Article

Stories of Racism and Resistance: A Narrative Analysis of Stories Told in the UK Windrush Generation and Descendants of the Windrush Generation

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Abstract

The Windrush Generation (WG) and their descendants continue to experience adversity in the UK, including racism and the Windrush Scandal, with such adversities absent from psychological research literature. Intergenerational trauma is a psychological concept explaining that adverse experiences can be transmitted from one generation to impact subsequent generations. There has been limited consideration of the ongoing impact of adverse experiences that span multiple generations, such as experiences of racism within Western Europe. This paper utilised a narrative research design to study the narratives of members of the WG and those of their descendants in the UK. Eight expert by experience co-researchers were involved in developing the project from design through to dissemination. Eight participants, including four members of the WG and four descendants, completed semi-structured interviews in which they told stories in the context of Windrush. These stories were analysed utilising a narrative analysis framework, looking at content, structure and performance. Collective trauma and racism were apparent in the stories told, yet tended not to be spoken about by the WG to subsequent generations. Instead, emphasis was given to communicating strength and resistance. Implications for policy, healthcare and supporting communities to heal through narrative and liberation practices are discussed.

Keywords: Windrush; narrative; decolonising; ethnicity; intergenerational trauma; racism; resistance; whiteness

1. Introduction

In June 1948, the 'MV Empire Windrush' ship docked in Essex, UK. The ship transported people from British colonies to fill UK labour shortages. Those arriving on Empire Windrush and other transport between 1948 and 1971 have been labelled the 'Windrush Generation' (WG). The WG have experienced ongoing adversity in the UK, which to our knowledge has not yet been explored within psychological research. The purpose of this

paper is to contribute to the literature, highlighting the importance of the impacts of adversity based on ongoing oppressive strategies of current negligence to repair colonial oppressions, by working alongside Windrush community groups and giving recognition to narratives told by members of the Windrush community and their descendants.

2. Racism and Trauma

It is well documented that the WG experienced racism[1] (Wardle and Obermuller 2019), were often denied jobs (Brinkhurst-Cuff 2018) and housing (S. Jacobs 1985) and, if securing accommodation, were charged more than white tenants and were exposed to poor conditions.

The 1988 Immigration Act revoked the rights of the WG to stay indefinitely in the UK. From 2009, Windrush landing cards and registry cards were destroyed. The 'hostile environment', introduced by then UK Home Secretary Theresa May in 2012, required individuals to prove their status as UK citizens to access healthcare, public services and employment. As many were unable to do so, the WG faced deportation. In 2018, The Home Office admitted to detaining over 850 people between 2012 and 2017 (Gentleman 2018). Whilst the Windrush compensation scheme was launched in 2019, by March 2023, 5413 applications had been made, yet only 1363 people had received compensation (Home Office 2023), with many reportedly receiving inadequate recompense (Nagesh 2023).

Racism, threats of deportation and loss of access to human rights could be considered to constitute collective trauma for the WG (e.g., Straussner and Calnan 2014). Such experiences can lead to sleep problems, poor physical health and poor emotional wellbeing (Beilharz et al. 2020). Systemic oppression[2] is not conceptualised as trauma in recognised mainstream mental healthcare (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association 2013), which focusses on individual experience and excludes racism and the impact of colonialism.

Collective trauma can harm communities, taking generations to resolve (Berger 2014), and can be unconsciously transferred intergenerationally (Knight 2017). One way this can occur is through disruption in the relationship between parent-figures and children (Bradfield 2011), although intergenerational resilience and recovery have also been documented (e.g., Denov et al. 2019). Research regarding intergenerational trauma has tended to centre on the events experienced in one generation that subsequent generations do not experience (Sangalang and Vang 2017). The present study, therefore, sought to attend to intergenerational trauma in the context of cumulative traumatic events across generations, which is little explored in academia (Hankerson et al. 2022).

3. Stories, Silence and Trauma

An ongoing discourse in the UK is that there is no evidence for institutional racism (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities 2021). However, this has been disputed in the academic literature (Gopal and Rao 2021; Patel 2021).

Kinouani (2020) argues that experiencing ongoing racism can lead to silence, emotional detachment and avoidance as common coping strategies for people of African and/or Caribbean heritage (Kinouani 2020). This can occur due to fear of experiencing violence when speaking about racism (Kinouani 2020). Silence in families can hinder recovery following trauma by perpetuating seclusion and distrust (Danieli 2007).

Conversely, parental sharing of trauma has been linked to insecure relationships (Dalgaard et al. 2016). Volkan (2001) reasoned that intergenerational trauma could develop from a previous generation's inability to grieve; therefore, mourning needs to take place by the next generation. Stories can facilitate meaning-making (Scholander et al. 2021), and talking about traumatic experiences in secure, safe spaces is thought to facilitate healing.

