

**University of Pardubice**  
**Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Perception of Black British Identity – The Theory of Essentialism in *Some Kind of Black***

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**Bachelor Thesis**

**2018**

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Akademický rok: 2014/2015

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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Osobní číslo: **H13084**  
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**  
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**  
Název tématu: **Vnímání britské černošské identity - Teorie esencionalismu  
v díle Some Kind of Black**  
Zadávající katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Bakalářská práce se věnuje analýze současného díla Dirana Adebaya z ohledem na formování kulturní, zde především etnické, identity. Práce bude vycházet z charakteristiky identity, postihne vývoj chápání tohoto termínu a jeho jednotlivé aspekty, především ty, které se týkají etnické identity a otázek druhé generace členů etnických skupin. Dále autorka vysvětlí pojem essentialism, se kterým bude pracovat i v rámci literární analýzy primárního zdroje. S otázkou individuální identity souvisí i otázka sebe-objevování či konfrontace individuální identity s autoritou, tj. témata, která román *Some Kind of Black* také řeší. Teoretická část práce bude obsahovat i zařazení autora do odpovídajícího literárního a teoretického kontextu a obecnou kulturní charakteristiku období a prostředí, do něž jeho dílo spadá.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná**

Jazyk zpracování bakalářské práce: **Angličtina**

Seznam odborné literatury:

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. března 2015**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **30. března 2016**



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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

Ve Ždírci nad Doubravou dne 26. března 2018

Tereza Culková

**Acknowledgement:**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D., M. Litt. for her valuable advice and guidance during the whole process of writing my thesis. My special thanks belong to my family for their support and encouragement during my studies.

## **Annotation**

This bachelor thesis deals with the analysis of the book, *Some Kind of Black*, by Diran Adebayo, that addresses the questions of the second-generation identity. The theoretical part provides the historical and cultural overview starting with the year 1948 which is marked as the milestone when the first generations of the black ethnic groups came to Britain. Furthermore, the characteristics of the identity and the essentialist theory are given. In the practical part, the aspects of the identity and the essentialism are analysed based on the primary book, *Some Kind of Black*. The analysis also focuses on the confrontation with authorities.

## **Keywords**

second generation, identity, ethnicity, essentialism, authorities

## **Anotace**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá rozborem knihy, *Some Kind of Black*, od autora Dirana Adebaya, která řeší otázky identity druhé generace. Teoretická část představuje historický a kulturní přehled, který začíná rokem 1948, který je označen jako milník pro příchod prvních generací černošských etnik do Británie. Navíc je charakterizován pojem identity a teorie esencialismu. V praktické části jsou potom analyzovány aspekty identity a esencialismu, které se objevují v primárním díle *Some Kind of Black*. Rozbor se také zaměřuje na konfrontaci s autoritami.

## **Klíčová slova**

druhá generace, identita, etnicita, esencialismus, autority

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## **Introduction**

This paper focuses on Black British identity and the theory of essentialism in Diran Adebayo's novel, *Some Kind of Black*. The aim of this bachelor thesis is to show how the second-generation identity is formed while being influenced by various factors. In this thesis, Dele, the protagonist of the primary source, and his family will be set as an example.

This work consists of the theoretical and the practical part. In each chapter the theoretical information is given first and subsequently the theory is applied to the primary source.

As this thesis is concerned with a contemporary work, first published in 1996, it is necessary to provide readers with a proper literary background. Therefore, as part of this introductory chapter, there is a short summary of the plot of the novel, *Some Kind of Black*, then the author – Diran Adebayo is introduced and literary context referring to minority literature is provided.

The first chapter gives historical and cultural background. It focuses on the history of black people which tracks the first black 'African' population in Britain and sets the year 1948 as a milestone which meant the arrival of people from the Caribbean. Then every decade with respect to African (black) population is described until 1990s.

In the following chapter, the term "identity" and the development of its understanding is clarified. The core part is Dele's identity formation analysis which is divided into three different places: family, Oxford and London while being influenced by the so called proximal hosts (Afro-Caribbean people). Due to clarity, all the influential milieus are discussed in separate chapters. Since the family and the essentialism are interconnected, the concept of essentialism is analysed in the same chapter. The following chapters closely discuss family, Oxford as well as London and stress the difference of each background and the issues Dele has to deal with.

The third chapter focuses specifically on the importance of the family and their Nigerian background. It points out the generation conflict between the parents who are Nigerian immigrants and their children who are British born citizens. This chapter also gives a brief characteristic of Nigeria leading to the theory of essentialism. The essentialism stresses that everything has their own essence but in case of Dele there seem to be some ambiguities. Not only is he a disappointment to his father but he is also hesitant regarding the question of his true self.



The fourth chapter relates to Oxford, the place of Dele's studies and the key place for his better future including his upward social mobility. At first, a companionable atmosphere at university is suggested emphasizing him being black as advantageous. This chapter gives also some examples of Dele's schoolmates and their different upbringings in comparison with Dele's. Another issue discussed here concerns black matters either represented by Black Students Discussion Group or in terms of relationships between black and white students.

The fifth chapter is about Dele's experiences in London where his position is the contradiction to the one in Oxford even when referred to social mobility. Dele is portrayed as a person who will never be considered Black enough to belong to communities in London as the consequence of being among white people. Furthermore, racism is given into context and the racially sparked confrontations with the police are analysed resulting in the critical medical condition of Dele's sister. The last section of this chapter is dedicated to Dele's self-discovery and self-awareness that is shaped by the relationship with his white friend, Andria.

The final chapters are conclusion, résumé in Czech and bibliography.

At this point, the story of *Some Kind of Black*, further referred to as *SKOB*, is about to be introduced.

It is a story about a young student, Dele, and his Nigerian family, primarily presented by his authoritative dad, and a younger sister, Dapo, who has a sickle-cell anaemia. As already mentioned, their mother and father come from Nigeria but the siblings, Dele and Dapo, are born in Britain. In many aspects it is obvious that the family exert pressure on both children when it comes to education as a compensation for the parents' misfortune. Dele studies at Oxford University which maximizes his potential for future growth not only job related but socially too. Oxford is a place where he is admired and favoured in comparison to London where he is very often humiliated and insulted by white people, authorities included and regarded as inappropriate by black communities on the other hand. The whole story approaches its climax when Dele, Dapo and their Caribbean friend Concrete get into a confrontation with the police and their subsequent brutal racially oriented assault. It turns Dele more towards his community when he starts seeking help. Thus, he realizes its significance and the importance of family as a unit.

Referring to the author, Diran Adebayo was born in London in 1968, to Nigerian immigrants. He is a British novelist and cultural critic. When he was twelve, he won a prestigious scholarship to Malvern College and then he studied law at Oxford University. After his

graduation, he worked as a journalist. He is an author of *My Once Upon a Time*, however, he became famous in 1996 for his first novel *Some Kind of Black* that brought him a great success. He won for example Saga Prize, a Betty Trask Award, or The Authors' Club's 'Best First Novel' Award. The book captivated many readers with the excellent usage of street talk which is a combination of English slang and West Indian Patois. He stresses aims of *Some Kind of Black* on his own website:

I wanted to look at the question of identity amongst children of immigrants through a fraught year in the life of a protagonist, Dele, as he struggles to find a comfort zone amongst the many homes he has his feet in - Nigeria, wider London, black London etc, at a time when these homes seem to be clashing and asking him to choose between them. I also hoped to tell a story about the tribes of '90s urban Britain, in particular the new breeds, black, white etc who, like me, had been subject to multicultural influences.<sup>1</sup>

It explores how identity is formed while influenced by various aspects at the same time. These aspects were, as mentioned on his website, Afrocentrism/Nubianism and black essentialism. Just shortly to introduce these: Afrocentrism is a movement trying to prove that ancient Africa had own civilizations, languages, cultures, and history a long time before the first Europeans arrived there. It puts an emphasis on shared African origins and fights against a bad impression of Africa that is given nowadays such as poverty, famine, AIDS, or reliance on other countries at the same time. According to Howe, there was a considerable impact on the Europeans (mainly the white youth) too, first and foremost, because of their keenness for black music.<sup>2</sup> The feature of music will be discussed later because it plays its role in identity formation. Black essentialism will be elaborated on in a practical part of this work.

As far as literary background is concerned, Adebayo is a representative of post-colonial and minority literature. Post-colonial literature addresses the problems of decolonization, which is usually marked by the year 1945, which is known for the Britain's retreat from the Empire. Indian independence in 1947 triggered the whole series of independence declarations in other British colonies in the next fifty years (last in Hong Kong in 1997). The literature is about these people from former colonies, their forged new post-colonial identities, traditions which they

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<sup>1</sup> Adebayo, Diran. Diran Adebayo. Accessed December 08, 2017.  
<http://www.diranadebayo.com/index.php?page=about>.

<sup>2</sup> Howe, Stephen. *Afrocentrism: Mythical Past and Imagined Homes*. London: Verso, 1998. Accessed December 8, 2017.  
<https://books.google.cz/books?id=pFrm19cZhugC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false>

bring and embrace in diasporas in a receiving country while clashing with values and cultures of the locals.

At the beginning, writers focused on the issues of settling in Britain including lack of housing, racial discrimination, the search for dignified jobs and the hostility of their new hosts, as Onyekachi concedes.<sup>3</sup> Themes like disillusionment and loss of migrants' expectations were very often. With upcoming race riots, writers were concerned with topics of civil right movements, in 1960s another wave of migrants arrived in Britain, and those settled started travelling into their ancestors' homelands or their native country and depicted their experiences and findings from the travels. At the same moment the Black British works were affected by the American Civil Rights, Students movements and inspired by international revolutionary writers. The importance of the Caribbean Artists Movement, which was founded in 1966, is further suggested as it was dealing with Caribbean artistic identity and politics as well as integration and cooperation of people of African descent. To support it, this cultural initiative established book stores and publishing houses e.g. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, Race Today, or New Beacon Books. These houses enabled artists and writers to show and share their work. The most prominent voice was that of Linton Kwesi Johnson.<sup>4</sup>

Linton K. Johnson is famous for dub and reggae poetry and throughout his work giving voice to the second-generation Black British who are descendants of post-war West Indian migrants. From his work *Dread Beat An' Blood* (1975), *England is a Bitch* (1980), and others as well, encouraged thus a new angry generation of people who were born and who grew up in Britain, yet are still rejected as Onyekachi notes.<sup>5</sup> However, their response is much fiercer than that of their parents'.

According to Onyekachi, another milestone essential for Black British identity was marked by Nothing Hill riots in 1976 leading to popularity of Rastafarianism in which many black people found support. Also voices of black women were louder. In the following years, some black writers decided to leave Britain, but among the newly arrived were for instance Ben Okri, Jean Binta Breeze, or John Agard. In literature, stories of young black Britons started to appear in works by Mustapha Matura in *Black Pieces* (1972), or Edgar White in *Lament for Rastafari* (1983), and a new multiracial face of Britain was depicted in *Strange Fruit* by Caryl Phillips

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<sup>3</sup> Wambu, Onyekachi. "Black British Literature since Windrush." BBC. March 03, 2011. Accessed December 26, 2017. [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/literature\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/literature_01.shtml).

