# The University Of Sheffield.

'They are fighting against them, it's a battle':

A critical study examining the schooling experience of Black Caribbean boys in English state schools, from the perspectives of their mothers

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## Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Brothers, Ryan Anthony and Paul Roosevelt. Stole at such tender ages, I realise that you were only guests in my story, but your memory lives on in the stories I pass on to others.

# Acknowledgements

*'Friends' are the family we choose'*

## *My sista's*

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the mothers for their participation. I sincerely appreciate the fact that they trusted me with their stories about the most precious people in their lives, their children. I am thankful for the time they dedicated to this study as without them it would not have been possible.

### *'A teacher affects eternity, they can never tell where their influence stops'*

I am eternally grateful to Dr Anita Franklin. You always believed in me, even when I doubted myself, your guidance, skill and understanding helped to turn my flicker into a flame.

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### *'Family is a link to our past and a bridge to our future, where life begins and love never ends'*

I want to thank my mum, Sheila Ward. I watched you continually fight to protect us, you instilled that fight in me, much of which rests in this work. Thank you for the unconditional love, care and support that you have given me throughout my life.

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To my children, Anthony and Elise, you are my inspiration and my greatest treasure. You have given me encouragement, drive and purpose. I love you more than you can ever imagine. Continue to follow your dreams.

*'For those who fill a space in your heart that you never knew was empty'*

*My grandchildren-Amaya-Rose and K'marni*

What I do today is with the intention and hope of creating better tomorrows.

## Declaration

*I, Adele Lisa Ward, confirm that the Thesis is my own work. I am aware of the University's Guidance on the Use of Unfair Means ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means](www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/unfair-means)). This work has not been previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university.*

**Abstract**

This thesis is an interpretative study which provides a critical account and analysis of the experiences of Black Caribbean boys in the English state schooling system, from the perspectives of their mothers. It employs Critical Race Theory (CRT) to provide a counter-narrative to dominant stories which portray pathological and deficit discourses. The educational disadvantage of Black Caribbean pupils in English schools has been a persistent concern for Black Caribbean parents, community and policy makers from the 1950's onwards. There have been moments of optimism in relation to the attention afforded to race equality, much of which is due to the concerted efforts of Black Caribbean parents, community activists and race conscious educationalists. However, the lack of political will to create educational equity is evident in the de-prioritising of race in education, as a consequence of the deracialisation of education policy and a colour-blind narrative and approach in schools, which has led to entrenched institutional racism in the 21st century.

Despite substantial evidence identifying that the low attainment and underperformance of Black Caribbean pupils, especially boys, is located in institutional and structural racism, ascribing Black Caribbean boys' underachievement to a deficit model prevails. The deficit model considers family structures, especially lone mothers, and an alleged parental lack of interest and involvement in their child/ren's education, as causative to Black Caribbean pupils' underachievement. Schools tend to view parental involvement based on particular types of leadership roles, such as involvement in PTA meetings and representation on governing bodies or activities. These are school centric and, Lawson (2003) argues, designed to fulfil the perceived mission of the school, based on White middle-class beliefs and values. Evidence shows, however, that when Black parents try to intervene on behalf of their children they are often marginalised and dismissed by schools (Crozier 1996; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Rollock et al. 2015; Wright et al. 2000).

Through the mothers' experiences of supporting their sons through school I illuminate significant factors relating to educational disadvantage. Informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) I recognise that racism is endemic in society and focus on the centrality of race in education. Guided by CRT, the research values the experiential knowledge and voice of five Black Caribbean mothers, exploring their experiences of supporting their sons through the English schooling system. I conducted three focus group sessions with this group of mothers. In this thesis I argue that their contributions are crucial because their voices are often

excluded from educational research (Rhamie 2012), but their interactions with their sons' schools and teachers was a crucial factor in their sons' educational achievement.