Hearing stories of the Windrush Generation and descendants may also have implications on systemic and political levels, as these draw on lived experiences of racialised communities in the British cultural context; for example, there is documentation of unequal access to mental health services for people of African and/or Caribbean heritage, alongside worse health outcomes and experiences when using the National Health Service (NHS) (Hussain et al. 2022). Hearing stories of racism and intergenerational patterns in the WG and descendants could have implications for how the healthcare system and society respond to racism and trauma in marginalised communities, as well as documenting the effects of hostile policies around immigration on people's lives and wellbeing over generations.

This research aimed to address gaps in current literature by using narrative inquiry to illustrate stories of Windrush told by the WG and descendants, with a focus on racism and intergenerational patterns. This was explored through the following research questions:

1. What stories are told of Windrush by members of the Windrush generation, and what do these stories include of trauma and racism, and what else is told in these stories?
2. What stories are told by descendants of the Windrush generation, and how do these connect with the stories of their elder generation who came to the UK via Windrush?

4. Method

Four people—who either identified as the WG or a descendant of the WG—co-produced the research as experts by experience, as part of the research team. Their involvement included support in developing the research aims/questions, defining and reaching the participant population, recruitment of participants, developing the interview schedule and dissemination of findings.

Eight participants—four who identified as the WG and four who identified as a descendant of the WG—were recruited using snowball sampling. These individuals were not related and came to England at different life stages, and therefore spoke about their stories across their lifespan. Their stories were collected via semi-structured interviews, as these enable participants to share their stories, allowing for idiosyncratic responses (Kallio et al. 2016). All participants self-described as cisgender female and as either Black Caribbean, Black British or a British Citizen. The WG participants were aged between 60 to 76 years. The second generation were aged between 48 and 61 years. Interviews ranged between 60 min and 112 min.

5. Ethics

The research was subject to ethical review by the University of Hertfordshire (protocol number: LMS/PGT/UH/0507), as part of a doctoral submission. Information sheets and consent forms were used with participants and experts by experience to ensure informed consent. Verbal consent was checked regularly. Pseudonyms were used for confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any stage prior to analysis without ramifications.

To minimise emotional harm, regular pauses, permission to skip questions or stop interviews and relaxation techniques were offered. Participants were signposted to support following the interview. The recruitment strategy was designed to allow each participant time and choice. The use of ground rules in meetings with experts by experience aimed to minimise harm, and meetings were voluntary.

Researcher Reflexivity

The principal researcher is a white, UK citizen, with the broader research team representing diverse backgrounds. Acknowledging the harm caused by white people in researching ethnically diverse communities, a reflective log guided by questions from

Patel and Keval (2018) was used by the principal researcher to reflect on their privilege and biases.

Under a Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw et al. 1995) framework, the authors understand that racism is ubiquitous, sits within a white supremacist context and is socially constructed. The authors read widely and discussed their ongoing learning, including critically analysing the function that privilege and oppression serve and showing commitment to social justice. The authors hold the belief that confronting racism is unattainable without confronting whiteness.

The authors discussed their own experiences of intergenerational trauma whereby patterns of relating were transmitted across generations. The principal researcher was aware that an over-sharing of stories of trauma, abandonment, loyalty and control were present in their own childhood and used bracketing throughout the research to reflect on this, whilst aiming to attend to the findings with openness.

Acknowledging the above, the researcher explicitly discussed their positionality with all participants, including their stance on racism and white privilege, as well as their own relationship to intergenerational stories.

6. Data Analysis

Interviews were analysed using Narrative Analysis (NA). NA has been described as a decolonising[3] practice (Samuel and Ortiz 2021) and allows for divergent stories (Fløttum and Gjerstad 2017) to honour idiosyncrasies within groups.

Interviews were listened to and transcribed verbatim, including repetitions of words, pauses, vocal disfluencies, laughter, and changes in pitch, pace and emotion. The coding used in the analysis is included in Table 1.

Table 1. Codes/symbols used in analysis.

Symbol	Meaning
Speech marks	The speaker is quoting another person
Square brackets	Indicates an unfinished word
Hyphenated	Indicates a broken word
Bold	Indicates emphasis
Upwards arrow	Indicates the word was said in a higher tone
Downwards arrow	Indicates the word was said in a lower tone
Capitals	Indicates the word was said in a louder volume
Italics	Indicates the word was said in a quieter volume
Underline	Indicates the word was said in a faster pace
Angle brackets	Indicates the word was said in a slower pace
Forward slash	The speaker verbalised the letters of an acronym
Asterisk	The speaker used a word profanity or a word that could cause harm to others

Transcript data were reviewed with peer researchers in the supervisory team to reflect on findings and inform the analysis. The principal researcher attended six NA workshops to support rigour in the analysis, in which themes were presented and discussed to support refinement. The CASP (2018) quality framework was followed to support credibility throughout the research.

Riessman (2008) described three categories for analysing interviews: thematic/content, structural and dialogic/performance analysis. This involved re-reading transcripts and

considering what was said, how things were said and organised and how the stories were being performed—including paying attention to emotional expression, respectively. This was thought about in relation to the participant(s) and the interviewer and how this was situated in a broader political, social and cultural context. Equal attention was given to content, structure and performance.