<sup>4</sup> Wambu, Onyekachi. "Black British Literature since Windrush."

<sup>5</sup> Wambu, Onyekachi. "Black British Literature since Windrush."

(1981), or in Hanif Kureishi's *Birds of Passage* (1983). As far as works from 1980s are concerned, their position within British literature is much stronger and confident owing to works like: *Monkey King* (1980), *Sour Sweet* (1981) by Timothy Mo, *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie, or works by Buchi Emecheta, being usually about an arrival from post-colonialism to multicultural Britain.<sup>6</sup>

After another outbreak of race riots, this time in Brixton, in 1981, black communities, black institutions and many artists were supported and subsidized by a council. New publishing houses were established: Akira, Dangaroo, and Karnak House, or feminist publishing houses e.g. the Women's Press, Sheba, and Virago.<sup>7</sup>

The themes like identity and freedom became very popular with forthcoming 1990s, however, the question of identity appeared to be much more complex. Gender issues and a subject of sexuality are in the spotlight and the new generation is about to turn their attention to popular fiction (crime, science-fiction, horror, adventure, etc.).<sup>8</sup> Among these writers, there is Diran Adebayo and his *Some Kind of Black* (1995), and Bernardine Evaristo and her *Lara* (1997), which addresses the same identity issues as Adebayo's work; or Steven I. Martin and his historical thriller full of adventure *Incomparable World* (1996). Not to forget Ben Okri who is a highly regarded author in the post-modern and post-colonial literature.

Referring to the relationship between Britain and its West African colonies, there are three possible themes, as Oyedeki suggests, writers are concerned about. The first group is represented for example by Ngugi wa Thiong'o's and Chinua Achebe who write about problems of post-colonialism and stress an idea of "creating national discourse in the wake of independence." The others such as Ben Okri or Buchi Emecheta hold a strong sense of their Nigerian identity highlighting violence, corruption, and poor single voices of African people. Finally, younger writers such as Bernardine Evaristo and Diran Adebayo who "represent the legacy of colonialism, being of west-African descent in Britain who may or may not have visited their parents' native country, and yet they still depict the borders of cultural space and national identity."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wambu, Onyekachi. "Black British Literature since Windrush."

<sup>7</sup> Wambu, Onyekachi. "Black British Literature since Windrush."

<sup>8</sup> Wambu, Onyekachi. "Black British Literature since Windrush."

<sup>9</sup> Koye Oyedeki, "Prelude to a Brand New Purchase on Black Political Identity: A Reading of Bernardine Evaristo's *Lara* and Diran Adebayo's *Some Kind of Black*," in *Write Black, Write British: From Post-Colonial to Black British Literature*, ed. Kadija Sesay (London: Hansib, 2005), 346.

## 1. Historical and Cultural Background

In the first place, it is necessary to say that the period when the book *Some Kind of Black* was written is relatively young from the point of history. For that reason, to understand the 1990's, important events about four decades ago will be presented with regard just to this specific topic.

To avoid ambiguity, the term '*Black*' should be clarified at this stage as it is important in the context. As Imoagene states, "the political usage of '*Black*' encompasses African, Caribbean, and South Asian groups," ethnic minorities who were put at a disadvantage.<sup>10</sup> That applies to Britain only as in America the conception was different.

As far as black African population is concerned, Africans reached Britain much earlier than as slaves. Their history on the isles is dated back to the third century AD when as soldiers of the Roman imperial army occupied the south.<sup>11</sup> However, Adebayo makes references to considerable Caribbean influence, which determines Dele's character and formation of his identity. Even in the book Dele says that "most everybody as a kid was acting Jamaican"<sup>12</sup> because many Jamaicans surrounded them, and his close friend Concrete was Jamaican too. Therefore, the year 1948 when the *Empire Windrush* arrived will be chosen as a starting point which is referred to as the outset of multicultural or multiracial Britain.

It was a post-war period when Britain was short of labour, so that it was sent for workers into the West Indies. Some of them came back as they had served in Britain in the WW2 and were welcomed in their 'Motherland' as Fryer notes.<sup>13</sup> This wave of the West Indian migration was not the only one. On that account, some ministers tried to prevent further cases of migration because of a rising level of the British citizens' anxiety and increasing crime.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, some MPs sent a letter to Attlee (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1945 to 1951) and asked for a limitation of black immigration. They argued that the British people are happy with their "unity without uniformity as well as with no colour racial problems within their country" and they wanted to keep it that way suggesting appropriate legislation as Olusoga

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<sup>10</sup> Imoagene, Onoso. *Beyond Expectations: Second-Generation Nigerians in the United States and Britain*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017, 24.

<sup>11</sup> Fryer, Peter. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*. London: Pluto Press, 1984, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Olusoga, David. *Black and British: A Forgotten History*. London: Macmillan, an imprint of Pan Macmillan, 2016, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, 372.

<sup>14</sup> Olusoga, David. *Black and British: A Forgotten History*. London: Macmillan, an imprint of Pan Macmillan, 2016, 493.

remarks.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, they met with counteraction because at the same time in 1948 the Nationality Act was enacted. Everyone who was a citizen of the United Kingdom and its former colonies gained the status of a British subject or a Commonwealth citizen.<sup>16</sup> This enabled many people to escape countless problems in their countries such as “floods, famine, poverty, unemployment” and brought them the possibility of a new life.<sup>17</sup> It seems they considered the arrival to their mother country a solution or a kind of liberation, unexpectedly, they soon realized that Britain would not meet their expectations, so disillusionment ensued. Since they had not ever questioned their identity of being English, they did not consider themselves foreigners as Fryer points out, however, the White British people showed up to be prejudiced against black people. They looked down upon them as black people were regarded as inferior to Europeans.<sup>18</sup>

It all started with a different perception of two colours black and white. According to Fryer, “blackness, in England, traditionally stood for death, mourning, baseness, evil, sin and danger. Words like blackmail, the Black Death, a black book, a black sheep, black arts emerged. On the other hand, white stood for purity, virginity, innocence, good magic, flags of truce and perfect human beauty.”<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, significant prejudices and stereotypes appear throughout the following decades until now. As Fryer states, race prejudices occur predominantly in societies which are “ethnically homogeneous, geographically isolated, or socially conservative.”<sup>20</sup> In general, people fear the unknown and hence they refuse it. The problem is, instead of getting acquainted and getting an insight, people label the others who are in a way ‘divergent’, have no sympathy, or ignore them at best. At worst there can be acts of violence, incitement of racial hatred, or exclusion from society. The only visible attempt to demonstrate and share their customs and traditions with others was that of the Caribbean representatives who began organizing street carnivals. The most famous and one of the world’s largest street carnivals – Notting Hill Carnival has been organized since 1966. Even though many people do not remember its main purpose, it signifies a connection between the Caucasian people and people of African descent.

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<sup>15</sup> Olusoga. *Black and British: A Forgotten History*, 494–495.

<sup>16</sup> The United Kingdom. The National Archives. *British Nationality Act 1948*. Accessed November 4, 2017. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/11-12/56/enacted>.

<sup>17</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, 373–374.

<sup>18</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 374.

<sup>19</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 135.

<sup>20</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 133.

As time went by, at the end of 1950s British citizens were so concerned that started putting up notices ‘No coloured’. The main problem referred to housing as immigrants could only afford to live in “the poorer areas of cities and urban areas” as well as British people, who had troubles with finding reasonably prized accommodation. It caused unrest and triggered riots in 1958 in Notting Hill in London, which, in the end, gave a stimulus to government intervention.<sup>21</sup> The riots were the first severe anti-racial manifestation in England. Notting Hill was known to be a slum area where black and white working-class families lived. From the 1950s on, ‘Teddy Boys’ (a white working-class youth subculture) were becoming more concerned with the growing numbers of Black people and were hostile towards them. As Fryer remarks, the whole process of armed attacks was called ‘nigger-hunting’.<sup>22</sup> It was supported by a rising fascist influence with Sir Oswald Mosely, being a leader of the British Union of Fascists, promoting slogans such as “Keep Britain White”.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, there were even reasonable politicians with counter-arguments such as Tom Driberg’s (Labour Party chairman) arguing that:

People talk about a colour problem arising in Britain even though all the immigration of the past few years, there are only 190,000 coloured people in our population of over 50 million – that is, only four out of every 1,000. The real problem is not black skins, but white prejudice.<sup>24</sup>

Regardless of the single voices, in 1962 the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was passed. Basically, it was meant to reduce influx of immigrants, coming from the Commonwealth by means of employment vouchers. Even though this act was controversial and seen as racially biased, other similar acts followed. Despite, as stated before, the Labour Party was in opposition, they themselves introduced new acts - the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968, and Race Relations Acts in 1965 and 1968 prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnic, colour while supporting rightful and peaceful community.<sup>25</sup> The Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 allowed the British government to decline more people coming to the country from the Commonwealth countries based on their skin colour while stated, that the former colonials

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<sup>21</sup> Lynch, Michael. *An introduction to modern British history 1900-1999*. London: Hodder Education, 2001, 215–217.

<sup>22</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 378–379.

<sup>23</sup> London museums. "20th Century London." Notting Hill Riots 1958 | Explore 20th Century London. Accessed November 12, 2017. <http://www.20thcenturylondon.org.uk/notting-hill-riots-1958>

<sup>24</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 380.

<sup>25</sup> Lynch. *An introduction to modern British history 1900-1999*, 217.

with white skin could enter without limitation. Thus, it was regarded as another anti-racial move.<sup>26</sup>

The end of 1960s is notorious for the ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech by Enoch Powell, a Conservative politician, and Minister of Health, who suggested that ‘non-white fellow citizens’ can never assimilate with British people because of their race and skin colour. Olusoga states that Powell aimed his policy at their children as well. For instance, he described British-born children of West Indian origin as ‘wide-grinning piccaninnies\*’. Powell made also more comments on the account of the West Indians and Asians. He uttered that irrespective of their being born in England, they would never be considered British and that “their colour is like a uniform that they cannot discard.”<sup>27</sup> No matter how racist these statements were, most people supported him, which raised a wave of violence against black people again.

The British people were also aware of what was happening meanwhile in America. 1950s and 1960s were decades marked by the Civil Rights Movements with significant voices of Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X, who stood up for the rights of blacks. On the other side, there was a significant activity of racist groups such as of the Ku Klux Klan. All that had an impact on the British consciousness, denoting how serious this matter was.

