality, etic and emic approaches, and in-group/out-group theory. In this section, we expand on each component, followed by providing our rationale for combining them.

2.1 Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality is of particular value for understanding Black British women graduate identities and experiences. Crenshaw, in her pioneering study, defines intersectionality as the ways in which Black women are erased due to 'a problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis' (Crenshaw, 1989: 139). She uses the American labour market and justice system to demonstrate how single- and fixed-identity categories are not inclusive of Black women's multiple, interlinking, and subjugated raced and gendered identities (Crenshaw, 1989). Her ground-breaking contributions speak to wider issues such as the exclusions felt by Black women within both mainstream feminisms, dominated by white women, and within anti-racist movements, spearheaded by Black men. However, while Crenshaw has managed to express a phenomenon that has plagued the lived experiences of Black women for centuries in one all-encompassing word, the characteristics of intersectionality form fundamental parts of both Black Feminist and Critical Race Theories, amongst others. In addition, intersectionality has developed to include other identities and material conditions like class and sexuality, alongside the intersections of race and gender (Yuval-Davis, 2015), power dimensions (Collins and Bilge, 2016: 189), and privilege (McCall, 2005).

As a theory to highlight race, gender and other inequalities within society, intersectionality is useful, and despite its application across a range of disciplines (Gray and Cooke, 2018), presents challenges when applied theoretically and methodologically (McCall, 2005; and Thomas *et al*., 2023). These difficulties can involve the practical challenge of applying a theory that operates at a broad sociocultural level of context, but they can also involve

questions of validity and reliability. Indeed, with particular relevance for this study, the sociolinguists Mortensen and Milani (2020: 420) argue that:

> intersectionality may paradoxically end up homogenizing people falling within a specific intersectional nexus (e.g. Black women) and erasing the particularity of individual experiences within the intersectional bundle under investigation. This is because intersectional scholarship privileges a focus on macro-structural inequalities; consequently, the lived experiences of such inequalities at micro-level become blurred.

The focus on macro-level social categories, such as race and gender, as a means of orientating the research can, therefore, inadvertently lead to the voices of the research participants being, if not negated, at least conflated with relatively more privileged voices. Toliver (2023: 211) also notes that, studies seeking to apply a critical lens to discourse 'lack a specific lens to center Black women and girls' consciousness and repertoire of skills'. In other words, both studies across the social sciences and humanities more broadly, and those centrally concerned with discourse, can fail to represent voices that have been historically silenced. Our study, which we argue is critical in orientation and contributes to the small but growing number of intersectionally orientated discourse-based studies (Thomas *et al.*, 2023), aims to address this issue directly, and suggests a methodology for its avoidance.

McCall (2005), seeking to map out different research orientations relating to the ontological and epistemological status of social categories, outlines three types of intersectional analysis. These are differentiated according to the degree to which categories are seen as fixed and of value, namely: anticategorical, intercategorical and intracategorical. Where McCall characterises an anticategorical approach as a critique of categories for being too vague and rigid, intercategorical analyses focus on the unequal relationships within established social groupings where categories are used. The intercategorical approach arguably aligns with traditional sociolinguistic analyses that assume the relevance and fixedness of *a priori* categories (e.g., Baker and Levon [2016]). Within this paper, we employ an intracategorical approach. Accordingly, we use traditional categories such as race (Black), nationality (British), gender (women) and position (graduates) as a way into the data, while prioritising 'diversity and difference *within* the group' and 'the complex texture of day-to-day life for individual members of the social group under study, no matter how detailed the level of disaggregation' (McCall, 2005: 1782, original emphasis). The intracategorical approach thus facilitates an examination of the voices of people talking about their own experiences.

2.2 Etic and emic approaches

Broadly speaking, 'emic' refers to accounts and observations from an insider perspective, and 'etic' from an outsider perspective (Angouri, 2010: 41). This

distinction, we argue, can both help illuminate what is going on in the data itself, and the position of the researcher. Specifically, the terms can relate to accounts by (emic) or about (etic) particular groups or systems, and it can illuminate whether the analyst is positioning themselves as a member of the said group (emic) or instead takes an outsider's perspective, typically to draw abstractions from or apply frameworks to the data (etic). In this study, we combine both perspectives iteratively: we employ an emic (insider) approach as the interviewees are discussing their own experiences and sharing accounts of what it means to be a Black British woman graduate – an identity which is shared by the first author (Pennant, 2020). That the first author has dual African and Caribbean heritage is of particular relevance for the analysis, as will become evident. We also employ an etic (outsider) approach based upon the second author's white male identity. As trained academics, we believe we could both offer an etic perspective – for instance, in interpreting the data using quantitative methods from an intersectionally informed theoretical perspective. In terms of the benefits this combination of perspectives brings to the paper, we would argue that the insider perspective provides a nuanced understanding of Blackness in terms of gendered differences. In contrast, the outsider perspective showed distinctions in the data that were probably normalised for the first author, such as certain differences within Blackness as a category.

The distinction between etic and emic also has relevance for our choice of intersectional approach, the intracategorical. An etic stance is employed in the corpus-informed, intersectional discourse-analyses we discuss below, and according to Tatli and Özbilgin (2012), etic is also the predominant stance in intersectionality studies of workplace diversity. They also note that an etic stance usually combines with an intercategorical approach, a pattern we have noted with corpus-informed intersectional studies. We concur that this combination is problematic in terms of the following: 'the single category focus, limited inclusion of certain categories, the additive nature of multi-category studies, static, fixed and essentialist notions of difference' (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012: 195–6). According to Tatli and Özbilgin (2012: 180–1), the etic approach 'lacks a sense of contextuality, [. . .] leads to static accounts of diversity, [. . .] ignore[s] the dynamic nature of power and inequality [in] relations [, . . . and] produce[s] flawed empirical, theoretical and political insights'. They propose that an emic stance can address these limitations and can lead to a deeper understanding of the contextualised nature of identity. In other words, diversity can be understood as dynamic and contextually driven, beyond simplistic binaries. They also argue that an emic stance aligns well with the intracategorical approach. This raises an important methodological question: what theory is needed to operationalise an emic approach to intersectionality for our data to be analysed effectively? We argue that it is Tajfel and Turner's (1979, 1986) Social Identity Theory of in-groups and out-groups.

2.3 In-group/out-group theory

As specified by Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986), in-group and out-group relations centre around how individuals categorise themselves according to perceived and accepted membership and belonging with others (in-group), compared to detachment from others perceived to be different (out-group). Such social categorisation accounts for how intergroup relations may give rise to discrimination by in-groups towards out-groups as they seek to maintain their identities through distinguishing themselves from others (Oldmeadow and Fiske, 2010: 426), a perspective also asserted in Yuval Davis's (2006) study of intersectionality and social inequality.