7. Findings and Discussion

This study explored narratives of members of the Windrush generation in the UK, alongside narratives of descendants of this community, in order to understand how stories stemming from the hardship and traumas, including racial oppressions, are managed or may be ongoing in the community and subsequent generations.

Overall, this study found that for the WG, Windrush was associated with opportunity; yet, for most participants, this did not match their experiences of arriving in the UK. All members of the WG reflected on the challenges they encountered in the UK, including racism, yet they tended not to share stories of this with subsequent generations. Instead, there was a preference to share stories of strength, resistance, values and family, and community cohesion. For descendants of the WG, there were mixed stories on the communication they received regarding stories of Windrush and racism from their ancestors. All discussed the struggles that their ancestors faced and all shared stories of their own experiences of racism in the UK. For descendants, there was an emphasis on sharing these stories with their children and wider society. All descendants valued social justice, and this appeared linked to the Windrush scandal and the current political climate in the UK.

In this section, the stories told across each generational group are presented alongside a discussion of links to existing theory and empirical literature. The themes are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes across the Windrush Generation and descendants of the Windrush Generation.

Generational Group	Story	Sub-Story
Windrush Generation	Stories of opportunity and hard work	Stories of sacrifice
	Stories of challenge	Stories of racism
Descendants of the Windrush Generation	Stories of ancestors' experiences during Windrush	Stories that were shared and not shared
		Stories of trauma
	Stories of racism	Stories of survival
	Stories of strength	Stories of challenge

8. Windrush Generation

Participants shared individual stories of their experiences during Windrush. This included pre-migration preparation, reasons for moving, first impressions of England, stories of adversity, and how they managed this.

8.1. Stories of Opportunity and Hard Work

All of the WG participants spoke of Windrush synonymously with achieving a better life, which echoes the literature that moving to another country has been associated with social and economic opportunities (Sangalang et al. 2019).

Thérèse situated her stories of opportunity around herself and her children:

Thérèse: "The opportunities that, my children have, I never saw as a young person."

Laura framed the opportunity around nursing. There was a sense that there were opportunities around status, as Laura referenced University reputations and upper-class British culture:

Laura: "We'd (family) have tea and scones."

Lydia described her ambitions and hopes to pursue a nursing career, which she felt would be an available opportunity in England:

Lydia: "I knew from a **very** young age before even coming to England, I knew I wanted to be a nurse."

Miriam storied work and educational opportunities as she discussed the barriers that can prevent one's access to opportunities, including gender identity:

Miriam: "Women should actually be going into, to become a secretary."

There was divergence around the emotions associated with opportunities. For Laura and Lydia, emotions of excitement were demonstrated by emphasis and laughter and in the content of their stories, as they set the scene (Labov 1972):

Laura: "I would like you to go to Southampton, there's this wonderful hospital."

Lydia: "We had 21 days on **sea**, and it was 21 **fabulous** days."

Thérèse and Miriam's stories of opportunities were framed around separation and what was lost to gain opportunities. For instance, Miriam discussed her parents travelling to England first, before Miriam joined them 2–3 years later:

Thérèse: "We left one sister behind."

Miriam: "She (mother) was **crying** at the airport because she was the main person who **looked** after me."

Thérèse's story contained more anger and sadness. This was shown through her structure, as the first half of her interview mirrored a tragedy narrative (Benish-Weisman 2009), where her stories described difficult times without resolution. Miriam, too, showed a disconnection to being part of the WG, which was inferred from her vague stories around Windrush. This contrasted with Laura, who seemed more connected to being part of the WG. Whilst Lydia expressed similar excitement around opportunities to Laura, she did not share a similar connection to being part of the WG.

Lydia: "It was all very new, and still ↑very confusing↑."

Levels of poverty may have compounded this. Thérèse, Miriam and Lydia emphasised the deprivation that they lived in. Conversely, Laura spoke about flying to England and living in the nurse's quarters. Thus, the relative wealth or level of poverty that participants arrived with appeared to influence the availability of opportunities on arrival that affected or reduced their social mobility. Relative poverty was apparent in their stories through altering the relationship participants had with their arrival as members of the WG.

Miriam: "We lived on a, on a council estate and, um, ↑things↑ like, um, you know, people kind of scrawling N/F on your wall, you know National Front."

Perhaps underneath stories of opportunity was a mismatch of pre-travelling expectations and post-settling experiences. This was inferred from the content of their speech:

Thérèse: "we were told we that was nice and sunny in August. It's summer. You'll be nice and warm. Hmm. We weren't."

Lydia: "Going to school I thought I was going to be excited because I loved school back in the Caribbean."

These stories being told imply deception around the move to the UK prior to the move.

8.2. Stories of Sacrifice

All participants spoke of working hard, sacrifice and "not wasting" opportunities:

Thérèse: "a couple of **years** to save that amount."

Lydia: "I didn't go back to the Caribbean like I said after my grandmother died, I stayed here and gave all my li[fe], all my working life in the hospitals here."