Themes identified in the thesis include teachers' underestimation of Black Caribbean boys' academic ability, thus resulting in placement in lower curriculum sets and exam papers. It reveals the complex intersections of race and SEN, and perceptions of Black boys as aggressive. These mirror the findings from literature surrounding the thesis. The findings illuminate the importance and necessity of the concerted efforts of Black Caribbean parents for involvement, to enable positive educational outcomes for their sons. This may in turn indicate the importance of developing and establishing formal parent networking groups at a local, regional, national and global level, as a means of supporting each other as they battle to support their child/ren through an education system that is flawed with inequalities.

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# Glossary of Terms

The following terms and abbreviations have been used throughout this thesis:

| Term | Definition |
|------|-----------|
| BESD | Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties |
| Black Caribbean | People of black Caribbean heritage who have at least one parent from the Caribbean Diaspora and have an ancestry in slavery |
| BLM | Black Lives Matter: A global movement for racial justice |
| BPM | Black parent's movement |
| CARD | Campaign Against Racial Discrimination |
| CECWA | Caribbean Education and Community Workers Association |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| CJS | Criminal Justice System |
| CLS | Critical Legal Studies |
| CRE | Commission for Racial Equality |
| CRT | Critical Race Theory |
| CSA | Child Support Agency |
| DfES | Department for Education and Science |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| EBac | English Baccalaureate: School performance indicator which measures student's attainment by calculating an average score from all achieved grades for subjects within the EBac |
| ESN | Educationally Subnormal |

| | |
|---|---|
| IQ testing | Intelligence Quotient: assessment that measures a range of cognitive abilities and provides a score |
| ITE | Initial Teacher Education |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| MLD | Mild Learning Difficulties |
| NEO LIBERAL POLITICS | Individual choice exercised within a system of economic market exchange rather than collective political decision making through an interventionist state |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| PREVENT | Government strategy to prevent people becoming involved in extremism |
| PTA | Parent Teacher Association |
| SCORRI | Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration |
| SEN | Special Educational Need |
| Supplementary schools | Informal schools set up by black parents and community activists to fight back against racism and inequalities in mainstream schools |
| Third Way | A political philosophy in the UK akin to centrism that attempts to reconcile right wing and left-wing politics |
| Windrush era | People arriving from the Caribbean from 1948 following the docking of the SS Empire Windrush |

**Chapter 1. Introduction**

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of Black Caribbean boys in mainstream schools in a post-industrial city in the north of England, based on the perspectives of their mothers, whose voices have been marginal in the educational debate (McKenley 2001). Through the accounts of mothers' experience of supporting their sons during their compulsory education, it takes a critical approach to exploring how 'race' and ethnicity continues to place boys of Black Caribbean heritage in a disadvantaged position. I explore how teachers' bias, conscious or unconscious, affects in-school factors which in turn have the potential to limit Black Caribbean boys' chances of educational success. I consider how a colour-blind approach within educational policy and discourse allows race to become incidental to other explanations of the underachievement of Black Caribbean boys and reinforces the deficit model of thinking.

The persistent disadvantages facing Black Caribbean pupils in English schools are widely acknowledged. There is substantial evidence that the problem is located in institutional and structural racism (Coard 1971, Gillborn 2005, 2008, Gillborn & Gipps 1996; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Gillborn & Mirza 2000; Macpherson Report 1999; Richardson 2005; Rollock et al 2015, Wright 2010). Research identifies a deficit model which culturally pathologises Black educational underachievement by ascribing it to, "inter alia deficits, cultural differences and family practices" (Wright 2013, p.88). The deficit model applied to Black Caribbean pupils, especially boys, extends to their involvement in what is portrayed as a negative type of culture, based on notions of hyper-masculinity, which motivates Black boys into gangs (Gunter 2008). Such views lead to negative stereotypes of Black Caribbean boys, based on notions of Black masculinities and Black subcultures as powerful. Thus, schooling experiences are informed and shaped in particular ways, and play a significant part in relationships between Black boys and their teachers (Wright et al 1998, 2016). Poor family structures, including single mother households and father deficit are regarded as causative (Sewell 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2018).