By employing an intersectional analysis utilising intracategorical, emic and etic approaches, integrated with in-group/out-group theory, our interviewees' voices can be understood in terms of their greater complexity, while our analysis will assist in simplifying the data to interpret the messages. Where an etic approach might encourage us to assume an outsider standpoint – for example, characterising Black women as a monolithic group (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012) as opposed to the various groups we find in the data – our approach enables us to see the range of diversity in an in-group: for instance, Black women of African and Black women of Caribbean heritage, and how power is perceived to operate among and between them. Furthermore, the first author's status as an in-group member proved useful when conducting interviews and eliciting certain information and perspectives. Linguistic evidence of this is noted in the analysis section.

3. Literature review

3.1 Black British identities

'Black' has become a racial identity marker and category that demarcates people with origins in 'Sub-Saharan' Africa (Eleode, 2021) and the wider African diaspora (Agyemang *et al.*, 2005). This can be attributed to the rise of the Black Power movement in 1970s US contexts which spread throughout the diaspora. This movement reclaimed 'Black' as beautiful creating much needed racial pride amongst African Americans (Carson, 1995) and became one approach to:

> Define and encourage a new consciousness among Black people… a consciousness that might be called a sense of peoplehood: pride rather than shame, in Blackness, and an attitude of brotherly communal responsibility among all Black people for one another.
>
> (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967: 12)

The movement's influence was felt in Britain where many people of the African diaspora increasingly started to identify as 'Black' alongside their

British identity (Hall, 1992; and Andrews, 2016). As Owusu-Kwarteng (2017: 2) writes, "'Black British (African/African Caribbean)" are hyphenated terms, often used to define second and third generation people, who have spent all, if not most of their lives in Britain, but seek to maintain a sense of their African/Caribbean origins'. By 'hyphenation', she refers to the merging of identities into a hybrid, inseparable whole, much like the African-American identity seen in the United States.

Being both Black and British[5] can be viewed as the epitome of hybrid identities and the syncretism of cultures (Nagel, 1994; Gilroy, 2000; Reynolds, 2006; and Lam and Smith, 2009). These identities are a product of Black diaspora communities who have settled in Britain, produced within a particular 'diasporic space' (Brah, 2003: 615). Yet, according to Alexander (2018) 'Black' should be understood as a disputed and ever-changing label, dependent on specific times and spaces. While 'Black' is now used almost exclusively to describe people of the 'Sub-Saharan' African diaspora, particularly in Britain and the US, its shifting positionalities with other racial groups cannot be ignored. For instance, it was once used as a collective label to encompass all racialised minorities with the shared history of racist oppression who had migrated from the former British colonies to Britain following the second world war (WWII). Furthermore, its current usage is not without opposition from scholars who view it as being problematic, due to the diversity and difference within this vast group of people (Brah, 2000; Aspinall, 2011; Wright, 2015; and Tsri, 2016). In the discussion section, we will return to this debate.

3.2 Black British women graduates and British educational research

When considering Black British identities, the role of gender is a significant dimension. As Gilroy (1993: 85) states, 'gender is the modality in which race is lived', and there are distinct differences in terms of gendered experiences of Blackness. Within educational contexts, this provides the motivation for a plethora of studies and literature highlighting and documenting the experiences of Black American girls and women (Lightfoot, 1976; Fordham, 1993; Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010; Ricks, 2014; Morris, 2016; Lane, 2017; Kelly, 2018; and Nunn, 2018). In comparison, there remains a relative dearth of recent research about the experiences and journeys of Black girls and women in British educational contexts, despite several important studies in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, and a few thereafter (Bryan *et al*., 1985; Chigwada, 1987; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Coultas, 1989; Mirza, 1992; Rollock, 2007; and Sobande and Wells, 2021). The relative absence of Black British women and girls as a research topic arguably reflects wider British society;

[5] Despite the focus being on England, 'Black British' is used throughout the paper rather than 'Black English' as the former is more commonly used and recognised in contemporary discourse.

Dabiri (2013) pointedly asserts that, 'you might be forgiven for thinking we [Black girls and women] are an endangered species'.

Still, parallels can be drawn from both American and British educational research in understanding and acknowledging the experiences and journeys of Black girls and women: namely their marginal positions (Mirza, 1992; and Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010), their resilience and tenacity (Chigwada, 1987; Nunn, 2018; and Pennant, 2020), their heightened self-esteem (Coultas, 1989; and Lane, 2017), and the resistance and ingenious strategies that characterise their attempts to 'succeed' (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Kelly, 2018; and Sobande and Wells, 2021). Our study contributes to this area through a more recent analysis of the next generations of Black women to see how our interviewees see themselves as belonging, or not belonging, and how such positionings can be both evaluative and context specific. By 'context specific' we mean that there is a high degree of dynamism and fluidity evident in the interviews (for instance, in terms of the way certain groups may be seen as fellow in-group members at one moment, but as out-group members at another). This dynamic positioning yields unique insights into the educational experiences of Black girls and women in Britain, from primary school to undergraduate university. Such insights can further inform both education policy about Black British student and pupil outcomes, as well as provide better understandings when unpacking the meanings behind statistical evidence. For instance, there are significant differences between Black Caribbean and Black African ethnic student groups in terms of GCSE level pass rates (Roberts and Boulton, 2023: 4; and Gov.uk, 2024). Furthermore, Black African girls outperform Black Caribbean girls at GCSE level (Gov.uk, 2023, 2024), although Black women as a group are least likely of all women from other races to finish university with a first or 2:1 degree classification[6] (AdvanceHE, 2023: 212).

4. Creating the corpus

The decision to focus on Black British women graduates was made to explicitly foreground the educational experiences and journeys of a group which has been under-researched within British educational research and to problematise dominant discourses of Black British student underachievement (Troyna, 1984; Crozier, 2005; and Wallace and Joseph-Salisbury, 2022) by exploring educational 'success' as symbolised by their graduate status. Twenty-five Black British women graduates were interviewed in mutually agreed, neutral and private locations such as hired meeting rooms, in the Southeast and Midlands of England in 2017. Participants were recruited based on specific attributes and criteria such as self-defining as Black

[6] A first class or upper second-class (2:1) degree classification is considered to be the benchmark for strong academic performance and is typically the minimum requirement for competitive graduate positions or further study in the UK.