Stories of sacrifice also had a mixed valence. Sacrifice was approached by Laura with gratitude, whereas for Thérèse, this was a reminder of discord in family relationships.

It is well-documented that people who move countries navigate a dance between their culture and the culture of their new country (Kil et al. 2019). There was a sense that participants sacrificed their needs when adjusting to the UK. This ranged from food choices to sacrificing a sense of togetherness that existed when living in the Caribbean and accepting that others' opinions on their identity could not be challenged:

Miriam: "All they knew was Jamaican, and, and I used to, sometimes lie and say yes."

Despite this, sacrifice was connected to stories of strength, as participants discussed that holding onto the principles of hard work held them during challenges. All participants spoke of the importance of communicating messages of sacrifice and hard work to subsequent generations. This highlighted how sacrifice can be both sustaining and depleting for the WG.

8.3. Stories of Challenge

All participants spoke of challenges, including racism, deprivation, occupational and school difficulties. Moving to another country can evoke stress and people can encounter difficulties related to isolation, feeling homesick, language barriers and an unfamiliarity with the new culture (Wang 2020).

8.4. Stories of Racism

Each participant disclosed implicit stories of racism. These tended to begin with setting a scene around their experiences of feeling different or not belonging:

Thérèse: "I remember being the only black kid in my class right through primary school and, um, ↑even↑ the teacher was openly racist, um, so you could imagine (laughs) we had no support at school at all."

Laura: "and there was **nobody** on the street that looked like me."

Lydia: "my **first** day at school, I got a sense of not belonging."

Miriam: "I had a Jamaican ↑accent↑ and the children didn't understand what I was saying half of the time, um, and when I did say something, they would actually taunt me."

Thérèse, Lydia and Miriam's stories of racism related to their personal experiences, whereas Laura spoke of racism more generally. This produced a dichotomy of whether participants seemed connected to or disconnected from racism, evident in the structure of their stories. Laura gave short examples and spoke quickly, which prevented her stories from progressing (Benish-Weisman 2009). This contrasted with Miriam, who—when talking about a white person accusing her of stealing money—described her experiences of racism and the process that followed, indicating a progressive narrative (Gergen 1994):

Laura: "I knew of terrible things were happening out **there**."

Miriam: "the woman actually tried to make it seem as if I'd stolen cash from the ↑office↑."

By not always naming directly that these were experiences of racism, these stories indicate surviving a pain that could not bear to be spoken, which was corroborated by Thérèse, who mentioned "brushing it out very quickly because it was unpleasant." Additionally, I am mindful that my identity as a white interviewer may have influenced the way that these stories were told. As people of African and Caribbean heritage can experience fear when naming racism to white people (Kinouani 2020), this may explain some of the vagueness in participant stories. For example, Lydia spoke in a quiet, gentle tone throughout our interview and I wonder if this connects to her previous interactions with white people: "if I tried to **speak**, and I spoke in a bit of a higher pitch that I'm speaking now, it comes out that you're **arguing**."

All participants spoke of how they managed the challenges of everyday oppression. Laura spoke of noticing others' actions and consciously mirroring these. For example, if

someone acted as though they did not see Laura, she would do the same. It seemed that this enabled Laura to bring humour into these interactions and make light of them, which may have distanced Laura from the pain behind how she was treated.

Laura: "I could do that very nicely, pretend I don't see you".

Lydia spoke of powerlessness and not verbalising things that happened to her. Lydia linked this to fear around what would happen if she spoke out.

Lydia: "You couldn't go into it."

Miriam described having no choice but to fight, yet also keeping quiet. Perhaps this sat in the context of authority, as she described, having come to the UK as a child and attending school, only feeling able to challenge peers outside of the classroom. Individuals can remain quiet in unequal power imbalances, including the teacher–student dyad (Ladkin 2017).

Miriam: "Fighting individuals who called me a name."

9. Summary of Windrush Generation Stories

Overall, the four members of the WG spoke about their story of hope and of hardships in relation to what they experienced on reaching the UK, and their stories also encompassed whether to share their experiences with subsequent generations. Miriam has spoken with her children about racism, while Thérèse, Laura and Lydia shared that these challenging experiences are only discussed when prompted, and even then, it is spoken about light-heartedly. However, there was a sense that despite limited communication from some WG participants with their children, their children still understood the adversity they had faced (Thérèse: "BUT he understands, EVEN though it's something that I laugh at with him"). Thérèse, Laura and Lydia articulated a preference for discussing strength with descendants. All participants discussed stories of celebration or positive memories of being part of the WG, including family and community cohesion, meeting new people, travelling, music, dancing and food. The wish to focus on this could reflect, as Hassan (2020) suggests, that some members of the Caribbean community want to focus on reviving and celebrating their culture.

10. Descendants of the Windrush Generation

The participants who told their stories as descendants of members of the WG were not related to the WG participants above, and so the analysis presented here is about the second generation within the Windrush community, rather than direct familial links to the WG participant stories presented above.