The deficit model thus contributes to the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils, boys in particular. It follows that Black children are regarded as a problem that needs to be managed, which Wright (2013) contends is reflected in historical and contemporary social policy. For example, social policy initiatives have adopted assimilation approaches, and

more recently a colour-blind approach which has involved the de-racialising of educational policy and discourse. Although there have been moments of optimism in policy and legislative developments to address racial disadvantage and create fairness and equity for all, so far these have proved ineffective. In relation to education, Tomlinson (2008) has argued that the long-standing inequities facing Black pupils arise because of the lack of political will to ensure that all groups are treated fairly. Any serious consideration that has been given to addressing racial disadvantage in the U.K, has tended to be a result of the concerted efforts from the Black Caribbean community.

Although some Black Caribbean pupils do achieve academically and enter into higher education (Channer 1995, Rhamie 2007) "the overwhelming picture is of a negative experience" (Crozier 2005, p. 586). While racism in schools impacts on Black boys and girls, this occurs in differing ways. Wright et al. (1998) argue that the gendered nature of racism is "particularly pronounced within education" (p.76). This is seen in the higher achievement levels of Black girls compared with their male counterparts (Mirza 1992) and the view that girls are more manageable and therefore not seen as a physical threat (Rollock 2007). The underachievement of Black Caribbean boys has been stereotypically attributed to pathological images of the Black Caribbean family, especially the notion of the lone mother, which has become part of a common-sense discourse (Reynolds 2005). Further to this, Rollock et al. (2015) highlight how stereotypical assumptions regard the Black Caribbean family as "deficient, uninterested and uninvolved in their children's education" (p.2).

In contrast, this study employs an interpretive paradigm, conducting three focus group sessions between 11th June and 17th July 2016, with five mothers, who like me define themselves as Black Caribbean[1]. It presents a critical account and analysis of the experiences of Black Caribbean boys in the English schooling system, based on the perspectives of their mothers, whose voices have been marginal in the educational debate (McKenley 2001). The theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) supports such an approach which I elaborate on in section 2.2. CRT provides a critical lens to expose the failings of the deficit model, through providing a counter-narrative to the majoritarian stories based on pathological

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[1] An issue facing those thinking or exploring race and ethnicity is the many different definitions used, some of which have been problematic (Demie & McLean 2017) and have shifted over time (Phoenix & Hussain 2007). In educational literature different terms are used to describe people of Caribbean heritage. These include, West Indian, Afro Caribbean, African Caribbean, Black and Black Caribbean. People of mixed parentage and whether they are considered Black can be a contentious issue. For the purpose of this study, I refer to people of Caribbean heritage as Black Caribbean or Black, this includes individuals who have at least one parent from the Caribbean Diaspora and have an ancestry in enslavement.

deficiency models. Such models place the onus of underachievement on the individual child, community and family and have the effect of deflecting the causes of Black boys' underachievement from schools, its institutional actors and the education system more widely.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce my research project and set out the scope of my study. I outline the factors that led to examining the underachievement of Black Caribbean boys from the perspective of their mothers. I begin by exploring the context of the Black Caribbean community in England from the Windrush era and consider the rise of indigenous racism. Following this I outline the stereotypes and misconceptions that are powerful in limiting Black boys' academic success in schools. The last section of this chapter gives a brief outline of the rest of the thesis.

## 1.1. Context

To facilitate an understanding of the disadvantages faced by Black people in Britain it is necessary to explore how mainstream views of them have been constructed. This section examines how Black Caribbean people have been viewed as the problem associated with the rise of racism from the late 1940's. It also highlights responses from the Black Caribbean community that have helped shape policy and resist the inequities brought about by the State and British society more widely.

Whilst much focus is given to Britain's relations with people from the Caribbean following the Second World War, Hall (1978) and Olusoga (2016) highlight that relations with people from the Caribbean do not solely belong to the 1940's. As Fryer (1984) asserts Black people in Britain can be traced back over 500 years. Britain's involvement in the slave trade led to thousands of Black people living in cities throughout England (Channer 1995). This thesis, however, is particularly concerned with the first generation of Black Caribbean people who arrived and settled in Britain during the late 1940's onwards, following the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks in 1948 (Phillips and Phillips 1998).