Back in Britain, ‘Powellism’ did not come to the end yet as Powell was convinced that Britain needed ‘Ministry of Repatriation’. According to Fryer, a new immigration act was about to be introduced in 1971 that replaced the previous immigration acts.<sup>28</sup> It stated that only people who have right of abode\*\* are free to live in the UK. The Commonwealth citizens could stay only if they lived or worked there for five years or they could enter Britain with a special employment contract but for a limited period. It gave black people and immigrants generally hard time, having had to deal with the police abuse. Therefore, the Black people endeavoured to defend themselves by striking or establishing militant black organisations for example the Black People’s Alliance and local communities as proposed by Fryer.<sup>29</sup>

\* piccaninny – a Pidgin word, an offensive term for dark-skinned child of African descent, very racist

\*\* being allowed to live or work in the UK without any immigration restrictions<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 383–384.

<sup>27</sup> Olusoga. *Black and British: A Forgotten History*, 513.

<sup>28</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 385.

<sup>29</sup> Fryer. *Staying Power*, 385–386.

<sup>30</sup> "Prove you have right of abode in the UK." GOV.UK. Accessed November 19, 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/right-of-abode>.



Moreover, Powell was aware that “by the mid-1970s 40 per cent of the black population were British-born,” and because Britain was their rightful home, they did not have any reason to reconcile themselves to the idea of being inferior or discriminated unlike their parents. He used two terms for them ‘the immigrant-descended population’ and ‘second-generation immigrants.’<sup>31</sup> The label second-generation immigrants can be mentioned as an example of institutionalized racial discrimination giving a hint of inferiority and difference contrary to the White British.

The following 1970s was a period of decline and disillusionment when Britain had to deal with numerous problems (Irish troubles, growing power of trade unions, stagflation, strikes, etc.). On top of that, it was also marked by fights between Black youth and the police, which is a climax of the story, when Concrete, Dele and his sister are brutally attacked by the police. At that time the whole country was affected by the inflation after the oil price crisis, causing high unemployment which aggravated the whole situation. It was also a period when the Black Power movement developed significantly because the black population had enough of unfair and inhuman treatment. That resulted in serious riots throughout many English towns (Birmingham, Bristol, and Liverpool) in the 1980s. Lynch mentions the most serious riots that started in Brixton in 1981 in response to racist police brutality, continuing till the end of 1990s when the Metropolitan Police was accused of being ‘institutionally racist’ after a case of Stephen Lawrence’, a black teenager, killed by a gang of white youths.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Olusoga. *Black and British: A Forgotten History*, 514.

<sup>32</sup> Lynch. *An introduction to modern British history 1900-1999*, 218.

## 2. Identity

This chapter focuses on the problem of identity precisely on Dele's identity formation in *Some Kind of Black* further referred to as SKOB. At first, the term "identity" will be explained then the development of its understanding will be summarized. Finally, the main attention will be paid to the aspects of "identity" crucial for the main protagonist, Dele, and his identity forging which will be analysed, based on the primary source supplemented with Dele's experience, and real experiences of common people.

"Identity" is a term which concerns every single human-being but its definition that would capture its range of meanings is quite difficult to give. Nonetheless, it is advocated that identity can be "social" and "personal" as stated by Fearon. In the first case, it refers to a social category, "a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and characteristic features or attributes." The later, personal identity is "some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride in or views more-or-less unchangeable."<sup>33</sup> As explained by Oyserman et al., "identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is."<sup>34</sup> It is further suggested that identities can be focused on the past, the present, or the future.<sup>35</sup> That is reflected in the primary source when Dele is oriented towards the future while still being swayed by the past and the present. But to find out the right way how to be sure about one's identity, there is one simple thing to help.

Fearon suggests a way how to ascertain person's identity and that is to ask a simple question, "Who are you?" which can be answered differently in different circumstances because "a person's identity is how the person defines who he or she is."<sup>36</sup> If someone asked Dele who he was, he could reply: I am a student, a son, a brother, a black man, a Nigerian, or a Black British. On the whole, it is apparent that one person has many identities throughout their whole life depending for example on encounters, which groups they have been a part of, their current

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<sup>33</sup> Fearon, James D. *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?* Pdf. Stanford: Stanford University, November 3, 1999, 11. <https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, and George Smith, "Self, Self-Concept, and Identity," in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, ed. Mark R. Leary and June P. Tangney, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2012). Accessed December 9, 2017. <https://www.academia.edu>.

<sup>35</sup> Oyserman et al., "Self, Self-Concept, and Identity," 69.

<sup>36</sup> Fearon, James D. *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?*, 12.

situation, or future expectations. Basically, identity is dynamic, and it changes with every new life phase or under different circumstances.

It needs to be stressed that the way identity is understood now is very different from how it was, and it still develops. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, people's identity formation was determined primarily by their social class. The first identity awareness was related to working-class consciousness that developed in the nineteenth-century England (at the same time when the terms working class, middle and upper class emerged) also as a result of the Industrial Revolution which started the significance of class distinction.

As mentioned above, the most crucial class for identity formation was the working class in Britain. Brantlinger suggests that in Britain the working-class culture was seen as "the core of the society." After the workers realized that they had the right to speak up for themselves too, a problem arose. They could not represent themselves through the institutions of the dominant culture because of that they created "own organizations – protest movements, trade unions or political parties." As Brantlinger claims, "discourse is power, then those who can represent themselves and others through discourse are powerful; those who cannot are powerless. Thus, to represent oneself became of major importance and representation by others was likely to be misrepresentation."<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, an effort to represent interests of the working class culminated in establishing a new political party – the Labour Party.

The similar stance towards the representation is taken by some of Dele's friends who have a need to set up a discussion group for black students. Some view it as racist (calling it "inverse racism"), the others have a need to reflect on many problems they feel are there. Their attitudes or responses to the group differ, probably, because of different class allegiance. All in all, it does not seem there are any particularly serious problems concerning black and white relations at university but having a place for their discourse is important to them.

Generally, class consciousness was the understanding of a social class of which one was a member and shared its working-class culture.<sup>38</sup> However, later people looked beyond and dawned to realize their personal/individual identity (identities) not restricted only to the class allegiance. They were becoming conscious of themselves as human beings whose identity should not be classified just according to their income and social status, they were worth more

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<sup>37</sup> Brantlinger, Patrick. *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America*. New York: Routledge, 1990, 109–110.

<sup>38</sup> Munro, André. "Class Consciousness." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Accessed December 03, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/class-consciousness>

than that. The new realization plus political misrepresentation gave birth to new categories: race, gender, ethnicity, age, or sexual identities that have evolved and in different periods each allured a different level of attentiveness.

Brantlinger suggests two approaches to working-class consciousness. One counts with “a degree of homogeneity” that was rejected by some because it looked for some “unity or essence.” The other, which is quite supportive, “stressed the heterogeneity or complexity of working-class culture which was fragmented by e.g. different geography, the social and sexual divisions of labour, age, political power or powerlessness, race, and economic development.”<sup>39</sup> As the former differences within working-class groups were recognized, it led to the idea of subcultures as stated by Brantlinger.<sup>40</sup> People with the same or similar interests and qualities would unite and form groups to share a set of common values, political views, specific styles etc. So that there is not one unified working-class culture but various competing subcultures which emerged from working-class.

Brake adds that “subcultures originating from within a society can be differentiated from those that originate from without, such as with immigrant groups or traditions, which is true for ethnic or minority cultures. Therefore, being a part of a subculture involves membership of a class culture when the subculture may be an extension of, or in opposition to, this. It can also create its own world, or it may merge with the dominant class culture.”<sup>41</sup> According to Brake for instance “working-class, black subcultures share elements of urban and rural working-class culture but also have the distinctive elements of black culture.”<sup>42</sup> Since WW2 there have been groups like Teddy Boys, Mods, or Skinheads. The subcultures which are linked to black identity (black and brown youth subcultures) will be mentioned as well because they affect Dele’s and his peers’ life in Britain too.

Black people and their culture played a very important role when white working-class subcultures were created. Since the 1950s, Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American culture determined the way British youth culture was forming. The most significant black subculture was the Afro-Caribbean Rastafarianism that had a huge impact on black as well as white youth in Britain. Originally, the Rastafarianism was an Afro-Jamaican religious movement of the

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<sup>39</sup> Brantlinger. *Crusoe’s Footprints*. 115–116.

<sup>40</sup> Brantlinger. *Crusoe’s Footprints*. 115–116.

<sup>41</sup> Mike, Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Cultures and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada*. (Place of publication not identified: Routledge, 2013), “Culture, Class and Ideology,” [https://books.google.cz/books?id=OgfyekgkpwWC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs\\_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=OgfyekgkpwWC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>42</sup> Brake, *Comparative Youth Culture*, “Culture, Class and Ideology.”

oppressed founded in 1932. It was originated in Jamaica and has gained international attention as a Pan-African approach to the problems of poverty, alienation, and spirituality.<sup>43</sup> It was created to give people, who suffered because of slavery and colonialism, their hope and dignity back. Its influence could have been seen in many aspects of life. In young peoples' lives it was noticeable mainly in fashion and music. These days, Rastafarianism is associated with reggae music, marijuana, and dreadlocks, as stated by Smyth.<sup>44</sup> In addition, as mentioned by Brantlinger, "Rastas believe that Haile Selassie's coming to power in Ethiopia in 1930 signalled the beginning of the end of Babylon (of white imperialism) and the liberation of the black races of the world."<sup>45</sup> Owing to its revolutionary ideas and West Indian reggae expressing oppositional values, white working-subcultures then embraced these values and used them as means of struggle against the bourgeois values and the dominant culture which is reflected in their lyrics.

Generally, subcultures express resistance to domination and each has characteristic features that are very often reflected in fashion and music. As Smyth adds, music expresses "one of the principal ways in which ethnic identity is manifested."<sup>46</sup> The element of music is apparent throughout the story of the primary source analysed in this thesis where Dele is portrayed as a music expert. In Oxford he leads a rich social life being invited to a lot of parties because he is one of favourite guests there. One party happening at Tabitha's place shows that Dele has really a sense of rhythm and is respected by his peers for that.

"The Motown selection had just played out and the punters parted and smiled expectantly at the brother as he moved through the crowd to exercise his inalienable prerogative. He shook his head in avuncular but firm fashion when a guy, with due deference, held out some doomy Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds vinyl for his inspection."

Dele then shows how prepared he is when taking some tapes out of his pocket, which was, actually, one of his rules. Every time he goes out to students' parties he brings his own music. Everyone listening to his beats could not be more satisfied. Being fed up with James Brown's Sex Machine, Dele was advised to put on "something with an up-to-date '93 lick", which was a tape marked Breaking-Up at the Basement.<sup>47</sup> "The Basement was a club that played to a Love

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<sup>43</sup> Olmos, Margarite Fernández, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, and Joseph M. Murphy. "Rastafarianism." In *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction from Vodou and Santeria to Obeah and Espiritismo*, Second Edition, 183-202. NYU Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155jkkd.14>.