10.1. Stories of Ancestors' Experiences

Every Windrush descendant participant presented stories of their ancestors' experiences of Windrush. Rachel discussed her ancestors' struggles with family loss and separation. May spoke of her mother's experiences of racism and confronting school and workplace systems. Alicia mentioned her father's difficulties with housing and workplace racism. Tolerant1 articulated her ancestors' loss of community. Each of them also articulated the pride that they felt towards their ancestors for working hard, and how they had been encouraged to work hard themselves.

10.2. Stories That Were Shared and Not Shared

There were differences in whether participants felt that the stories of their ancestors' experiences were accessible to them or were less available.

Rachel voiced trying to speak with her grandmother about Windrush; however, this would not be responded to, or they would begin a conversation, and the subject would change. Rachel spoke about cherishing moments when she spoke with her grandmother.

There was a sense that, despite having greater information as an adult, this came too late and left her with a desire to know more about her heritage.

Rachel: "I actually recorded ↑it↑ because it was the first time."

May discussed that she had access to a variety of stories of her ancestors' experiences:

May: "There are funny ones, there are not so funny ones, there were **deadly** serious ones."

May did not express a desire to know about the past. May focused her attention on justice:

May: "**WHAT** they're gonna do about this scandal ↑now↑."

Perhaps the stories of celebration influenced her perception of Windrush, as she viewed Windrush positively.

Alicia commented that her parents told stories of racism. There was a sense from Alicia that a lot was communicated indirectly by witnessing her parents' avoidance of situations and her parents not verbally responding to challenges. Alicia felt that she did not need to know further details of her parents' past during Windrush, and too felt that Windrush was a positive moment in history:

Alicia: "I think it was a benefit."

Tolerant1 recalled that women in her experience were more forthcoming about talking about Windrush and racism, yet men were more silent. The mixture of communication was mirrored in the mixture of emotions that Tolerant1 felt around Windrush. She expressed sadness about the treatment that her ancestors received, yet she described a sense of pride at her ancestors' contributions.

Every descendant presented a story of attempting to understand the communication styles of their ancestors. Following adversity, individuals can aspire to understand why events happened and how this relates to their worldview (Joseph and Linley 2006). Rachel conceptualised her grandmother's closed communication as a consequence of trauma. May viewed her mother's open communication as necessary to keep May connected to her Caribbean heritage. Alicia understood her parents' open communication as a form of protection. Tolerant1 conceptualised her experiences as linked to differences in gender identity.

All spoke about being open with their own children about their experiences and those of their ancestors. For Rachel, this was to compensate for the closed stories in her childhood. For May, this was to keep her children connected to their culture. For Alicia and Tolerant1, this was about warning their children about the mistreatment that they may encounter. It seems that participants wanted to replicate or modify their childhood experiences, which are common intergenerational patterns (Byng-Hall 1995).

10.3. Stories of Trauma

When presenting stories of their ancestors' experiences, May and Tolerant1 spoke about trauma transmission across generations.

May related to intergenerational trauma to separation and attachment. The literature has noted that separation due to migration can adversely impact attachment, and this may not be repaired following reuniting (Venta and Cuervo 2022). May linked intergenerational trauma to enslavement; for example, she spoke of people of African and/or Caribbean heritage using harsh discipline across generations, which mirrors the physical chastisement inflicted upon people who were enslaved. Graff (2014) discussed that the shame intertwined with not being able to emotionally react to the impact of enslavement can be transferred intergenerationally through parents feeling less empathetic to their children's pain, and parents not feeling shame around these responses.

Tolerant1 reasoned that pejorative language functions to ensure division and results in trauma:

Tolerant1: "How you're referred to as a human being, as in less than human."

Derogatory language regarding people who move countries can be associated with acculturation stress, post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Wypych and Bilewicz 2022). Reflecting on how this trauma manifests, Tolerant1 spoke of living in fear, which she linked to media rhetoric around deportation.

10.4. Stories of Racism

All participants told stories of their ancestors and their own experiences of racism. Descendants presented more detail and emotion in their stories of racism than the WG. NA posits that stories are told to the present audience (e.g., the interviewer) and individuals in the past and future (Squire 2008). This could connect to people of African and/or Caribbean heritage who have their experiences of racism denied. Klein et al. (2021) found that individuals are more likely to explain things when they wish to rectify a flawed belief. Participants may have been driven to communicate in a detailed manner to feel believed by those who may read this. All expressed frustration that racism still operates. This was either named or suggested through performative aspects, including higher pitch, louder volume, faster pace and emphasis on words, which are signifiers of frustration in stories (Kleres 2011).

Rachel: "IT'S JUST LIKE having to talk to people and say ↑why↑."

May: "the scandal that we face ↑now↑, um, which yeah angers me a lot."

Alicia: "these poor people ↑suffered↑ **unnecessarily**."

Tolerant1: "how we're depicted and how we're viewed and I'm, I'm sick of hearing it."