The arrival of colonial subjects settling in Britain to a large extent was at the invitation of employers to take up surplus work that indigenous workers vacated or as Gilroy (2006) contends, to do the dirty tasks that the indigenous workers no longer wanted to do. Either

way, it was clear following the destruction during World War II there was a shortage of labour for the reconstruction work (Phillips & Phillips 1998). Employment in Britain was not only viewed as an economic opportunity but, given their high regard for education, Caribbean parents believed Britain would enrich their children's educational prospects, thus enhancing their future economic mobility (Channer 1995).

The loss of the imperial British Empire created in Britain a kind of cultural depression arising from the traumatic adjustment of bringing the empire to an end. Post-war guilt and deep resentment are no longer able to be expressed in forms of popular imperialism and have given way to new forms of racism within national boundaries (Anderson 1983). Gilroy (2006) argues that the two specific triggers fuelling British racism towards Black Caribbean people from Britain's former Caribbean colonies post-Windrush, related to economic crisis and to psychological trauma. He contends that the political and economic consequences of the loss of Britain's empire, and the impact on British culture and identity that went along with it, were compounded by the arrival of the post-war settler population and their second-generation descendants who were perceived as uncomfortable reminders of the history of empire. This, combined with industrial economic decline, led to the rise of indigenous racism of the 1950's and 60's onwards (ibid). This, however, is not to suggest that racism was not prevalent prior to the Windrush era, but as Phillips and Phillips (1998) suggest, the arrival of increasing numbers of Black people from former colonies from the late 1940's is when the problem became widely identified.

People arrived from the Caribbean in the post-war period at which time the UK had an established white underclass, many Black migrants settled in areas where that underclass lived. People from the Caribbean faced extreme hostility from sectors of the white indigenous population. Sivanandan (1976) argues that Black immigrant workers were blamed for creating what were considered to be 'ghettos' and causes of social and economic problems. This perception made them more undesirable in the eyes of sections of the White working and underclass. A housing shortage (which was made worse by the fact that many proprietors refused to rent to Black people due to racial prejudice), in addition to the fact that Black workers from former colonies were forced to accept low status and low paid jobs regardless of their qualifications or previous experience were crucial factors leading to hostility. Many of the low skilled jobs that Caribbean workers were employed in, included factories, transport and the hospitality industry, located in already overcrowded conurbations. These combined

factors resulted in many Black immigrants becoming "ghettoized and locked into the decaying areas of the inner city" (ibid. p.349).

Racial discrimination in social and economic life were not the only problems that Black Caribbean people faced.  As Clayton (2012) and Debrowlsky (2010) highlight, violent racial clashes in Nottingham and London's Notting Hill during the summer of 1958, which were attacks on Black citizens by Whites, exposed the development of open and emergent racism in the form of an active fascist element, at which point the link between unrestricted commonwealth migration and a race problem was made.  The media and the press were powerful in applying racialization as the product of the disturbances and other social problems at that time, making reference to Black people being 'welfare scroungers' (Gilroy 1987), which garnered White public angst.  Labour and Conservative governments could no longer ignore the race relations problems which paved the way for successive legislation to limit immigration. This marks the interconnectedness of race politics of the inner city, with statutory law. At which point the wheels of contemporary British racism starts to turn (Hall, 1978, Gilroy, 1987, Braham et al, 1992, 2006, Clayton, 2012).

### *The Commonwealth and Immigration Acts of the 1960s and 1970s and the rise of Black activism*

The legal framework controlling the flow of Black Caribbean populations to Britain is structured by the Commonwealth and Immigration Acts of 1962, 1968 and 1971.  Implicit in the provisions of the legislation was to prevent the arrival of further non-White British citizens, as the acts were "intended to limit the entry of black first immigrants and their families" (Debrowlsky 2005, p.21).  Clayton (2012) reports that during the implementation of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962, "it was made clear by internal guidance that the discretion given to immigration officers to refuse entry on the basis that requirements were not met, would not be applied in practice to immigrants from Canada, Australia or New Zealand…The system of control that was established therefore discriminated at two levels against black would-be entrants" (p.11).  Supporting both Debrowlsky (2005) and Clayton (2008), Gilroy (1987) argues that the Acts "codified this cultural biology of race into statute law as part of a strategy for the exclusion of black settlers" (p.45).