<sup>44</sup> Gerry Smyth, "Ethnicity and language," in *British Cultural Identities*, 2nd ed., ed. Mike Storry and Peter Childs, (London: Routledge, 2002), 230.

<sup>45</sup> Brantlinger. *Crusoe's Footprints*, 126.

<sup>46</sup> Gerry Smyth, "Ethnicity and language," in *British Cultural Identities*, 232.

<sup>47</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 18.

Has No Colour crowd in London's Ladbroke Grove.”<sup>48</sup> The significant influence of black music is apparent up to the present day, no matter what colour or race people are, music connects them all. It is a moment when any differences between people disappear and they get to another reality.

As far as relations between black and white subcultures are concerned, the situation was tense mainly between the Teds and the minority of coloured people which led to race riots in Notting Hill. The protagonist of *SKOB*, Dele, refers to this issue too, stressing that “[...] it had been Jamaicans who had gone to the aid of the St Lucians, when their dating of Teddy girls had sparked the original Notting Hill riots, and they had been first to the breach for them all ever since.”<sup>49</sup>

With reference to identity, its notion has changed a lot over decades. It used to be something that people could not choose but it was predestined to them for instance by a family into which they were born, the achieved level of education, a job position, or financial means. As Howard noted, “identity was assigned, rather than selected.”<sup>50</sup> Nowadays, people are eager to know and understand who they really are, constantly looking for answers. Otherwise they could not fulfil their expectations and meet requirements which are placed on them. The protagonist of *SKOB*, Dele, has the same troubles.

Imoagene provides four approaches to how children of black immigrants can reflect their black identity. First, they “will forge a reactive black ethnicity and identity characterized by an oppositional culture; devaluing schooling and work; and opposing the mainstream.”<sup>51</sup> Second, identities can be situational varying according to situations. Third, “they simultaneously hold racial and ethnic identities,” or finally, they choose racelessness.<sup>52</sup> Imoagene concludes that Nigerians have formed a multifaceted identity and have not accepted an oppositional culture.<sup>53</sup> The ways how Dele reflects his identity will be elaborated shortly after information about his Nigerian family background will be given.

Another influential aspect that Imoagene stresses is the groups of immigrants called the proximal hosts. They group according to their race and religion in a new country where they

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<sup>48</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 18.

<sup>49</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 47.

<sup>50</sup> Howard, Judith A. "Social Psychology of Identities." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 367. Accessed December 9, 2017. <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.367>, 367–368.

<sup>51</sup> Imoagene, Onoso. *Beyond Expectations: Second-Generation Nigerians in the United States and Britain*, 3.

<sup>52</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 3.

arrive and participate in influencing ethnic identities formation. In Britain such a group is presented by black Caribbean people. It has been found out that for younger people it was troublesome to live in close proximity to black Caribbeans. Even though they were black too, their shade of black was different.<sup>54</sup>

Perception of black colour differs from a culture to a culture, from a decade to a decade and from a person to a person. There are various labels used, sometimes not cautiously enough, by minorities and the mainstream having negative effects in diverse surroundings. For instance, when white people use words like ‘negro’ or ‘nigger’ it is usually seen as racist. On the other hand, these labels are openly used among Blacks but perceived by them without any implicit offensive meaning and vice versa. It is clear that not many white people would be offended when someone calls them ‘white’ and that shows back to different perception of colours. When Dele is describing the other kids at school in Oxford, he adds even their shade of black to their physical characteristics. He is using words like ‘cobalt-dark’ or ‘coffee-coloured’ trying to identify where they come from or what their origins are.

Dele has been growing up alongside many Caribbean people but there is an obvious difference between being of Caribbean or African parentage. “His own words just confirm the fact, “The games that white folk play on blacks are straightforward enough and well documented; the games that black folk play on whites are equally obvious. But the games that black folk play on one another! Well, that’s something else again.”<sup>55</sup> In the primary source there are a few cases which show how Africans are approached by the West Indians and vice versa. There is one incident when Dele and his new girlfriend, Andria, encounter a Caribbean, evidently with racist inclination, who attacks them, first Andria, because she is white, and in the end, threatens Dele with a knife. Another example Dele gives is a tense relationship between him and one Caribbean at school. “The situation had got a little distressed at school when some Jamos used to dish out abuse about dark, ugly Africans and bubuheads, and even gave him grief for taking piano lessons – as if real black pupils should be busy raping the teachers instead.”<sup>56</sup> Probably the only exception is Dele’s best friend Concrete, also a Caribbean, Jamaican.

When talking about Dele’s dad attitude towards Caribbean, he tries to discourage Dele from hanging out with Caribbeans but as mentioned earlier, it was hard to avoid their company when everybody – Africans or Small Islanders – were pretending to be like Jamaicans. Dele explained

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<sup>54</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 17.

<sup>56</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 47.

that their life was much easier as there were many Jamaicans and because of troubles between these ‘seemingly same’ minorities, it was better to approximate to those more dominant ones. The dad degrades them for instance in connection to wearing glasses and education. “You see how we Africans all study in this country-oh! Years of thrift. Bad lights and so many difficulties. But the West Indians – you think you need glasses to stand on street corners? Enh-henh!”<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, Dele’s dad overlooks this issue in church. “Mrs Maynard was Bajan\*, but the old man didn’t mind exchanging pleasantries with the Caribbean in church. It was just outside that the problems started.”<sup>58</sup>

Another look at this problem is indicated in a testimony from Michelle Anoke, who is married to a first-generation Nigerian, saying that in the 1980’s being of African origin was not in vogue and many Africans became an object of bullying by Caribbean citizens (the proximal hosts) and contradicting thus the idea of Pan-Africanism\*\*. Referring to her perception of identity, her family never used a label Black British, so she regards herself as British-born Nigerian.<sup>59</sup> Nowadays, the word ‘Black’ is seen as offensive by some Britons of African origin. As mentioned right at the beginning the word has always had a negative connotation. Everything black meant to be bad and that is the reason why people with different complexion are frequently offended. Calling them by their colour still hides inferiority of their race to Europeans (generally all ‘white’ people) in its core.

It must be taken into consideration that all black people are of African origin even those who are around the world in diasporas. Therefore, it is preferred to apply the designation consisting of nationality and ethnicity as in the case of British Nigerians, African Americans etc. which is supporting above mentioned Michelle’s attitude. Thus, the name includes both parts – roots and native country – forming their identity. Whether people in diasporas see it in the same way and reflect both African parentage and a newly acquired identity in their homeland is hard to say, it would probably depend on the individual and their experience. Here is this question focused on Dele’s perception.

\* being from Barbados

\*\* the union of all people of African descent stressing common interests and solidarity among all people of African heritage

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<sup>57</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 89.

<sup>58</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 49.

<sup>59</sup> Imoagene, Onoso. *Beyond Expectations*, 2017.



Dele was born into a family of Nigerian immigrants who brought own traditions, language, and myths from their homeland. His parents raised him thinking he would receive it as part of his identity as it would have happened if they had stayed in Nigeria. In the course of time, his identity changes as he occurs in new environments among new people with different experience and different opinions. His identity develops from three main spaces: Nigerian background, being a student in Oxford and being part of urban London. All three aspects are very distinct yet so connected so that they will be examined along with individual aspects of identity.

The most crucial for Dele's identity is ethnic identity. When looking at what ethnicity means, it could be simply described as belonging to some ethnic group. According to Smith "'ethnicity' has a 'primordial' quality, so it is viewed as the 'givens' of human existence. Another quality is 'situational' saying that ethnic identity varies with a situation in which an individual is, and thus functioning as a useful tool when achieving one's goals or struggling for power."<sup>60</sup> In addition, Howard notes that these shifts in ethnicity are caused for instance by immigration.<sup>61</sup>

Ethnic identity formation is based on belonging to an ethnic community which is characterized by six main attributes: "a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific 'homeland' and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population."<sup>62</sup> As stressed by Smith, "when these elements are present, a community of historical culture with a sense of common identity emerges."<sup>63</sup> Since the term 'ethnic community' is very often confused with the term 'race', it should be emphasized that 'race' is a group of people which has unique inherited traits distinguishing them from the others. There are more approaches to the division of human races but Mongoloid, Negroid, Australoid, and Caucasian prevails.<sup>64</sup>

It is accepted that for people from ethnic and racial minority groups identity development is very complicated because of negative stereotypes and discrimination. Howard also suggests the main components of ethnic identity which are: "ethnic self-identification, a sense of belonging, attitudes toward one's own ethnic group, social participation and cultural practices."<sup>65</sup> Another attitude proposes that development of ethnic identity and socialization can be influenced from many perspectives "including mothers' teaching about the ethnic culture, parental generation

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1993, 20.

<sup>61</sup> Howard. "Social Psychology of Identities," 375.

<sup>62</sup> Smith. *National Identity*. 21.

<sup>63</sup> Smith. *National Identity*. 21.

<sup>64</sup> Smith. *National Identity*. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Howard. "Social Psychology of Identities," 374.

of migration, mothers' cultural knowledge and orientation, language spoken, and demographic characteristics such as parents' education and degree of community urbanization." Nonetheless, in the story of the primary source, *SKOB*, the mother's influence is overshadowed by her husband who permanently places demands on her. Even Dele remembers some moments when "their mother chided their father for never having given her a day of relief in that country," threatening to die of hard work.<sup>66</sup> However, no more information is given about her or her attitudes to education and upbringing, so that it could be further elaborated on. The most significant influence is that of the father.

From a psychological point of view "the relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem is also mentioned. It shows that a strong ethnic identity, which is accompanied by some adaptation to the mainstream, is related to high self-esteem."<sup>67</sup> It becomes apparent that Dele's self-esteem in Oxford is much higher compared to the one he has in London. In Oxford he is more relaxed as he is accepted by his friends and people in Oxford, white as well as black.

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<sup>66</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind Of Black*, 42–43.

<sup>67</sup> Howard. "Social Psychology of Identities." 375.

### 3. Family, Nigerian Roots and Essentialism

As it has been said before, Dele's identity has been influenced by several milieus as follows: his family, Oxford, London, and last but not least, by the proximal hosts – the Caribbeans. The first dominant suggested element shaping Dele is his family. Dele was born in Britain, and thus he is a rightful British citizen. On the other hand, his parents come from Nigeria and have been living in Britain for over thirty years representing a minority in England, which makes their children the second-generation Nigerians. So that, there are two different sources for identity formation. The significant influence goes from the family who raises Dele and Dapo according to Nigerian values, based on an essentialist approach, wanting them to embrace the Nigerian legacy. However, such life is unacceptable for two young people who have never been to Nigeria and are used to a western kind of lifestyle which surrounds them. And that is a moment when these two different worlds clash.