(African/Caribbean descent), and within 'African Diasporic Blackness' (Andrews, 2016: 2063), British – all born in and/or called England 'home' from infancy, and women who had all graduated from an English university between 2014 and 2017. This is also known as 'purposive sampling'. The study was also advertised in targeted spaces and places, on and offline, where desired participants would congregate, as well as through introductions and recommendations made by recruited participants for others which is called 'snowball sampling'. During interviews, participants freely expressed themselves using their own voice and cultural capital (Yosso, 2005; and Wallace, 2017). As a result, code-switching, such as the inclusion of African/Caribbean accents, words, and phrases (Boulton, 2016), was commonly observed, and formal language was not always adopted. All but one had British Caribbean and/or African roots.[7]

Over the course of approximately ninety minutes, each participant shared their educational stories in face-to-face, one-to-one, qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the same interviewer (the first author).[8] These transcribed interviews, in total 309,498 words, provide the data for our BBWG corpus, constructed for the purposes of this study. To ensure the analyses contained contributions from the interviewees as opposed to items from the repeated questions from the interviewer, we follow Sealey's (2009) approach to creating a suitable corpus from spoken interview data in that we removed the standardised questions but left any follow-up questions to provide context to the responses. The reference corpus we use is the Spoken BNC2014, containing almost 11 million words of contemporary spoken English, recorded in largely informal settings, in Britain. As our interviewees are also speakers from Britain, this reference corpus enables us to pinpoint salient terms, whereas comparing our BBWG corpus to, say, a large written corpus would inevitably throw up a lot of spoken features. The software we use is Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al*., 2014).

5. Methodology

There is a considerable body of work exploring intersectionality as a theory, but markedly less as a discourse-informed methodology (Hancock, 2007; and Thomas *et al*., 2023). In terms of combining intersectionality and methods from discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, particularly work using

[7] One participant was mixed-race with African–American roots through her one Black parent. She was included as she is of African descent: this research reflects a principle of self-definition (Tate, 2005).

[8] In line with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011, 2018) guidelines and the host institution, ethical approval was awarded. All participants were given information sheets and gave their informed, written consent before participating; confidentiality was upheld by using pseudonyms to replace participant names and changing or omitting any identifying information; all data was stored on a password-protected, secured hard drive; and participants were made aware of their right to withdraw.

a corpus-assisted discourse analysis, there have been insightful studies by Levon (2015), Baker and Levon (2016) and Hunt and Jaworska (2019). Our approach differs in several ways from these studies, not least in terms of the choice of and emphasis we place on *intra*categorical intersectionality, as well as our operationalisation of intersectionality through the integration of the intracategorical approach with an emic perspective and in-group/out-group theory. While these other studies use intersectionality in their analyses, they arguably do not critically engage with it. For instance, Baker and Levon (2016) state that they employ an intercategorical approach, but this is not discussed in any length and no justification is given for using the intercategorical, as opposed to the intracategorical approach. Hunt and Jaworska (2019) employ intersectionality as a way of briefly framing the context and then briefly allude to it when explaining their findings. Furthermore, the following differences are evident between our research and the Baker and Levon (2016) and Hunt and Jaworska (2019) studies:

- They both analyse written newspaper discourse; we analyse spoken interview data which enables the researchers to learn about the experiences of Black women under study, in their own words, as opposed to focussing on how the media/press frames their experiences.
- Both are interested in hegemonic masculinity; our focus is on Black women.
- They take an etic stance; ours is emic and etic.
- Both deal with relatively larger corpora, particularly so with the Baker and Levon study; the BBWG corpus is smaller but with greater contextual information.

while the biggest theoretical difference concerns our intracategorical orientation, probably the biggest methods-related difference involves how the corpora are interrogated. Hunt and Jaworska examine a set of collocates, specifically those around the search term *Pistorius*, the athlete convicted of murdering his wife. Similarly, Baker and Levon specify a set of terms they want to analyse first (e.g., *Asian men*), then analyse the collocates surrounding such terms.[9] In contrast, we employ a 'bottom-up' methodology, which we propose is necessary for an intracategorical orientation to be coherently operationalised (through avoiding the imposition of etic *a priori* categories onto the data).

Our methodology initially involves the production of keywords and key *n*-grams (i.e., multi-word expressions), from which we extract and categorise items salient to our research question (Stage 1 of the analysis). In Stage 2, we examine these items in longer extracts which evidence the

[9] They also employ what they term 'purely qualitative discourse analysis' (2016: 4), examining a small subset of their large (44 million-word) corpus to examine the notion of stance in the newspaper data.

indexing of in-groups and out-groups and any evaluative stance, noting such instances in tabular form. The evaluative stance is central in evidencing membership of in-groups in discourse, suggesting as it does some level of emotional attachment to the in-group (as well as stance towards the out-groups), which is requisite for in-group membership (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006).

To locate our study in a broader research culture, it aligns with the 'Nottingham School' (McEnery and Hardie, 2012) in terms of analysing small, spoken, contextually rich corpora from a bottom-up orientation – although it is, to our knowledge, the first to analyse intersectionality. This paper also adds to the growing number of corpus-informed studies that, while acknowledging essentialism may be an 'ethnographic fact' (Bucholtz, 2003: 375) in that it pervades many mainstream discourses in society, explicitly reject essentialism as a theoretical orientation (Handford, 2022); we argue it is the intracategorical orientation that enables and indeed demands this.

6. Analysis

This section, examining how relevant in-groups and out-groups are discursively constructed, has two stages. The first reproduces and interprets the quantitative corpus keywords and key *n*-grams (multiword expressions) results. The second, wholly qualitative, stage examines salient keywords and *n*-grams in longer interview extracts, under our proposed intracategorical groupings: 'differences within Blackness as a racial category', and 'differences in terms of gendered experience'.

6.1 Stage 1: corpus analysis

For the first step of the analysis, keyword and key *n*-gram lists were produced using Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al*., 2014). Table 1 shows the top ten single-item keywords,[10] comparing items in the target BBWG corpus to those in the considerably larger BNC 2014 reference corpus. Two figures are provided in the density columns: the normalised density per 10,000 words, and the raw frequency figures below in parentheses. The table features items we will explore below, such as the differing national (e.g., *Ghanaian*) or geographical (*Caribbeans*) identities.

In total, 968 keywords were produced. From an analysis of the top 200 keywords, we derived several thematic categories through considering two aspects relevant to the research question (Table 2): categories related to

[10] The keyness score is calculated using Sketch Engine's 'Simple Maths' formula (see: https://www.sketchengine.eu/documentation/simple-maths/).

Item	Density BBWG Corpus (target)	Density BNC Spoken Corpus (reference)	Score[1]
1. ACS (African Caribbean Society)	1.29 (40)	0.00 (0)	129.51
2. Ghanaian	1.13 (35)	0.00 (1)	104.6
3. A-levels	2.71 (84)	0.02 (19)	103.95
4. Nigerian	2.14 (66)	13 (0.01)	101.51
5. Caribbeans	0.90 (40)	0.00 (0)	90.954
6. Sociology	2.36 (73)	0.02 (19)	90.388
7. Caribbean	5.08 (157)	0.07 (68)	74.909
8. participant	1.00 (31)	0.00 5	70.712
9. diverse	1.68 (52)	0.02 (18)	66.658
10. BME (Black and Minority Ethnic)	0.55 (17)	0 (0)	55.615

Table 1: Top ten keywords in the BBWG Corpus.