10.5. Stories of Survival

Participants presented how their ancestors survived racism and how messages of survival were communicated to them. All mentioned hearing stories of protection or caution or experiencing their ancestors as protective in their parenting. There were, however, diverging messages within this:

Rachel discussed her mother communicating caution concerning how to interact with strangers, including not drawing attention to oneself. She noted observing that her ancestors did not interact with white people and how this may have been linked to fears around safety. Rachel spoke about initially adopting these messages, yet this changes across age:

Rachel: "I'm a LOT MORE CONFIDENT, I'm 50."

May voiced that protection was connected to resistance. She recalled stories that her mother had told her, including advocating for fair pay at work, as well as the solidarity shown by white people, when her mother experienced racism outside her home:

May: "**all** of the white people on the street came out and they started standing next to mum".

An important aspect implied in May's stories of protection was overt action. May reflected on how she has valued taking action against racism against her children.

Alicia mentioned messages of caution about the police and how this impacted her, related to fears of safety, where Alicia was told not to react by her parents. Alicia linked this to survival:

Alicia: "The person saying what they're saying isn't the one that's gonna end up in jail, it's going to be my parents."

Alicia oscillated between her own stories of adopting these messages and acting against injustice.

Tolerant1 spoke of stories of protection around their peers. Tolerant1 recalled her mother checking how she was being treated by friends, behavioural protection and noticing fear in her mother:

Tolerant1: "I was never allowed to have a sleepover at a white friend's house."

Like Alicia, this expanded to institutions. Tolerant1 recounted messages from her ancestors about not reacting to racism for survival:

Tolerant1: "You turned a blind eye."

Tolerant1 described how she previously adopted these messages; however, her view has shifted away from this.

There were differences in the function of the messages of protection or caution. For Rachel, Alicia and Tolerant1, this was around how to fit in and survive, yet for May, this was around how to stand up for herself. For all, there was a balance in how much these messages were adopted and how their relationship to caution changed over time.

10.6. Stories of Strength

All presented stories of strength alongside challenges. Mirroring the WG, sticking together enabled strength amidst adversity. Rachel and May spoke about attending church, as it facilitates cohesion with the black community. May and Alicia discussed connecting with other communities, which prevented experiences of isolation.

10.7. Stories of Challenge

Intertwined with stories of strength were stories of social justice. All expressed values around human rights. Tolerant1 spoke of how the values of Caribbean culture were conducive to strength through a sense of belonging. There was something about how participants used their ancestors, their communities and their own experiences to motivate them towards change:

Rachel: "I don't just sit there waiting for **God** to change it for me, because that's how that my Nan raised, did, she didn't do anything she didn't take **action**."

Alicia: "I was wary of dad, dad's struggles and I wanted to prove that you can ↑progress↑."

Tolerant1: "They didn't deserve it and have **died** not being able to see the wrong being put right."

May: "A lot of children out there that are still suffering the racism."

11. Summary of Descendants' Stories

All four descendants of the WG spoke about resistance to oppression. For Rachel and May, this involved anti-racism work in their communities. For Alicia and Tolerant1, this included challenging racism at work. All spoke of a sense of wanting to rectify false ideas in society. Everyone referred to the fact that their ancestors of the WG entered the UK legally. Rachel, May and Tolerant1 mentioned that the educational system has taught a biased view of colonisation:

May: "It's not the little nice version of came here with a suitcase and look at me now, it's **all** of the things that led up to it."

May and Tolerant1 spoke about language being used incorrectly to describe the WG and descendants. It felt instrumental for Tolerant1 that language is changed so that this could help change people's perception of the WG and people of African and/or Caribbean heritage:

Tolerant1: "That will help longer down the line of how we're seen as a people, by changing some of those **negative** words."

The ways in which people are described may have negative consequences for their wellbeing, which is of relevance within the current UK political context. For example, UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman's use of language towards ethnically diverse individuals has been criticised for evoking hate (Forrest 2023). Current policies struck a chord for most participants, which perhaps links to the vilification of the WG through the Windrush Scandal:

May: "What Suella's doing, it is **wrong** that you can use people in this way."

12. Discussion

Summary of Findings

All eight participants presented their stories as a journey. Thérèse and Rachel voiced personal journeys of self-exploration. For Thérèse, this was shifting from holding emotions of anger at the hostility she and her family experienced to reaching a place of pride for what they endured to contribute to employment equality. For Rachel, her journey involved understanding more about her sense of self and heritage and connecting with family and the wider community. Laura and Lydia told narratives of managing premoving expectations with the reality of living in the UK, including social practices and the British schooling system. Miriam, Alicia, Tolerant1 and May presented journeys of challenging racism. For Miriam, this related to her career in the workplace; for Alicia, this was around communicating this to subsequent generations; and for Tolerant1 and May, this was challenging the use of language underpinning racism from a systemic lens and advocating for justice for the Windrush community.