Dele and his sister Dapo tend to distance themselves from their parents and their Nigerian cultural restraints. They incline more to Black British identity. Even though Dele does not desire to be connected to his ancestry anymore, he cannot deny its significant impact on him as being it a reason for what he has become so far. His view that roots are not important anymore is expressed when talking to Dapo. "Did you hear anyone mention roots? I just said 'back to purity', that's all. I swear, if I had a puff for every time black folk drone on about 'roots this' and 'roots that'. I'm more worried about my branches, you know. It's the branches that bear fruit and tilt for the sky."<sup>68</sup> The other thing is that Dele looks beyond this matter and concentrates on the future. His branches, meaning his future, are what matters from now on. The first step in letting his branches grow is his studies in Oxford.

For better comprehension a little information about Nigeria will be provided. Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960. It is located in West Africa and it is the most populous nation in Africa which consists of 250 ethnic groups. There are five hundred twenty languages spoken with English to be the nation's official language. The north is mostly Muslim, the south is mainly Christian and with significantly higher educational levels than the north. Therefore, as Imoagene observes, the most educated Nigerian immigrants from the south and the east are the most frequent immigrants in democratic Western countries.<sup>69</sup> He also accentuates the fact that "Britain have created a highly selected population of first-generation Nigerian immigrants

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<sup>68</sup> Adebayo, Diran. *Some Kind of Black*. London: Abacus, 1996, 9.

<sup>69</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 37–38.

because of their immigration policies.”<sup>70</sup> What does it mean in reality? The parents are highly probable to have high levels of ethnic capital passing on their second-generation children. The children are then more productive and successful in social, cultural, and economic spheres.<sup>71</sup> That is applicable to Dele who is successful with his studies at college, in Oxford, and socially favourite among his peers.

It is often suggested that the first generations moved to Britain just until they earned enough money to go back, therefore, they would never be fully settled and would never come to terms with this temporary environment. Neither Dele’s mother nor father are happy in England, but they try hard to provide for their children and encourage them to work towards the better future. To accomplish this task, the father’s idea about the best way of treating and raising his children goes hand in hand with essentialism that will be introduced next.

The essentialist theory has its origins in Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophies that claim that all things have their own essences which make the thing the thing and nothing else as stated by Radden and Cuyckens.<sup>72</sup> Essentialism is generally viewed as a set of attributes or characteristics that is specific only to that particular entity. Oyedeji gives an example of Black people and stresses that identity is fixed and there is something inherent that links all Black people.<sup>73</sup> There is another aspect taken into an account and that is culture. Dervin and Machart assert that “culture can easily lead to essentialism by pre-setting people’s individual behaviour as entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are.”<sup>74</sup> On the other side, there is even the opposing non-essentialist approach asserting that “societies and distinct cultural influences help us to inherit identities that are never fixed but fluid and ever changing [...]”<sup>75</sup> In this case, Dele’ parents represent essentialist approach and their identity is more fixed than the one of Dele’s as they completely adhere to Nigerianness. Although Dele is influenced by changing environments he is in, there are certain fixed aspects that account for his identity too – connected even to Nigerianness of his parents. So, it would be more of a combination of both fluid and fixed identities.

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<sup>70</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 72–73.

<sup>71</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 73.

<sup>72</sup> Günter Radden and H. Cuyckens. *Motivation in Language: Studies in Honor of Günter Radden* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Pub. Co., 2003), 274.

<https://books.google.cz/books?id=qzhJ3KpLpQUC&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<sup>73</sup> Oyedeji, “Prelude to a Brand New Purchase on Black Political Identity,” 349.

<sup>74</sup> Fred Dervin, and Regis Machart, “Introduction: Omnipresent Culture, Omnipotent Cultures,” in *Cultural Essentialism in Intercultural Relations*, ed. Fred Dervin and Regis Machart (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 5.

<sup>75</sup> Oyedeji, “Prelude to a Brand New Purchase on Black Political Identity,” 349.

In *SKOB* sociological essentialism is noticeable. Sociological aspect emphasizes traits of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender as fixed and unchangeable over time. That is seen mainly when people in Oxford want and expect Dele to project typical values of Black community. Because he is Black, he is meant to be the same as the others. For instance, this idea was many times misused to justify colonization and imperialism in the past. One of those very important values typical for Nigerians especially is education which is also highlighted in the primary source.

Imoagene observes that “there is a huge pressure on the second generation in Nigerian communities to do well in school because being successful is increasingly defined as part of their ethnicity.”<sup>76</sup> Correspondingly, children in the diasporic Nigerian communities accepted “it was un-Nigerian not to go to college.”<sup>77</sup> Dele’s father reflects the idea that university or college education is essential, so he supports Dele’s studies as much as possible, most often in an authoritative way. Nigerians were aware that having a college degree meant having a good job, a good standard of living and even a better social status.

There were days when Dele wandered back to London instead of studying in Oxford which made his father furious. That only resulted in father’s lecture reminding Dele of the importance of education while putting emphasis on realization of his African roots.

I’ve no more time for you, boy. Tch! You are an ill-trained, degenerate little boy. Complexed, you are complexed and bring shame on the family. You are no son of mine. There is saying **in my country** [meaning Nigeria]: the well-born child does not walk in the dark. Do you understand what that means? I will not be here to pick up the pieces when you fall to earth. I have done my best for you, but now I wash my hands! [...] But for your mother, I would throw you and your complexes out of the house, until you understand that you’re an African, not some Follow-Follow boy! [...] <sup>78</sup>

It is obvious that the father wants his son to study properly otherwise his effort in England would be wasted, “You must not let me down. I have spent thirty years in this country, forgoing the lifestyle to which I was accustomed. Blood money, blood money! I trust you will not spit my blood in my face.”<sup>79</sup> These words suggest that the life in Britain has not lived up to his expectations. After getting his first degree, he got a job in a post office as a junior manager but since then he performs the civil service in lower positions which makes him peevish and furious at home. All the more reason why he is attached so much to his Nigerian heritage. “Like some Late Great Black Man, now tossed around, desperate and dazed by his condition, clutching at

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<sup>76</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 49.

<sup>77</sup> Imoagene. *Beyond Expectations*, 73.

<sup>78</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 4–5.

<sup>79</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 41.

the phoney straws and trampled roots, dizzy from the decay of his inheritance.”<sup>80</sup> The sole place which is nearest to his perfect world is their sitting-room. It is described as a room “full of educational achievement laid out on the walls – the school sports medals, the framed college photographs that meant a lot to the father as well as children who realize its importance. In other families the sitting-room was kept pristine, with prayer scrolls, and cloth maps of the Caribbean – carried so much family pride you could only go in there on Sundays.”<sup>81</sup> This place meant a lot to the father and even to Dele. He remembers many stories that his father was telling him. The stories of street-boxing, detailed remembrances of Nigeria, academic triumphs, or the histories of both of his parents.

In case of this family, it is surprising that the children are not incited to travel to Nigeria. If they had done so, it could most likely contribute to their Nigerian awareness which happened in case of some of Dele’s classmates who frequently visit either their relatives or just go on a trip to their parents’ homeland. It would definitely strengthen their Nigerian awareness. The only reference is made by Dele’s father who simply threatens Dele to send him there but never really does it. “It were better that you spent some time in Africa and then you would know (that you are an African).”<sup>82</sup> Trying to show and prove that their roots are what matters most and Africa would be the right place for his recovery.

There is one engaging conversation between Dele and his very good girl friend Cheryl who is impressed with a situation in London concerning a conscious community. But Dele suggests not to be, because even though some people show their inclination to their roots it is more about patriotism and not about the true understanding of what the roots mean in fact. “There was plenty of bogus brotherhood going down, and the fact that some proud Nubian couple named their kids Kwame and Nefertiti still didn’t mean they could find Ethiopia on a map.”<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, Cheryl argues that it could arouse interest of children to find out more about their names, and thus they would be led towards their unexplored roots as her words confirm: “This would pay unforetold consequences for life, because the children would one day be intrigued at the origins of their names, and this would start them on a voyage of discovery.”<sup>84</sup> Although it is hard to say how much the children would be captivated by this idea when they are situated in

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<sup>80</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 47.

<sup>81</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 45.

<sup>82</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 5.

<sup>83</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 54.

<sup>84</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 54.

their home country. That would be again up to their parents and their adherence to traditions and values they brought.

There is one moment when Dele catches himself missing knowing Nigeria. ““But you must have strong memories about the country too?” ‘No. I’ve never managed to get there, you know!’ He was about to add ‘But I miss it’ but realised it would sound strange to miss a place he’d never visited. He had what somebody once called nostalgia without memory.<sup>85</sup>

Just to sum up, the first crucial aspect having the impact on Dele is his family including Nigerian roots and African values that stress the importance of education. Therefore, another influential aspect is Oxford, a place where he studies.

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<sup>85</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 169.

## 4. Oxford

Oxford is another important place in shaping Dele's identity. It is the education his father has always wanted for him. They both are conscious of the fact that Oxford degree qualifies Dele to be a part of the upper class with a bigger chance to succeed in Britain than the parents.

In Oxford, Dele is very popular and seen as the number one "negro" among the other Black students. "Up here, Dele was what you'd call a Mr Mention\*."<sup>86</sup> He realizes that being black there is an advantage for him as the other students like him and admire him, and therefore he makes use of his ethnicity, which cannot, on the contrary, be accomplished in London. Kelleher proposes that "his position demonstrates the extent to which stereotypes persist and the romanticised visions that especially those outside urban areas have of Black life."<sup>87</sup> However, he soon gets tired of the whites' attitude. His being black, they believe Dele must naturally understand everything Black such as Black culture, music, etc.<sup>88</sup>

There are also other black fellows who are of different upbringings having an impact on Dele's self-consciousness. For example, Tetteh is described as 'the living Supernegro' because his position is much better "with his dad a Ghana's Minister for Transport, mixing in English Society, and his weekend trips to Paris and Geneva for exclusive parties."<sup>89</sup> Or there is Colin, a Bajan boy, adopted by a liberal English couple, pretending to be an English gentleman, and Jonathan, who had probably the most similar West African background to Dele's which befriended them. It is obvious that not in all Black people's company Dele feels comfortable. As Kelleher says, Dele's alienation is enhanced by the other Black students coming from diverse backgrounds.<sup>90</sup>

\* Jamaican word for a man who knows it all

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<sup>86</sup>Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 19.

<sup>87</sup> Fatimah Kelleher, "Concrete Vistas and Dreamtime Peoplescapes: The Rise of the Black Urban Novel in 1990s Britain," in *Write Black, Write British: From Post-Colonial to Black British Literature*, ed. Kadija Sesay (London: Hansib, 2005), 251.

<sup>88</sup> Kelleher, "Concrete Vistas and Dreamtime Peoplescapes: The Rise of the Black Urban Novel in 1990s Britain," 274.