Category	Example keywords
Nationality/regional/ethnicity/race	*Black*, *Ghanaian*, *Caribbean*, *Asian*, *Blackness*, *BME*, *white**, *racial*, *race**
Social categories/identities	*females*, *middle-class*, *minorities*, *males*, *class*
Educational	*A-levels*, *grades*, *Sociology*, *academically*, *NVQ* (National Vocational Qualifications), *ACS*
Evaluative	*disliked*, *positive*, *gifted*
Difficulties	*overcome*, *struggles*, *hindered*, *stereotypes*, *conflicts*

Table 2: Thematic categorisation of keywords.

intersectional identities (such as race), and to speaker's positioning (such as evaluative items like *positive*, or difficulties). We argue that the inclusion of items relating to positioning is necessary for emic-intracategorical analysis, as we make evident in the analysis of longer extracts below.

One issue with corpus tools is that the software cannot distinguish between different meanings of homonyms. In order to pinpoint items whose

situated meaning (e.g., *white* as a racial term) may have been missed because of polysemic items in the reference corpus, we manually analysed selected items. As a result, even though both *white* and *race* were not in the top 200 keywords, both are included here, with an asterisk. In the BNC2014 reference corpus, around 1.5 percent of the 271 instances of *race* refer to the social category (most being about sports, *etc*.), whereas in the BBWG corpus all 55 uses index this category; a similar pattern is found with *white*. *Black* is unsurprisingly one of the top fifty keywords; once again, though, the main bulk of the instances in the reference corpus are not to do with race, with an analysis of 100 random instances from BNC2014 showing around the same proportion as *white* are related to race. In other words, rather than there being almost 2,000 instances of *Black* as a racial category in the reference corpus, there are probably about 30. In contrast, in the BBWG corpus, close to 100 percent were to do with race. This means that if we recalculate according to these new figures, *Black* would be the top keyword, with a score of around 1,227 – around ten times higher than the current top keyword.

6.1.1 Analysis of *Black*

Figures 1 is a Sketch Engine visualisation of the top-fifteen collocates of *Black* in BBWG, colour-coded by grammatical pattern. Again, given the topics

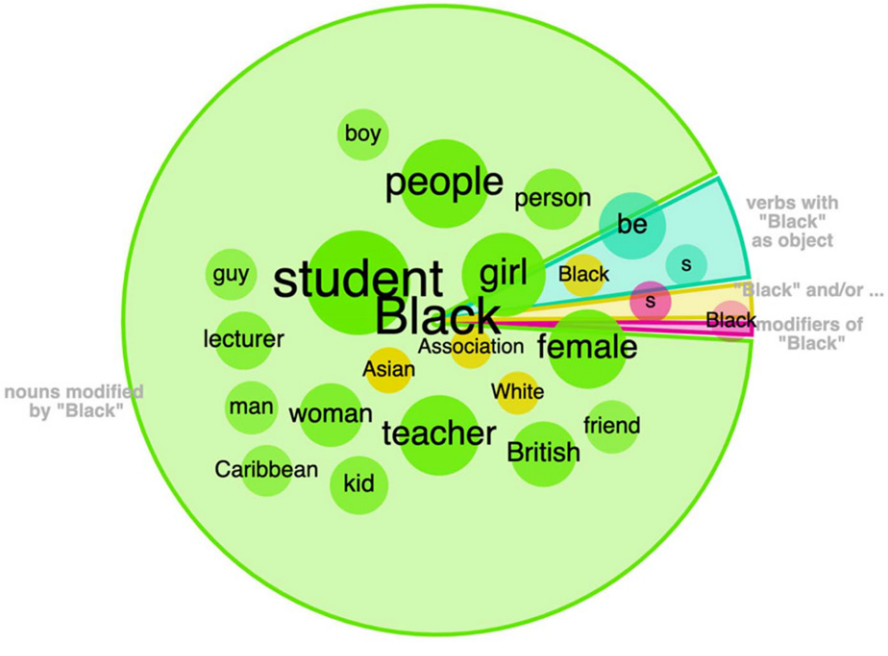

Figure 1: Collocates of *Black*.

3-gram	Frequency BBWG corpus	Frequency BNC Spoken Corpus	Score
1. *the only Black*	1.20 (37)	0.00 (0)	119.867
2. *my secondary school*	1.00 (31)	0.00 (0)	100.592
3. *my friendship group*	1.20 (37)	0.00 3	95.624
4. *in secondary school*	171 (53)	0.01 12	85.035
5. *as a Black*	0.74 (23)	0.00 (0)	74.891
6. *friendship group was*	0.72 (22)	0.00 (0)	71.678
7. *my final year*	0.90 (28)	0.00 (4)	67.975
8. *first year was*	0.65 (20)	0.00 (0)	65.253
9. *the Black people*	0.84 (26)	0.00 (4)	63.173
10. *I kinda feel*	0.59 18	0.00 (0)	58.827

Table 3: Top ten trigrams.

covered and the participants in the corpus data, it is somewhat unsurprising to see that the frequent collocates are words like *student*, *people* and *girl*. The visualisation not only shows frequency collocates, represented by the size of the circle, but also centrality, represented by the closeness to the node word. In other words, while *girl* and *teacher* collocate frequently with *Black*, the distance of *teacher* from the node-term *Black* shows that, in the BBWG corpus, it also collocates with other words a lot. Below we extract and categorise frequent *n*-grams involving this keyword.

The next step was to produce and analyse key *n*-grams, and Table 3 shows the ten most typical trigrams in BBWG.

Most striking from Table 3 is the top key trigram, *the only Black*, occurring thirty-seven times in the BBWG corpus. It usually occurs in utterances like 'I was the only Black person in my class', or 'just as the only Black girl in the course and now in the workplace'. *As a Black* tends to collocate with woman/girl/female and the first-person pronoun: for example, 'as a Black woman, I feel like we have a different experience to Black men'. It also suggests that, although the parameters for the interviews specified four social categories ('Black'+'British'+'Women+'Graduates'), for the participants 'Black' is the most salient. We explore this further in the discussion section.

Black+social category	Frequency
Black girls	84
Black students	77
Black British	75
Black girl	55
Black women	35
Black teachers	30
Black female	30
Black teacher	25
Black woman	23
Black students	14
Black Caribbean	13
Black guy	11
Black man	11
Black men	11
Black African	10

Table 4: Selected bigrams.

3-gram	Frequency
a Black woman	17
other Black students	16
other Black girls	14
a Black British	14
a Black girl	13
a Black teacher	13
Black British female	12
a Black female	12
any Black teachers	9
Black middle class	7
Black British Caribbean	5

Table 5: Selected trigrams.

The bulk of *n*-grams are not directly relevant to our research question: for instance, the most frequent 2-grams were *to go* (321 occurrences), *they were* (319) and *have to* (316). Therefore, we created bespoke *n*-gram tables: Tables 4 and 5 contain bigrams, and trigrams and featuring *Black*, that allude to an intersectional identity.