All participants acknowledged racism and collective trauma as part of Windrush stories. Despite this, the WG tended not to speak about this with subsequent generations, instead preferring to communicate stories of strength and resistance. There were several dichotomies in stories by the WG: whether participants were open or closed in their communication to subsequent generations around Windrush, trauma and/or racism, and whether memories of Windrush were joyful, unpleasant or contained elements of both. There were oscillations between opposing states: fighting racism versus powerlessness, connection or disconnection to racism, separation versus closeness to family and stories of pride for Windrush versus sadness or frustration. This reflected dichotomies heard in second-generation descendants' interviews, including receiving open or closed communication, adopting parental messages versus distancing, connection or disconnection with their heritage and the focus on Windrush and the past versus current and future change.

Those who spoke about having open conversations with their ancestors told more positive stories of Windrush, and there were no stories of voids in their identity, which supports previous research that open communication can be associated with growth in subsequent generations (Lin and Suyemoto 2016). Those who described closed communication with their ancestors told stories of Windrush with more negativity and told stories of feeling less secure in their identity. Those who described mixed communication conveyed positive and negative stories of Windrush.

The interviewed descendants also told stories of patterns being passed down intergenerationally. Some told stories of their ancestors displaying avoidance, fear and communicating caution and subsequently described themselves adopting these behaviours. When considering how they managed this, all expressed talking more openly with their own children about Windrush, trauma and racism. This mirrors literature that silence can decrease across generations (Kizilhan et al. 2022). Echoing other research (Zasiekina et al. 2021), these descendants described their focus and drive towards social justice as "healing". Overall, these findings suggest that while Windrush was one important aspect of second-generation participants' identity, their stories also encompass broader contexts,

with current socio-political events (e.g., the murder of George Floyd, UK government policies) being important.

All participants from the WG spoke of hard work being integral to their identity when moving to England ("I was not coming here to waste my time", "I had to be **properly** screened"). This was strengthened by descendants of the WG in how they described their ancestors. The concept of working hard was valued by all participants, and it reinforced what the WG have contributed to the UK. This notion has been seen in other minoritised communities in the UK, such as Polish women (Erel 2011), where Erel (2011) discusses the emphasis on work ethic as contributing to a rhetoric to justify their own migration.

Similar to Erel (2011), the dichotomies and multi-faceted nature of participant stories in this research highlight the complexity of reaching a sense of belonging when moving to a new country with a different culture. In the stories in this research, participants connected to themes of social, cultural, economic, moral and political themes in shaping their identity in the UK. This highlights the complex processes that occur intergenerationally for the WG and other minoritised and racialised communities when adapting to life in the UK.

13. Reflections

Extensive engagement work went into enabling access for participants to tell their stories for this research, and we felt that the stories told were honest and unvarnished accounts. Experts by experience expressed urgency to have these stories told, given the emotional content and how participants speak to the ongoing resonance of historical harms with ongoing social policy and seeing the impact on the children of their community. This research has opened up reflections upon how people who have lived through experiences of oppression, as a community, speak about these experiences between generations within their community. We introduced the rationale for this research by acknowledging the position that defining such experiences as "trauma" could be a white, Eurocentric perspective that not all communities resonate with or find useful. For example, trauma theories have been criticised for a Eurocentric bias (Crap 2013). As healthcare providers, we were interested in how people speak about these collective experiences, and what this means about the resonance to therapeutic supports available, and their accessibility.

14. Implications

The findings highlight the implications on a policy level. For example, reviewing and addressing the Windrush compensation scheme, as well as the impact of the current rhetoric of European and UK immigration policies on marginalised communities. For example, the Kings College Kings College London (2024) found that the Windrush compensation scheme has the highest refusal rate, with only 22% of applications being accepted. Legal aid and the use of independent experts are not used within the Windrush compensation scheme, which contrasts with other initiatives, such as Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Government of Canada 2021). Ergo, one suggestion to improve the scheme would be to provide applicants with the necessary independent legal support to aid the application process.

The focus on stories of strength and resistance has implications for supporting the health and wellbeing of communities. Coen-Sanchez (2025) noted that for Haitian and Jamaican individuals who moved to Canada, public events centred on their culture fostered a sense of belonging. This gives weight to the continuation of events in the UK, such as Notting Hill Carnival, which celebrates Caribbean culture. This is particularly important when considering that in 2023, Suella Braverman, then-Home Secretary, dropped the recommendation made in Wendy Williams' Windrush Review around "holding a series of 'reconciliation events' to 'listen and reflect on their stories.'"

Relatedly, Collins et al. (2019) reason that the wellbeing of racially oppressed communities is linked to resisting oppressive practices. They discuss this in relation to the importance of anti-racist organisations to fight against oppression to work towards liberation, akin to principles of Liberation Psychology (Martín-Baró 1996). In the context of an increase in far-right groups, alongside restrictions on political protests in the UK, this demonstrates the significance of organisations such as Stand Up to Racism, Black Lives Matter, Stop Hate UK, alongside many others being supported to campaign against oppression to help protect the wellbeing of minoritised communities.