<sup>89</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> Kelleher, "Concrete Vistas and Dreamtime Peoplescapes: The Rise of the Black Urban Novel in 1990s Britain," 251.



Even though they all are of the same race, they have various positions in the British society and it can seem they do not have any need of unity. Nevertheless, in the second year at university, Dele joins the newly set up Black Students Discussion Group which is seen by some of his peers as racist. It supports again the idea of a needful place for discourse although they mostly can think of no problems referring to the race or ethnicity issues, existing in their surroundings. “Folk felt that whatever the problems had been out there, they had overcome them, they must be the crème de la crème.”<sup>91</sup> Referring to co-existence of Africans and Caribbeans, some of his friends from the discussion group drew attention to “myths of integrity of strong African cultures and contrasted that with the Caribs’ lack of coherent identity to explain their minuscule representation there.”<sup>92</sup> However, Dele himself was not convinced that they all marshalled their thoughts about it saying: “But when I checked it, I could barely find a person in the room, myself included, who was truly sorted. Most of them were unreconciled either to their families or to their role here, if any.”<sup>93</sup> Probably, the only thing they were sure about was school because as stated by Dele: “the implications were too troublesome.”<sup>94</sup> There was one astounding situation that is unacceptable for Dele and that is a slave auction student hold every week at university. One would say it is racist but because it was for charity many of Dele’s friends did not mind being sold as slaves for one day. However, Dele took it seriously and with all things going on, he condemned the whole event as “so out of order”.<sup>95</sup>

Relating to ‘black matters’, it is interesting to look at girls’ approach to ‘keeping it just black’. Giving some examples, there was one of Dele’s classmates, Ruby, who was a militant mixed-race girl. On the one hand, supporting a separatist action, albeit she liked being with white boys on the other. “Only nobody took her seriously, as she was known to fling down the cream of European manhood behind closed doors.” They took a stand of being with guys of their race, from their community at best but in fact they were attracted to the opposite. The same case as Dele who was dating white girls too, even though it would not be approved of by his parents. At this point when it comes to his relationships, he is disorganized and enjoys company of many girls. Dele was British born and thus, it was confusing and difficult for him to keep distance from what life in Britain offers and lead Nigerian life instead, the life he has never experienced,

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<sup>91</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 21.

<sup>93</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 21.

<sup>94</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 21.

<sup>95</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 24.

and the same life his father wants his son to follow so much. As Dele admits: “My heart is Nubian, but my dick is international!”<sup>96</sup>

Another place which is far from similar to Oxford is London. The situation in urban areas of the capital city is different and Dele can sense it in many encounters with Londoners even with the authorities, so it is London background that will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>96</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 176.

## 5. London

London is the last place to be mentioned with an impact on Dele's life. It is a place where his family and friends live. The friends who are rather different from those in Oxford. They do not come from the upper-class environment, but they are more urban based and can relate to their communities in contrast to Dele who is not that welcomed. As he soon finds out, it is a different world which has distinctive rules to survive.

Just to outline the background of the 1990s, census records show that ethnic minority groups were concentrated in the urban centres. In London the largest groups consisted of Black Africans and Black Caribbeans.<sup>97</sup> London is a multi-ethnic city but a Black community there is culturally complex and packed with divisions. However, Lynch claims that London is not a melting pot. "The loss of identity is not an option for young Londoners [...] But that does not mean a retreat to the ghetto."<sup>98</sup> People learned to embrace their identity but also found a way how to accept identities of others as in Dele's case. He embraces all his identities and accepts the ones of the other people, nevertheless it does not guarantee him acceptance among people throughout communities. Kelleher proposes, "Dele is a university educated Black man who had mixed substantially with mainly white reality of Oxford, he would never be considered Black enough by the standards of those who continued to live their lives within the worlds of frontline and estate realism."<sup>99</sup> The people in London reckoned Dele as alienated because of the exposure to white folks in Oxford. Thus, London is a place where his blackness does not mean any advantage as in Oxford, on the contrary, it attracts attention of the police and triggers a wave of racism.

Increasing racial tensions between Black and White as well as between state and Black youth which began in the 1970s have its repercussions even in 1993 in a case of Stephen Lawrence who was murdered by a group of white youths in the street as Sesay says, which pointed to the police misconduct and the police corruption. She also remarks that throughout those decades British media were full of images how Black youth is running from the police, showing their

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<sup>97</sup> Kelleher, "Concrete Vistas and Dreamtime Peoplescapes: The Rise of the Black Urban Novel in 1990s Britain," 241.

<sup>98</sup> Lynch, Michael. *An Introduction to Modern British History, 1990–1999*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2001, 218.

<sup>99</sup> Kelleher, "Concrete Vistas and Dreamtime Peoplescapes: The Rise of the Black Urban Novel in 1990s Britain," 251.

resistance.<sup>100</sup> Subsequently, the police racism and brutality resulted in people caring more about their communities.

As a matter of fact, the conflict with authorities is presented even in *SKOB* when Dele and his friends get into a confrontation with the police, more because of their skin colour than anything else. It does not demonstrate only a fight between individuals and authorities, but it includes general public both Black and White. Dele is disgusted and determined to fight back by taking legal action and organizing a march. First, racist tendencies in Britain will be shortly put in context and then the act of racism in *SKOB* will be described to illustrate the true face of racism driven by racial intolerance.

From the historical part it is known that immigration was seen negatively, which resulted in xenophobia and racism in Britain. It is believed that racism in modern Britain can take two forms according to Smyth. An older, biological racism is accompanied by violence and aggression as it happened in the 1960s and 1970s, or the newer, cultural form. The latter form was stressed because many immigrants who came to Britain held their values and did not fully accept British identity, and therefore could not become British citizens.<sup>101</sup> That applies to Dele's parents who with their own (foreign) traditions and values will never be accepted as British citizens. Nevertheless, racism afflicts the second-generation, descendants of immigrants already born in Britain too. The manifestation of racism occurs in Adebayo's work as well where it accounts for the climax of the story itself.

It happens one day when Concrete, Dele and his sister go out and see how policemen towed away Concrete's car. A police officer named Daniels, who is described as "a notorious bandit in the local police's black-pack," is obviously biased against Concrete (from previous encounters when Concrete joined a shady group of the criminally disposed young) and tries to humiliate Concrete. "What's a little delinquent like you doing with a nice vehicle like this, eh? Don't tell me you're a working man now."<sup>102</sup> And because Concrete decides to take possession of his car again, the policeman asks for assistance, saying that there are some suspects, two male and one female, which implies that Daniels immediately includes innocent Dele and Dapo into this unhappy situation. Dapo did not understand why they all were, all of a sudden, suspected, so she tried to justify themselves, that they minded their business. However, PC

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<sup>100</sup> Sandra Courtman, "Blacks in Ivory Towers Can't Write About Ghettos': West Indian Worker Writers in 1970s Britain," in *Write Black, Write British: From Post-Colonial to Black British Literature*, ed. Kadija Sesay (London: Hansib, 2005), 212.

<sup>101</sup> Gerry Smyth, "Ethnicity and language," 224–225.

<sup>102</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 73.

Daniels snarled at her “Shut your face, or I’ll do you too.” Even though, neither did she nor her brother commit any offence, Daniels automatically evaluated Concrete’s company as potentially dangerous. It was done, obviously, in large measure because of their race. One of the policemen, the Chiny PC as he is called, climbed to the truck where Concrete’s car was and Dapo followed him, however, she was stopped by Daniels who again started to affront her and her ‘race’. “I’ve told you once, haven’t I? Don’t your fucking sort ever learn?” Dele was sure they will get justice from the policemen’s boss but that made Daniels even angrier, so he grabbed Dapo and knocked her down on their car. At that moment the called-out team of policemen arrived and bore Dele down to search him. In spite of Dele’s trying to reach Dapo in the police car, he was hit into his head, stunned, and someone stood on his neck. In the end, he was handcuffed. He was too proud to be humiliated like this in front of the local onlookers, so he at least went with his head up. The people knew that this police act was overdone, and they responded with hurling insults at the police. “Police hoo-li-gans! Cho! De bumbaclaaf’ Watch wha’ ouno do with de bredrin, iyah! None o’ dat raasclaat coarseness!”<sup>103</sup> Here the usage of the patois language points out how threatening and serious the proceedings were. Common English would not have such an effect on their resistance.

What followed was that Concrete was badly beaten and bleeding from his temple and wrists. Dele was worried about missing Dapo while being with Concrete in a van together with Daniels who was not stopping insulting and threatening Concrete. Daniels accused Concrete (Avery as Daniels called him) of being in his neighbourhood where he should not be. When they rifled through Dele’s wallet and found out that he is Nigerian, it initiated another wave of insults, this time on account of their ethnicity. ‘You fuckin’ Ni-gerians! You’re all fuckin’ crooks! You think you can get away with anything, don’cha?’<sup>104</sup> While Daniels used brute force, he took advantage of detained suspects to find out who killed Joseph, a Nigerian boy who was murdered in a club. It was most likely gang-related but having weak Dele and Concrete in a car was a great opportunity to accuse them, or at least startle. It gives clear evidence that prejudices among policemen were ubiquitous and that all black people were automatically considered gang members or criminals.

However, their cruelty was not over as they came with ‘bunny-bashing’. They covered Dele and Concrete in blankets in a cowardly way and kept hitting them, then the policemen decided to search Dele and Concrete again. This time they abased themselves to undress the boys

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<sup>103</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 75.

<sup>104</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 77.

forcibly and what was even more humiliating, they made fun of their genitalia. “I thought you boys were supposed to have big dicks. What is it – Linford Christie’s lunch-box\*? I don’t think much of these. Sad, sad.” Daniels uttered.<sup>105</sup> Highlighting racial differences of Black people from White has been popular since these two physically distinct group met. It is generally known that each race has characteristic facial features; nose, eye, head shape; skin colour; body type etc. The flat nose, big lips, dark skin, muscular body type, frizzy thick hair, and enormous sex organs, which they were known for, awakened curiosity on the one hand, and also disgust for some on the other. People feared of the unknown and in defence they exposed and ridiculed the others as in the above-mentioned case.

The whole incident ended up with the police finding two bags of weed and accusing the boys of drug selling and Concrete of assaulting a police officer. What happened to Dapo is even more disturbing. She was beaten with a swelling on her cheek and bruises on her head. Only with the help of a solicitor Dele could see Dapo. She was gurgling and thrashing on the floor with her eyes wide open. Dele told them about her serious medical condition – having sickle-cell anaemia. The police officers stopped laughing after they realized their misconduct and tried to find her bag with medication. Unfortunately, she sank into a coma and this condition of hers made Dele reassess his life and their community in London. “He had been so crazily casual; about Dapo’s health, about London, about life – where bad things happened to black people.”<sup>106</sup> So, he decided to take necessary steps himself thinking about establishing cooperation with some organization. He has been addressed by many social organizations which support families with similar troubles, lead campaigns, or make speeches in favour of black people.