Tables 4 and 5 show some of the main intersectional identities in the corpus, such as Race+Gender (Black woman/girl/female/guy/men), or Race+Profession (Black teacher), or Race+Nationality/geographical location (Black British), or Race+Social Class (Black middle class). As well as signalling what might be termed expected intersectional identities, such as 'Black British', certain *n*-grams (and keywords, see Table 1) suggest something more nuanced, such as 'Black British Caribbean' (Table 5). From examining such *n*-grams devoid of co-text, we might assume that such language is used descriptively. However, analysis of longer extracts demonstrates how speakers position themselves and others in dynamic and evaluative ways, and we pre-empt such analysis in the next section as a means of elucidation by briefly examining a short extract here. In Example 1, Ebony[11] in answering how she would describe her social class, first she explains how 'the Black middle class' may baulk at the use of such a label, evaluating it as stigmatised (key items in boldface).

(1) ***Ebony:*** '*See this is [short* pause] *this is interesting because* [. . .] *I've read* [. . .] *loads of articles where* [. . .] ***the Black middle class*** *don't actually want to* ***identify*** *themselves as* ***Black middle class*** *simply because of the label and the* ***stigma***. *But it's just like my mum, even though she has* [. . .] *worked her way up, definitely still describes herself as* ***working class***, *but because of the* **educational** *exposure I have had, I am by definition* [. . .] ***middle class***.

(Interviewer: But how would you describe yourself?
Ebony: Lower middle [class].)

This longer extract arguably validates an intersectional lens: class and race are not atomised or additional categories, but instead class is raced, and race is classed; to understand Ebony's point, race and class cannot be seen as distinct. The positioning of her ascribed class being different from the class she ascribes herself serves to further highlight the complexity here, and the benefit of applying an intracategorical as opposed to an intercategorical lens. Whereas the latter may categorise Ebony as straightforwardly middle class, the intracategorical approach illuminates the liminal space she sees herself as inhabiting (Maylor and Williams, 2011; and Vincent *et al*., 2013). Stage 1 has described and partially interpreted the corpus findings; in Stage 2, several other longer extracts will be analysed from an intracategorical perspective.

While the interviewees do sometimes frame themselves and others in somewhat monolithic terms, our emic-intracategorical analysis of the in-groups and out-groups indexed by the interviewees suggests a more nuanced and complex picture than these quantitative lists imply. This finding resulted from drilling down into the corpus, firstly by analysing and categorising the *n*-grams, and then exploring the salient lexical items in longer extracts. As

[11] All names are anonymised.

such it highlights the importance of moving beyond the quantitative findings of corpus analysis when examining complex topics like discursive identity construction.

6.2 Stage 2: qualitative analysis of intracategorical differences

Through analysis of the in-groups and out-groups evident in the longer extracts invoking some of these identities and related terms and concepts (such as the keywords *Nigerian* or *stereotype*), we propose two main areas of intersectional fluidity which also arguably capture the in-groups and out-groups identified by participants: differences within Blackness as a racial category, and differences in terms of gendered experience. For each extract we also provide a table noting selected in-groups and out-groups, along with evaluative language that relates to the speaker's positioning towards the groups.

6.2.1 Differences within Blackness as a racial category.

The word *Blackness* is a top fifty keyword in our corpus, and is typically preceded by a personal pronoun (*my*, *your* as a generic marker), and collocates with terms to do with awareness and perception (e.g., 'I wasn't really aware of my Blackness at that time') or exclusion ('having teachers that will support you and not use your Blackness as a means of excluding you'). As such, the term signifies 'Blackness' as something akin to a social practice (Hall, 1992), where the subject comes to see themselves as being part of a practice that is evaluative and normative. While these linguistic examples suggest again a monolithic sense of racial identity, there are many instances that suggest a fracturing or nuancing of this sense. Typically, this involves a distinction between those with African heritage, and those with Caribbean heritage. And not only is this difference a descriptive one: it is also seen as normative and thus tied to issues of power and societal expectation. These normative evaluations are manifested in and through the unfolding discourse, and relate to the discursively constructed in-groups and out-groups. Our operationalisation of the intracategorical approach enables the consideration of the 'direction' of these evaluations: for instance, is the interviewee evaluating their own in-group, are they evaluating the out-group, or are they noting how an out-group may evaluative the in-group? Example 2 is from Shakirah, an interviewee of Caribbean heritage.

(2) I *feel like sometimes it's quite well known that, I think often people who are from y'know* ***African*** *countries like* ***Ghana*** *or* ***Nigeria*** *or things like that, I think they do sorta look down on* ***Caribbean****s for whatever reason that is. And I feel like we're not as y'know, as*

intelligent or ***educational*** *or y'know, that we are not on the same level as them, and I definitely felt that in uni yeah.*

(Shakirah, self-identified as British Jamaican and working class; state educated and attended a post-1992 university.)

Table 6 features several items that signal the in- and out-groups, such as the pronouns *we* and *they*, several keywords denoting places (*Caribbean*, *Ghana*, etc.), plus selected evaluative terms. Pronouns and proper nouns are used widely in the extracts and relate to differences in 'Blackness', although of course whether the proper nouns signal in-groups or out-groups differs, depending on the speaker. Despite the use of several linguistic hedges, such as *y'know*, *sorta*, for 'whatever reason that is', the speaker outlines an evaluative distinction that occurs several times, where her in-group (Caribbean heritage) is perceived by those of African heritage as somehow lesser; in other words, it is the out-group's perceived evaluation of the speaker's in-group that is being noted here. While there have been previous studies regarding how Black British Caribbean students navigate and are positioned within dominant white, educational narratives (Crozier, 2005; Rollock *et al*., 2015; and Wallace and Joseph-Salisbury, 2022), Shakirah's is an intriguing insight, as little research explores the intra-cultural differences and experiences between Black students of different ethnicities, specifically within educational settings. Lam and Smith (2009) and Owusu-Kwarteng (2017) have notably illustrated differences in the ways in which Black British African and Black British Caribbean young people in general identify in relation to their Britishness and other identifiers, as well as amongst and between each other more broadly. Furthermore, based on our theoretical perspective, Shakirah's insights contribute to our intracategorical intersectional analysis which shows 'diversity and difference *within* the group' between people of African *versus* Caribbean heritage.

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
Caribbeans	*African countries*	*Not on same level as them*
we	*Ghana*	*Not...as intelligent*
	Nigeria	
	they	

Table 6: Example 2 selected items.

In the following three extracts we also see parallel distinctions, and in Example 3 Ebony (also of Caribbean heritage) argues a similar point to Shakirah but from a historical perspective.

(3) *First off the boat always gets it the hardest, so the* ***Caribbean*** *people that came to the UK faced a lot of systematic oppression that we kinda*

> *paved the way for **Africans** who are the newest wave of **Black immigrants** to come in. So, I do think that is… it's hard to compare apples and oranges, do you get what I mean? Because even though we are **Black**, we are not a monolith so **it's sorta like**, I do understand we came off the boat and it was harder and stuff like that and like it's been made slightly easier, but I do [short pause] I don't know cos there is always that **stereotype** that it's more lax in **Caribbean** households and it's like **Africans** are like "them **Jamaicans**" and stuff like that. But it's just the **African** households are banging out like the great **grades** and stuff like that.*
>
> (Ebony, self-identified as British with Jamaican and Guyanese heritage and lower middle class; both state and privately educated, attended an elite university.)