The method of storytelling in this research was found to hold value for the WG to share their experiences. This research found that open communication and sharing stories linked to Windrush has helped participants move towards healing, particularly for the descendants of the WG. This could have implications for using collective interventions in healthcare settings that centre on storytelling. For example, the Tree of Life (ToL) taken from Narrative Therapy could facilitate discussion of experiences of racism and trauma. The approach can work well with communities who have experienced collective trauma (S. F. M. Jacobs 2018). Stories could be explored using genograms, which can uncover intergenerational patterns linked to oppression and resistance, accounting for social, historical and cultural contexts (Joseph et al. 2023). Using genograms to begin conversations of intergenerational strength may be important, especially to promote culturally responsive engagement.

When designing and commissioning services, attention to what is found beneficial, acceptable and appropriate to the needs of all communities is an important consideration. For instance, participants spoke of the importance of public recognition of their families efforts ("DRAG them over to the plaque [at Euston station] and show them, they had no idea that it was there ↑so↑, I'm, I'm proud"), the importance of legislative change ("legislation has, has, um, has cre-created that change"), accurate education in schools ("it needs to be in our curriculum about the Windrush, the truth") and institutional/political transparency ("I wish those transcripts were even more readily available"). These suggestions align with Liberation Psychology, which shifts away from the individual to a broader, community-level focus, concentrating on social justice and liberation of oppressed groups (Martín-Baró 1996). For example, Liberation Psychology group-based interventions for trauma are found to facilitate change through resistance for people of African and/or Caribbean heritage (Manyam et al. 2020), and moves away from more Western-centric individual models of distress, which have been argued to have an empiricist, evidence-based focus, with less attention given to social issues (Burton and Guzzo 2020), such as collective oppression. Liberation Psychology inherently acknowledges that oppressive systems impact the wellbeing of marginalised groups and thus offers such groups credible pathways for resistance and resilience (Afuape 2012).

Holding in mind the drive and the need for public services to have a preventive focus, commissioners must develop awareness of the importance of community resources and available spaces. For example, as collective practices were expressed by participants as being pertinent for developing strength in individuals, families, and as a community, this has implications for the availability of community spaces for cultural sharing, outside of mainstream (e.g., mental health) services, which can be experienced as inaccessible or problem-focused. Such community spaces would exist to strengthen cultural ties within communities, as part of culturally responsive practices and decolonisation[4] of traditional approaches to supporting health. For example, Mbilishaka (2018) utilised hair salons and narrative therapy techniques to explore stories around ethnicity and trauma.

Participants referenced the importance of allyship and solidarity shown by white people in working towards social justice regarding racism ("I would love to see the rest of the communities come out in support of us"). Bennett and Gates (2022) argue that to

address racism, this needs to involve reflecting on prevailing social practices that privilege whiteness. In light of this research, solidarity may involve deconstructing operations of power, privilege and oppression—including whiteness and how whiteness is involved in upholding racism—is important in order to move towards equity and support of all communities.

15. Strengths and Limitations

This research is the first to look at stories of Windrush and explore possible intergenerational trauma from colonialism and ongoing racism. Capturing the voices of the WG and descendants is timely and significant given the Windrush Scandal. The extensive findings and attention to converging and diverging stories contribute to the credibility of this research. Another strength is the use of co-production, which contributed to meaningful relationships, stories told and authenticity. Nonetheless, the sample size is small, and this narrative research does not represent all views held by the WG and descendants of WG. The research can instead be seen as a step towards hearing stories by the WG and descendants, and attending to the meanings behind the emotional content, as well as how these change across generations.

To continue hearing other perspectives, future research may wish to recruit participants who identify as male and second-generation participants with mixed heritage, to give acknowledgement and recognition to the stories of people with different community affiliations.

All descendants of the WG discussed the messages that they communicate to their children. Future research may wish to extend interviews across three generations or include a different range of ages within the community of participants.

Further research is needed to document the value of community spaces and liberation practices to consider the difference this brings to health inequalities, away from Eurocentric, individual models of distress.

16. Ending Comments

Participants' stories highlighted the nuance associated with Windrush. Whilst collective trauma and racism were strong components of participants' stories, values, family and community support and stories of strength were also pertinent. The WG and descendants seemed to present stories of intergenerational resistance over intergenerational trauma. This has implications for conceptualising and working with communities where there has been collective trauma in healthcare, and supporting wellbeing of marginalised communities more generally, with support to the energy required to realise justice within our racialised societies.

"Let's get together and design our own terms, sit alongside us and listen and you will learn. Nothing about us without us." (Alyson Malach 2022, personal communication).

Notes

[1] "A system of power entwined with practices and beliefs that produce and maintain an ethnic and racial hierarchy." (Fish and Syed 2020, p. 2).

[2] Two definitions of oppression will be adhered to. "A situation in which people are governed in an unfair and cruel way and prevented from having opportunities and freedom" (Cambridge Dictionary 2022). "A societal system in which actors are divided along socially constructed dimensions with power unevenly distributed (or produced) based on these dimensions." (Paradies 2006, p. 144).

[3] "Decolonisation involves identifying colonial systems, structures and relationships, and working to challenge those systems." (University of Essex 2022).

[4] See note 3 above.

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