In a process of thinking Dele realizes that when he was in Oxford, he did not think about violence or danger, explaining: “This whole tragedy has been such a vicious shock to me, it’s still difficult to comprehend. [...] But, prior to this, I had spent three years as a protected, privileged student outside London. I mean, er, I think I had got out of touch, or kind of cocooned –.”<sup>107</sup> He can be simply justifying himself, or he is only a twenty-one-year-old naive lad who sees what he wants.

\* Linford Christie was a Jamaican-born British sprinter who wore close-fitting running suits which showed his big private parts, therefore the term ‘lunchbox’ refers to male genitalia.

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<sup>105</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 78.

<sup>106</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 86.

<sup>107</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 91.

London, it is where he becomes conscious of inequalities and differences among people even though it is after the accident and after he is able to compare his experience from Oxford with the one in London. He admits that the place where he grew up, north-east London has changed. He remembers: “There were Asians, Africans, Caribs, Jews, pure Greeks, Cypriots, Orthodox and Reformed Jews, Irish almost everywhere, and a guy could do most things with most people.”<sup>108</sup> Suggesting that people got on well together, but his friend adds that these days London is probably more tribalistic.<sup>109</sup> It might imply that because of all the happenings concerning the problems with authorities, people tend to stick together more within their communities, with people they can trust.

Concerning the community life, Dele was contacted by many organisations and agencies which supported his idea to act, so that the scandal was not concealed. However, it was the parents, at the end, who disapproved of his actions since Dele had decided to arrange a march and another benefit event for Dapo, but his parents thought it would bring shame on their family. Adebayo shares Dele’s father’s opinion, or to be precise, doubts about the way of upbringing his children.

His mistake had been to be too lenient, simply that. He and their mother had spoiled them. Not come down hard enough when they saw them aping vulgar ways; their fooling around, and their music and their more than they thought he knew. When all he asked for them to do was to study. Be humble, study for a little while longer then play as much as they liked.<sup>110</sup>

As a deterrent example he gives a comparison of a life in Africa and a struggle that local children have to get to school: “How often had he told them that cousins their age back home walked miles in their bare feet, stitched sacks, carried and sold them at market, just to get to college? Truly, it was better they were in Africa. But these children thought they were so wise and clever.”<sup>111</sup> If the parents had sent Dele and Dapo back to Africa, the situation could be in the father’s eyes better and their relationships much more relaxed. In addition, their children would respect family values and education as it happened in case of their family acquaintance who was sent back to Nigeria to be re-educated.

Nevertheless, the whole thing went beyond the father’s fears and soon he and his wife realized that they needed to unite to be strong enough so that they sent for members of their extended family to support them. In the end, it is obvious that Dapo’s hospitalization made Dele review

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<sup>108</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 104.

<sup>109</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 104.

<sup>110</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 112.

<sup>111</sup> Adebayo. *Some Kind of Black*, 112–113.

his life and values he had had so far. It made him realize the importance of his community and family.

There is also another element contributing to Dele's self-discovery and that is "relationships." Dele has experienced a lot of new friendships, or better sexual encounters, but most importantly his relationship with Andria leads him to the realization of many differences between their black and white worlds.

Andria is a young and spontaneous girl, necessary to say white, who catches Dele's attention. When he is trying to impress her, the first thing he starts with is about Nigerians: "Only if all the black guys you know are rudebwoys and roughnecks. I'm an educated Nigerian. There are loads of us around. Ask your friends about their briefs, and they'll tell you I speak the truth."<sup>112</sup> One could sense that Dele's fighting racial bigotry and hinting that because he is black and Nigerian, it does not mean he is as the other guys she might know. Her response shows bias against them anyway: "Nigerian, yeah? You can't say nothing to me about Nigerians. I know what you're like!"<sup>113</sup> But since that everything was very good between them. She was even received into his family and they took a liking to her.

As the time went by, Dele began to notice differences. One was that Dele had his Oxford degree and thus was part of the upper class, but Andria was only a working-class girl. Because of that accident with the police and Dapo, he speculated about Andria because she symbolizes the white community. The same community which caused Dapo's ill treatment and gave their parents a hard time when they had arrived in Britain. It could be the situation itself which made him think like that or the drugs he was more often on. In any case, it occurred to him that no certificate or diploma will change the attitude of others. He will always be treated by the people with racist inclination in the same way as the other black people.

But he was angry and confused, and he could not tell whether Andria had something to do with it. [...] He hated the police and the system and all those white things and didn't know where Andria fitted in all that. She wasn't rich, she wasn't even middle-class [...] Were their differences more important than what they had in common? [...] He, the Oxbridge man, was more established than she and yet what had befallen Dapo, and his parents in other ways, assured him that mere papers counted for little. [...] And again, he did not know where Andria made sense in all of that [...]<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 140.

<sup>113</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 140.

<sup>114</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 185.



Another problem is the combination of black and white attracts unwanted attention. They can see it soon after experiencing two incidents contributing to the end of their romantic affair. The first incident happened when they were standing at the bus stop and a Caribbean in late twenties approached them, grabbed Andria and threw her against the wall. When Dele stepped in, the man pulled out a knife but then he left. They came to the conclusion it was an act of racial hatred. Second, they were at the station, in primarily white peoples' company with only one black Moroccan male, when the Francophone African started shouting "Niggers! Niggers!" addressing the couple, Dele and Andria, "Look at your white pussy! Yes, that's right. Enjoy it! You think you've achieved something? You think you're so great?"<sup>115</sup> Dele got nervous and for the reason that he was publicly ashamed, he hesitated whether to interfere or not. In the end, Dele disabled the man still not understanding why the man gave him a superior look. People reacted showing their sympathy, but that made Dele angry even more. Being with a white girl and protecting her in the way he did, people considered him to be one of them (white) and he highly disapproved of this attitude. These small incidents just cast doubt on their relationship, so that he decided to take a break. Surprisingly, the biggest rejection came from the black people not white as would have been expected.

Dele's explanation is clearly given in the following extract showing that he cannot and does not want to identify himself with the white community as they are the reason why Dele's family has been suffering. In the end Dele seems to be incapable of further finding himself so he leaves it.

He couldn't stand the vulnerability their affair made him feel; the sense that the power of judgement hung over him when he was with her, ready to be wielded by any man, jack, black or white, on the street. And when white people let on to him when he was with her, making overtures, happy to see him basking in the mainstream, it made it worse. He found it harder to disentangle Andria from the people out there. These people that had produced one big humiliation for his family, and who knew how many small humiliations had escaped his knowledge, beginning with his father in his schooldays. And all that just set him thinking about Oxford again – just thinking about it made him feel faint. He just wanted to draw a fat red line under that whole period. [...] He wanted no intimate connection with those people anymore. It should just be strictly business from now on. [...] He felt under increasing pressure from most of his words to find a woman who befitted him. He couldn't square the circle. He had always been some kind of black.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 187–190.

<sup>116</sup> Adebayo, *Some Kind of Black*, 190.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to analyse the novel, *Some Kind of Black*, with regard to the second-generation identity formation of the protagonist Dele. The theory of essentialism was also examined as part of the analysis with reference to Nigerians.

The first chapter provided the historical and cultural background beginning with the year 1948, marking the arrival of Afro-Caribbean people (the so-called proximal host) who have an impact on newly emerging subcultures as well as arriving Africans who set up their communities in Britain. Cultural and racial differences are outlined as they result in bigotry of British citizens and race riots. It caused that people tended to group into communities. As the latest happenings for this work institutional racism is mentioned because it is represented by the confrontation with the police in the novel *SKOB*.

In the second chapter, the term identity and its development were described. At first it was suggested that identity consists of characteristic features and attributes obtained by being a part of various social groups. That was demonstrated in the following chapters that focus on three different backgrounds having impact on Dele's identity formation – Nigerian family background, Oxford and London while being influenced by the proximal hosts.

Therefore, in the third chapter, where the influence of his family and Nigerian roots is addressed, Dele's confusion about British and Nigerian identity perception is put in contrast to his dad's requirements and expectations that are embedded in the essentialism.

The fourth chapter is about Dele's studies in Oxford. The degree he receives enables his social upward mobility. On the other hand, it is the reason why Dele is not accepted in London. It makes him distinct from the other black working or middle-class people. Oxford and meeting or being friends with white population blackened his reputation.

In the fifth chapter, London is the last influential location described in connection with Dele's identity. It is suggested that London is not a melting pot, but people from various communities embrace their identities and accept identities of others. The same does the protagonist Dele. With the help of his friend Andria and because of racially oriented attacks even by the police, Dele realizes that it is better to be mindful of his family and community where he is among his people since the white people have not brought anything good to them. Thus, he evolves from

a young man distancing himself from the family, unsure about his identity into a young man with a stronger attachment to his family and community.

## 7. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá vnímáním britské černošské identity a teorií esencialismu v díle *Some Kind of Black* od spisovatele Dirana Adebaya.

V úvodu práce je představen děj primární knihy, jelikož se jedná o současné dílo a dějově ne zcela známé. Dále je krátce představen i sám autor, který je následně zařazen do literárního a teoretického kontextu. Bakalářská práce je rozdělena na teoretickou část, která obsahuje historicko-kulturní charakteristiku zaměřenou především na černošskou imigrační problematiku, a také charakteristiku identity a vývoj jejího chápání. Praktická část je založena na analýze několika aspektů, přesněji prostředí (rodina a vliv esencialismu, Oxford, Londýn) ovlivňující utváření identity mladého člověka z rodiny nigerijských imigrantů, v tomto případě hlavního protagonisty primárního díla *Some Kind of Black*, Dela.

Spisovatel Diran Adebayo se narodil v roce 1968 nigerijským imigrantům a představuje tak druhou generaci černošů v Británii. V literárním kontextu ho lze zařadit k zástupcům postkoloniální a menšinové literatury. Tato literatura se zabývá hlavně problémy spojenými s dekolonizací, utvářením nových identit, osvojením si nových tradic a zvyklostí v diasporách vzniklých v Británii po rozpadu Britského impéria a následným střetáváním se s odlišnými hodnotami a kulturou místních obyvatel.

Dílo *Some Kind of Black* se zaměřuje na otázku identity mladistvých, zde především hlavního protagonisty Dela jako potomka imigrantů, který se snaží najít sám sebe, zatímco na něho působí několik velice různorodých prostředí mající vliv na utváření jeho identity, a to i za neustálého ovlivňování tzv. proximal hosts, v tomto kontextu lidmi karibského původu. Ti v Británii představují důležitou menšinu mezi ostatními menšinami afrického původu. Prvním prostředím utvářející jeho identitu je jeho domov a vliv nigerijských kořenů, který je zastoupen rodiči, především autoritativním otcem. Dále je to Oxford, kde Dele studuje a střetává se tak i s bílou „smetánkou“. Posledním místem je Londýn, jeho rodné město, kde má rodinu i přátele. Na druhé straně je to místo, kde se dostává do konfrontace s policií a také se stává terčem rasistických urážek a útoků.