Table 7 lists selected linguistic items used to index Ebony's in-group and out-group membership. Some items explicitly mark membership and are apparently descriptive, such as *the Caribbean people* and *Africans*, whereas others are more evaluative, such as the use of *paved the way* to imply the inevitable hardship for those who were 'first off the boat', a metaphor repeated twice in the extract. A further repetition is the use of the vague category marker *and stuff like that* to capture the represented views and practices of the African out-group. Vague category markers, which appear in some other extracts too (e.g., *things like that* in Example 2) are, we argue, interactionally evaluative, because the listener is positioned to have sufficient knowledge to be able to 'fill in' the rest of the category (Handford, 2010: 164). They might also be considered a means of signalling possible in-group membership with the interviewer for the same reason. It is, moreover, important to re-emphasise that 'Africans' are signalled here as an outgroup through our intracategorical intersectional analysis of the unfolding discourse, not in themselves; later, Ebony notes that 'we are Black', signalling that both people of African and Caribbean heritage are Black. Finally, the use of hypothetical reported speech is noteworthy here in terms of evaluation, as it can serve to both provide objective distance from an evaluation while simultaneously working as an

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
*the **Caribbean** people*	Africans	(*Africans are like*) "*them **Jamaicans***"
we (x3)	*the newest wave of Black immigrants*	(*we*) *came off the boat*
	*the **African** households*	*banging out like the great grades*
		and stuff like that

Table 7: Example 3 selected items.

involvement strategy (Koester and Handford, 2018); in Example 3, Ebony uses *them Jamaicans* to arguably achieve these rhetorical aims, in that it frames her in-group as being otherised, but the words attributed to the out-group, not to her. Below, we also note the use of hypothetical reported speech in other extracts.

In terms of the recurring themes of in-group–out-group difference, educational expectations at home and perceived intelligence are noticeable in Ebony's talk. This may also be an internalisation of negative educational discourses about Black British Caribbean students (Hamilton, 2018; and Wallace and Joseph-Salisbury, 2022). In Example 4, Claudia is of African heritage, but repeats the same theme about academic expectation; she does, however, note differing degrees of parental strictness according to cultural background and even race when she refers to 'mixed race students'. Interestingly, while she distinguishes between two African countries, she groups all Caribbeans together, possibly due to a greater understanding of the diversity within the region due to her own African identity. Such a finding concurs with Tajfel and Turner's (1979) research on in-groups and out-groups, and the implication is that Caribbean parents are not as educationally focussed[12] with Nigerians being the most focussed of all of the groups (Demie, 2021).

(4) I *think* ***Ghanaian*** *parents are a little- literally a little bit more relaxed- more than let's say my* ***Nigerian*** *friends whose parents would be on them. There was* ***stereotype****s, there was a* ***Ghanaian*** *crew, the* ***Nigerian*** *crew and the* ***Caribbean*** *crew. The* ***Caribbean*** *crew were chilled man, their parents won't be on them too much. The* ***Ghanaian****s were on them and the* ***Nigerian****s weren't going anywhere, they are just staying at home, so that's sorta the thing. And also there were a lot of* ***mixed*** *race students and all of them had like one white parent which sorta I guess tapered the strictness or the cultural influences that they had. But I am trying to think back [short pause] yeah, no it was still the* ***African*** *ones that had stricter parents yeah.*

(Claudia, self-identified as British Ghanaian and working class; both state and privately educated, attended an elite university.)

Example 4 is particularly interesting because of the shifting in- and out-groups, as evidenced in Table 8. Although Claudia initially notes that there are Ghanaian and Nigerian parents, and that the latter may be relatively stricter, she then frames them as having parallel attitudes compared to the Caribbean parents ('Nigerians weren't going anywhere […] the African

[12] Historically, though, this was not the case with the existence of the Black supplementary school movement which was led by Black British Caribbean communities (Mirza and Reay, 2000; Gerrard, 2013; and Andrews, 2016).

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
Ghanaian	*my Nigerian friends*	*little bit more relaxed*
the Nigerian friends	*Caribbean crew*	*weren't going anywhere*
The African ones		(*parents*) *won't be on them*

Table 8: Example 4 selected items.

ones'). Again, the intracategorical analytical framework thus accounts for the dynamic fluidity of such talk, whereas an intercategorical approach would fail to note such changes. We have refrained from categorising the 'mixed race students', because it is not clear from the extract whether they are positioned as an out-group, or a nuanced instance of a more liminal identity. It is also noteworthy that the speakers in Examples 3 and 4 use the term (and keyword) *stereotype*, thus acknowledging that this normative and potentially problematic distinction exists within the Black community in Britain.

In Example 5, Afua highlights the class differences within the Black African community, and again we see a high degree of fluidity in the construction of the in- and out-groups

(5) *It's easy to say that there are similarities because we are all* ***Black****, but each culture is different. Ultimately even within West* ***Africa****,* ***Ghana*** *and* ***Nigeria*** *are different, Togo and Benin. From like primary school and secondary school, the parents or the other children around me who are* ***Ghanaian*** *or African or* ***Caribbean****, were all working class, when I got to uni, I was exposed to* ***middle class Black people*** *and* ***upper class Black people*** *from* ***Ghana*** *and from* ***Nigeria*** *and from the* ***Caribbean*** *as well, so they don't know the* ***struggle*** *how I know it if that makes sense*.

(Afua, self-identified as Ghanaian and working class; state educated, attended a pre-1992 university.)

Afua paints a complex picture of the relations between, and subject positions of, different groups, both in terms of African countries of birth or heritage, and also in terms of social class and different lived experiences. The speaker is of African heritage, but expresses surprise at these divisions and the advantages that middle- and upper-class international Black university students may have had. The use of evaluative language like 'they don't know the struggle' (evaluative both of the out-group's knowledge and of the in-group's experiences) indexes Afua's stance and serves to create an out-group of middle- and upper-class Black students of African and Caribbean heritage (see Table 9).

Furthermore, the use of *West Africa* serves as a meso-level category between the apparent in-group of Black identity, and the divisions at the

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
Ghana	*Nigeria*	(*they*) *don't know the struggle how I know it*
African	*Togo*	
working class	*middle class Black people*	
	upper class Black people	
	from Ghana	
	they	

Table 9: Example 5 Selected items.

national level. Hence we cannot straightforwardly categorise either Black or West Africa as simple in-groups: Afua is indeed a member of both, but she also positions other members of these categories as out-group members, especially when inflected with social class. Also, it is far from clear that Afua is positioning Caribbean students as an out-group here the first time she mentions them – grouping them as she does as others who 'know the struggle' a struggle centrally related to class. The way she seems to frame people from Ghana who are upper or middle class as out-group members is also noteworthy, despite the fact she self-identifies as being Ghanaian. It is the perceived difference in social class that is most relevant to Afua's sense of identity here.