První kapitola přibližuje historické a kulturní pozadí. Ačkoliv příchod černošů do Británie sahá daleko do historie, pro tuto práci je milníkem rok 1948. Ten označuje příjezd lodi *The Empire Windrush*, která přivezla stovky imigrantů ze Západní Indie do Británie a započala tak přeměnu konzervativní Británie na zemi multikulturní a multirasovou. I přesto, že byli do

Británie pozváni jako pomocná síla, jejich příchod způsobil obavy britských občanů a také zvyšující se zločinnost. Následující roky se tudíž nesly v duchu legislativních opatření. Například v roce 1948 vešel v platnost občanský zákon, který každému občanovi Spojeného království a jeho bývalých kolonií udělil statut britského subjektu nebo statut občana Commonwealthu. To umožnilo mnoha lidem začít nový život v Británii, aniž by někdo zpochybňoval jejich práva, což se projevovalo i na nepochybování o své identitě. Na druhou stranu britští občané nabývali na znepokojenosti a stupňovaly se rasově zaměřené útoky, jež jsou pro geograficky izolovanou a společensky konzervativní zemi typické. Padesátá a šedesátá léta 20. století jsou známa veřejnými nepokoji v Notting Hill, rostoucí nevraživostí mezi subkulturami a kvůli rostoucí imigraci novými zákony i nenávistnými projevy. Tím byla například řeč Enocha Powella *O proudech krve*, hlásající, že „ne-bílí“ občané se nikdy nepřizpůsobí a neintegrují do britské společnosti. V následujících 70. a 80. letech přišla další vlna rasismu, tentokrát ze strany autorit, především policie, což vyústilo vážnými nepokoji po celém městě – v Londýně primárně v Brixtonu.

Hlavní problematikou této práce je již zmíněná identita. A co to vlastně ta identita je? Někteří ji rozdělují na společenskou a osobní, ve výsledku se dá vymezit jako kombinace obou. Jsou to znaky a rysy, společenské vztahy, role a členství v různých sociálních skupinách, které definují, kdo jedinec je. Zjistit odpověď lze položením otázky: „Kdo jsi?“ V případě hlavního protagonisty Dela lze říci: Jsem student, syn, bratr, černoch, Nigerijec, britský černoch. I když některé výpovědi právě záleží na něm samém, čím a kým se sám cítí být. Pokud pro něho bude důležitější fakt, že je rozený Brit, řekne: „Jsem Brit.“, pokud bude přičítat důležitost kořenům (které zná jen skrze rodiče), může prohlásit: „Jsem Afro-Brit/Nigerijec/Afričan.“ a tak dále.

V kapitole o identitě je zahrnut i vývoj tohoto termínu, jelikož se identita stále vyvíjí. První vnímání identit bylo spojováno se zařazením do sociálních tříd, především s dělnickou třídou. Postupem času si lidé začali všimnout dalších aspektů, a tak se zrodily nové kategorie: rasa, pohlaví, etnikum, věk nebo sexualita. Dále tato kapitola řeší vztah identity a subkultur.

Během let existovaly tendence, které se snažily najít mezi zástupci jednotlivých skupin stejnorodost neboli esenci, která by všechny spojovala. Například právě u dělnické třídy se ukázalo, že se lidé dále spojují do tzv. subkultur. I v případě hlavního protagonisty Dela lze vidět, že si ve škole hledá kamarády podle společných zájmů nebo alespoň podobného původu. A odtahuje se od spolužáků, kteří jsou popisováni jako potomci majetných nebo jinak dobře společensky postavených rodičů. Zásadní subkulturou mající vliv jednak na Dela, tak i na vznik

britských subkultur, je afro-karibské rastafariánství. To je spojené i s vlivem černošského obyvatelstva původem z Karibiku na ostatní africké komunity v Británii ukazující na značné rozdíly a problematické soužití ve vzájemné blízkosti. Sám Dele přiznal, že si většina hrála na Jamajčany, protože už jako děti cítily, že splynutí s dominantnější menšinou bylo lepší a v mnoha ohledech bezpečnější.

Další kapitoly se pak už konkrétně zaměřují na jednotlivé aspekty, přesněji prostředí, která se podílejí na utváření identity hlavní postavy v díle *Some Kind of Black*.

Kapitola třetí pojednává o vlivu rodiny, a to hlavně Delova otce, jenž má vysoké nároky na Dela i jeho sestru Dapo. Značný vliv představuje i nigerijský původ rodiny. Ten je tu zastoupen rodiči. Avšak pro děti, které jsou narozené v Británii, Nigerie představuje hodnoty, podle kterých je rodiče vychovávají. Jednou z těchto hodnot je vzdělání. Vzdělání je obecně pro Nigerijce zásadní a hovoří o tom i čísla průzkumů. Především jih Nigerie, který je primárně křesťanský, se vyznačuje značně vyšší úrovní vzdělání, proto právě tito lidé jsou nejčastějšími přistěhovalci v západních demokratických zemích Evropy. Vzdělání je tudíž důležitou hodnotou pro Nigerijce, což se odráží v primárním díle na studiích Dela v Londýně a Oxfordu a otcově starosti, aby syn nezanedbával školu. Část této kapitoly se proto věnuje tzv. esencialismu, který tvrdí, že všechny věci mají svou vlastní esenci, která dělá věc právě tou věcí, kterou je. To samé platí na člověka nebo skupinu lidí. Jako příklad jsou uvedeni černoši (v tomto díle Nigerijci), u kterých je zdůrazněna neměnná identita a cosi inherentního (vlastního), co je společné pro všechny z dané etnické komunity. Esencí je zde tedy např. zmíněné vzdělání.

Čtvrtá kapitola je o Oxfordu, místě, kde Dele studuje na univerzitě a začleňuje se tak mezi bílou elitu, která ho mezi sebe vítá, a i mezi spolužáky je za hvězdu. Tím, že je černoš, vzbuzuje zaujetí u ostatních a mnozí ho považují za černocha představující typické znaky a hodnoty černošské komunity. Jde tedy znovu o myšlenku esencialismu. Oxford je pro Dela a jeho rodinu vidinou lepší budoucnosti. Řeší se zde také reprezentace černošských studentů a jejich strasti spojené s identitou. Poslední část této kapitoly reaguje na teorii esencialismu. Ve spojitosti se sebepoznávání se a vztahů se ukazuje, že esencialismus ustupuje do pozadí, když se jednotlivé rasy navzájem střetávají a projevuje se oboustranná sympatie.

V kapitole páté je rozebráno poslední, třetí místo, které má značný vliv na formování Delovy identity, a tím je Londýn. Je to místo, kde se soustřeďují největší skupiny afrických a karibských černošů. I přesto, že je Londýn multietnický, černošská komunita je kulturně komplexní a plná dalších dílčích skupin. Nicméně, jak se ukázalo, nejedná se o tak zvaný melting pot, tedy o

případ, kdy se z heterogenní společnosti stává homogenní a jednotlivé rozdílné prvky se spojují v jeden celek. Naopak, lidé se naučili osvojit si vlastní identitu a zároveň přijmou identity ostatních. O to samé se snaží i Dele, ačkoliv mu to nezaručuje, že bude i on přijat ostatními. V Oxfordu mu to vycházelo a svého společenského postavení mohl využívat, ale v Londýně tomu tak není, jelikož je lidmi z komunit spatřován jako ten, jenž se zapletl s bílou sortou lidí.

Další problematikou, které se tato část věnuje, je rasismus a střet s autoritami. S rasismem se nejdříve setkali Delovi rodiče, kteří si přinesli své nigerijské tradice a hodnoty a nepřijali tak naplno britskou identitu; proto nebudou nikdy považováni za právoplatné britské občany. Nicméně i Dele, který je rozený Brit, se s rasismem setkává, a to ze strany policie. Výsledkem nepatřičného zacházení se zajatým Delem, jeho sestrou Dapo a kamarádem Concretem je zhoršení zdravotního stavu jeho sestry a následného upadnutí do kómatu. Jako reakci upozorňující na tuto záležitost s autoritou se Dele obrací na dříve zavrhané komunity a snaží se získat jejich podporu i při pořádání benefiční akce. V této situaci si také uvědomuje, jak v Oxfordu jako chráněný a privilegovaný student rychle zapomněl na nebezpečnou realitu Londýna.

Tato kapitola je také zaměřena na Delovo sebeuvědomění se, které je spjaté se vztahy. Důležitou roli zde hraje Andria, která i přes všechny dobré chvíle, které spolu oba zažili, vzbuzuje v Delovi hned několik nejistot a otázek. Také mu dochází rozdíly mezi světem „bílých a černých“. První rozdíl spatřuje při dvou náhodných incidentech, kdy jsou Dele s Andriou napadeni nebo uráženi na základě rasové odlišnosti. Dalším rozdílem je zařazení do společenských tříd, kde titul z Oxfordu umožňuje Delovi vstoupit do elitní, vyšší společenské třídy, avšak Andria, ta představuje třídu dělnickou. Navíc po střetu s policií Dele začíná spekulovat i o Andrie, protože zastupuje bělošskou komunitu, tu stejnou komunitu, která dostala Dapo do kómatu a která ztrpčovala život jejich rodičů po příjezdu do Londýna. Uvědomuje si, že v souvislosti s rasismem téměř vůbec nezáleží na dosaženém vzdělání. Titul v tomto případě moc neznamená. Ve výsledku se rozhodne dát svému vztahu s Andriou pauzu. Co se týče hledání sám sebe, zdá se, že prozatím rezignuje.

Výsledkem této práce je tedy zjištění, že na tvorbě identity se může podílet hned několik aspektů a míst. V případě Dela, představitele druhé generace Nigerijců, je to rodina, která představuje zároveň nigerijské kořeny, dále Oxford a Londýn. V Oxfordu, místě jeho studií, důležitým pro Delovu „lepší“ budoucnost, na jeho identitu působí zástupci bílé většiny z vyšších společenských tříd. V Londýně jsou to kamarádi pocházející z obdobného prostředí,

dále pak i negativní vlivy: problematické přijetí komunitou, rasisticky orientovaný zásah policie a vztah s běloškou připomínající mu bílou komunitu, která způsobila jeho rodině všechny nepříjemnosti. To vše v mladém člověku vyvolává nechuť se jakkoli dál zaobírat sebou samým a nad vším rezignuje. Nejspíš je jen otázkou času, kdy toto období přejde a Dele znovu začne pátrat nad svým „Já“ a ptát se: „Kdo vlastně jsem?“



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