In our analysis of differences in Blackness across these four extracts, we see variety in the ways speakers may position themselves and others, with dynamism in the construction of in- and out-groups – for instance, Afua's complex framing of Ghanaian identities in Example 5. Across the examples, however, the main difference is between those of African and those of Caribbean heritage. In terms of the evaluations, we also see variety in the topics, such as perceived hardship, or academic achievement, and parental control. But to abstract from these evaluations, there is arguably a coherent mosaic with people of Caribbean heritage perceived to have worse academic performance, but there are mitigating factors in that this community was the 'first off the boat' and has faced hardships not faced by those of African heritage. Furthermore, social class further may inflect these differences, a theme repeated (in Example 9) in our next category.

6.2.2 Differences in terms of gendered experiences

Whereas the first category explores differences within the way the interviewees position themselves in relation to their geographical heritage (e.g., African *versus* Caribbean), and the associated expectations, stereotypes and struggles, this category explores how their and others' gender is made relevant in their accounts. In our BBWG corpus there are several examples

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
As a Black woman	*Black men*	*have a different experience*
we	*Black boys*	*are failed*
Black women	*they*	*high performing than*
Black girls in school	*boys*	*stereotype*
girls		

Table 10: Example 6 selected items.

of Black men being positioned as belonging to an out-group – an-outgroup that in some contexts may align with white students. The contrasting experiences of Black men/boys and Black women/girls, focussing on the perceived additional difficulties ('stereotype') that the former tend to face, are highlighted by Chanel in Example 6.

(6) [. . .] *As **a Black woman**, I feel like we have a different experience to **Black men**. So, I feel like **Black men**, or **Black boys** should I say, growing up in **school**, there's a **stereotype** and I feel like **Black women** have a **stereotype** as well, but I feel like it's not as bad as **Black men** in schools and yeah I just feel like they are just failed in **school** – boys – but I feel like it's not on a scale. . . basically I am trying to say that the female education [. . .] within girls, **Black girls** in school are high **performing** than [. . .] I feel like education fails boys more than it does girls.*

(Chanel, self-identified as Black British Jamaican and Guyanese and working class; state educated, attended a pre-1992 university.)

Chanel contrasts her in-group of Black women and girls with Black men and boys (see Table 10), positioning the latter as being in a worse situation than Black women. Chanel argues it is the education system that 'fails' Black boys (a repeated relexicalisation of the passive form 'are failed'), because of the powerful 'stereotypes' they encounter (Mocombe *et al*., 2016; and Wright *et al*., 2016). Across the corpus, this portrayal of Black men as being in a relatively disadvantageous position compared to Black women is unusual. More typically, Black men are positioned as more privileged, less discriminated against than Black women, and they may also hold negative stereotypes about Black women in terms of dating. Yasmin in Example 7 positions her in-group (*we* in the opening clause) as being at the bottom of an intersectional hierarchy, here roughly equivalent to a scale of privilege, and below that of Black men.

(7) *I feel like we have to fight, I feel like we do. When you think about the hierarchy of like the pay scales, you have the **white man**, the **white***

> ***woman***, ***the Black man*** *and* ***the Black woman*** *y'know, we are still at the bottom, we are still trying to make a way up and so regardless of what they are saying in terms of* ***diversity***, *equal pay and all that crap, actually, we are still fighting, we are still a* ***minority*** *y'know.*
>
> (Yasmin, self-identified as Black Caribbean and lower middle class; state educated, attended a pre-1992 university.)

Compared to Example 6, which frames the contrast between Black girls and Black boys in relatively neutral language, in Example 7 Yasmin rhetorically positions herself as an in-group member through the repeated use of exclusive *we* on the one hand and the repetition of various nominalised groups (see Table 11), and through a high degree of evaluative language (e.g., the repeated use of *fight*, the metaphorical use of *bottom*, and the repetition of the booster *still* in all the in-group evaluations [see Table 11]). Once again we see the use of a vague category marker ('and all that crap'), used to signal shared understanding.

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
we (x5)	*the white man*	*Have to fight*
The Black woman	*the white woman*	(*we are*) *still at the bottom*
	the Black man	(*we are*) *still trying..fighting*
	they	*and all that crap*

Table 11: Example 7 selected items.

There is also evidence to support Yasmin's points: compared to other gender or racial groups in the UK, Black women are least likely to be in the top earners (Almeida *et al*., 2021). In addition, Black people being 'invisible' in white societies like Britain (Mowatt *et al*., 2013: 645) and how such marginalisation is often compounded for Black women (Crenshaw, 1989) was discussed at the beginning of this paper. Sophia in Example 8 provides an intersectional interpretation of this lived experience.

(8) *I just feel you always have to be conscious as* ***a Black woman*** *because I feel in terms of like racism, they are always highlighting the things that* ***Black men*** *kinda face and* ***Black women*** *are always* ***overlooked****. So even just with the police, "oh* ***Black men*** *are more likely to be searched" but what about* ***Black females****? What we experience and the fact that we are one of the main victims of sexual abuse, but it's always* ***overlooked****. Like just these things where we are always* ***overlooked****, and I think it's worrying as well cos it makes you feel as if you are not really valued, and you are not really important.*

(Sophia, self-identified as Black British and working class; state educated, attended a pre-1992 university.)

Sophia's evaluative stance is achieved through some persuasive tropes, such as the repetition of the term *overlooked* in regard to Black women, along with the engaging use of hypothetical reported speech in a rhetorical question ('oh Black men…'). Sophia also positions Black women as more disadvantaged, but here it relates to the attention they do not, yet should, receive about the discrimination and crimes they endure (Showumni, 2017; and Pennant, 2022). In Table 11, it is notable how much emphasis is put on the in-group experience, with very little mention of the out-group (Black men) here. Black men are again positioned as an out-group in Example 9 (see Table 13).

(9) *I think **class** has a big part to play in education because even let's say, I know a lot of actually **middle-class Black men** who still think they are better than **Black women** hands down. I've had so many conversations with them, they would never date **a Black woman**, we'll be best friends- "I've known you since you were 12"- but, they would never date **a Black woman**, they would never date someone who looks like their own mother because they were socialised to be like "I am on the come-up so I need to have a **white woman** on my side cos that's also my social status, I need to have that".*

(Claudia, self-identified as British Ghanaian and working class; both state and privately educated, attended an elite university.)

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
a Black woman	*Black men*	*always overlooked* (x2)
Black women		(*you are*) *not really valued*
Black females		(*you are*) *not really important*
we (x3)		
you (x3)		

Table 12: Example 8 selected items.

In-group markers	Out-group markers	Evaluative language
Black women	*middle class Black men*	*are better than*
	they (x4)	*Hands-down*
	a white woman	*I need to have a white woman by my side*

Table 13: Example 9 selected items.

Unlike Example 8, in this extract, Claudia talks predominantly about the out-group of Black men, personifying them though repeated use of hypothetical speech, with little overt mention of the in-group. Notable again is the importance of class in the way intracategorical intersectional identities are positioned, and in-groups and out-groups are constructed in the discourse. Claudia describes herself as working class, despite having attended private school and an elite university. It is specifically middle-class Black men, those 'on the come-up' who are positioned as the out-group here, a group who actively reject Claudia's in-group of Black women, regardless of social class. Dabiri (2013), however, argues that these preferences are found within Black British 'urban' youth, working class culture which are then popularised in the mainstream media and in society. These dating choices need to be viewed through wider, historical lenses and legacies which are yet to be substantially explored within a British context though it has in America (Craig-Henderson, 2006; and Schoepflin, 2009).

The category of differences in gendered experience has shown a fairly consistent in-group of Black women, with the most typical out-group that of Black men. In terms of evaluation, the majority of these instances position Black men in a higher hierarchical position that Black women (although see Example 6). Once again, we see that class can be made relevant to the creation of out-groups, as in Example 9.

7. Discussion and conclusion

This paper has operationalised an original theoretical approach, combining in-group/out-group theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986) with an emic, intracategorical conception of intersectionality (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). This has enabled a fine-grained analysis of a group of rarely heard voices, one that is aware of its marginalised position in society (Mirza, 1992; Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010; and Emejulu and Sobande [eds], 2019). Moreover, our novel approach has enabled their emic perspectives to be prioritised.

In answer to our original question, we have categorised the in-groups and out-groups that are discursively constructed by Black British women graduates as 'diversity within Blackness as a racial category', and 'differences in terms of gendered experiences'. Within the first category, the most typical distinction was between people of African (e.g., Ghanaian or Nigerian) or Caribbean heritage, as either in-group or out-groups, with a fairly consistent portrayal (across in-groups and out-groups) of those of African heritage being higher achievers, mainly in comparison to the Caribbean community. In the second category, Black women are consistently positioned as the in-group (unsurprisingly, given that the interviewees were all Black women), but the most frequent out-group was that of Black men. Other out-groups were signalled, such as white women, but to a lesser degree than Black men. In terms of evaluation, Black women were discursively constructed as an

in-group that may be overlooked or treated more poorly in society at large, and by Black men in terms of romantic relationships.

Quantitative corpus analysis of keywords, key *n*-grams and collocations was combined with qualitative analysis of longer extracts; this unearthed the nuances and dynamism within our corpus of interviews, thus amplifying the voices of Black women as a distinct group, building upon previously outlined studies in the literature review about their educational experiences and journeys (Mirza, 1992; and Morris, 2016). Through rejecting an *inter*categorical, top-down approach to the data (which assumes the relevance and relative fixity of categories), and instead adopting an *intra*categorical approach that informs our methodology, several original findings are unearthed. While the collocation analysis of *Black* suggests the primacy of this term in comparison to other social categories (like 'women'), the strength of the intracategorical+emic+in-group/out-group approach becomes particularly evident in the second part of the analysis, through highlighting the dynamism, fluidity and distinctions within social categories. By implication, our approach highlights the importance of not relying too strongly on the phraseological findings of quantitative corpus analysis, in that such an analysis could overlook these distinctions within social categories (a potential problem for intercategorical studies (see Tatli and Özbilgin [2012]): the rationale for not assuming a keyword, for instance *African*, indexes the same identity across similar texts, or even within the same extract, should be evident from our analysis. Hence we proposed the two areas of intersectional fluidity. As argued above, 'differences within Blackness as a racial category' captures not only the contrast between African and Caribbean heritage, but it also captures distinctions within these categories, such as national heritage or social class. In terms of differences of gendered experience, our intracategorically orientated methodology unearths fluid distinctions between the genders, with Black British men sometimes being positioned by the interviewees as an in-group, but often as an out-group.

It was also noticeable that the analysis of longer extracts illuminated the use of certain rhetorical linguistic strategies, such as hypothetical reported speech, repetition, and vague category markers, enabling speakers to persuasively index a particular evaluative footing. Hypothetical reported speech was typically used to put evaluative words into the mouths of out-group members, thus rhetorically signalling the struggles the in-group faces. Future studies can further examine such rhetorical devices used by in-group members to personify out-groups.

An important point is that we are not suggesting our two themes are comprehensive. Future areas of analysis include more on the shifting positionalities with other racial groups. An example would be Black women aligning with other women of colour in educational contexts. And while we discuss class to some extent (e.g., Examples 1, 5 and 9), the relevance of class in intersectional analysis in a British context around Blackness – despite having been discussed previously (Gillborn *et al*., 2012; Rollock *et al*., 2015; Meghji, 2017; and Wallace, 2018) – deserves further attention.

While these findings are interesting empirically, they also have theoretical implications. One of the core ideas of in-group/out-group theory is that the negative stereotyping of out-groups tends to occur as a result of positive in-group associations (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; and Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). Yet here, there is relatively little evidence of negative evaluations towards the out-groups; instead, the bulk of the negative evaluations, as evidenced in Tables 6 to 13, concern perceived views of the out-group towards the in-group. In other words, it is the in-group's views of the out-group's assumed perception of the in-group that are largely negative (especially for speakers who identify as of Caribbean heritage). Whether this might be because the in-group as a whole perceives itself as relatively marginalised in society, or because most out-groups (for instance Black men, or Black women of African heritage) are also in-group members at other moments in the discourse, requires further study. Regardless of the reason, we argue that this complexifying of in-group/out-group theory results from our approach, and would not have been achieved through an etic intercategorical analysis. As such, the study contributes to other recent corpus-informed analyses that acknowledge that essentialism may be an ethnographic fact in society, but reject essentialism as a theoretical orientation (Handford, 2022).

The debate around the use of the term *Black* was noted in the Literature Review, specifically that some scholars (e.g., Brah [2000], Aspinall [2011] and Wright [2015]) view it as problematic given the diversity and difference within the group of people it covers. Others, it was noted, argue for its usage (e.g., Nagel [1994], Andrews [2016] and Owusu-Kwarteng [2017]), not least as a tool of empowerment and of reclaiming a subjugated identity, one often hyphenated with other national (e.g., British), cultural or ethnic identities. Our study speaks to both positions, in that the emic-intracategorical analysis has illuminated the diversity and differences within the discursively constructed (Hall, 1992) category of Blackness. At the same time, it is used by the in-group as a powerful and usually the most salient marker of their social identity. We began this paper by arguing that amplifying the voices of marginalised groups is self-evidently right; when Black voices of all genders and backgrounds are as heard and unmarked as white British voices, then that might be the time to let go of the ethnographic fact of strategic essentialism concerning Blackness.

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