Subject to racism in social, economic and political life in Britain, it was necessary for Black Caribbean people to organise themselves in resistance to racial discrimination (Sivanandan 1976). One illustration of formal collectivism during the early 1960's was The Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD). This group is one example to illustrate the level of formal collective activism organised to eliminate racial discrimination in many areas of British society (Sivanandan1976). Although formal organisations such as CARD were crucial in the fight against racial injustice, especially in resisting and highlighting inequalities in immigration policy (Gilroy 2006), it is argued that informal spontaneous responses against racial discrimination were equally, if not more important than the State's response to injustice. For example, violent street clashes between Black and Whites in Notting Hill and Nottingham led to the implementation of the 1965 Race Relations Act. The uprisings that took place during the 1980's were also significant in fighting against institutional and structural racism (Long 2018; Phillips & Phillips 1998; Scarman 1981).

The persistent struggle of school disadvantage facing Black Caribbean pupils, who entered the English schooling system in increasing numbers in the 1950's, which at that time was biased by social class and then became racialised (Tomlinson 2008) has been a significant feature of Black community life (Andrews 2013). This has led to the Black Caribbean community engaging with and working in a range of collective strategies to improve Black pupils' educational attainment through resisting racism in schools. The North London West Indian Parents Association initiated in the late 1960's was particularly active in campaigns against local authorities in opposing the overt racist practices contained within IQ testing and making a number of proposals for better education of Black Caribbean children in England (Sivanandan 1982). Other organisations included The Black Parents Movement (BPM) initiated in 1975 which involved campaigning for social justice in education and combating police brutality against the Black Caribbean community. The Caribbean Education and Community Workers Association (CECWA), was a collective of Black parents and community activists who commissioned Bernard Coard to write his seminal text, *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System* which was crucial to mass resistance against educational inequality (Andrews 2013; Channer 1995).

In his polemic work, Coard (1971) argued that teachers' low expectations of Black Caribbean pupils were having a profound effect on Black children's confidence and motivation "thus dooming them to a life of underachievement" (Demie & McLean 2017, p.1). Coard urged

parents and the wider Caribbean community to be active in Black children's education at both the individual (being visible at the children's schools) and collective level (alternative provisions such as supplementary schools) as both were necessary to building the self-esteem and confidence of Black Caribbean children. "Our children need to have a sense of identity, pride and belonging, as well as mental stimulation so that they do not end up hating themselves and their race and being dumped in ESN (Educational Subnormal) schools. Pride and self-confidence are the best armour against the prejudice and humiliating experiences which they will certainly face in school and in society (Coard 1971, p. 39). Black Caribbean pupils have been attending English schools in mass numbers since the 1950's, some are now third and fourth generations. It is of concern that supplementary schools still need to exist, over 50 years later, "the same concerns about Black Caribbean pupil's underachievement have not gone away" (Demie & McLean 2017, p. 48).

## 1.2. Stereotypes and misconceptions leading to underachievement

As I have noted at the start of this chapter, there is clear evidence that institutional and structural racism is leading to the underachievement of Black Caribbean children. Several scholars have evidenced that a significant aspect of institutional racism is manifested in the historical misconceptions and current stereotypes encompassed in a discourse of Black males as problematic students, which influence teachers' actions in relation to Black pupils (Ladson-Billings 2011, Gillborn 1990, Wright et al. 2010). These result in teachers' perceptions that young Black pupils, males in particular, are anti-learning and anti-establishment (Sewell 1997, Wright et al. 2016) and are considered as a physical threat (Long 2018; Strand 2011; Wright et al. 1998). Such stereotypical misconceptions can limit a pupil's educational success in schools, because the evidence shows that teachers place them in lower curriculum sets, therefore preventing them from being entered into top tier exams (Gillborn 2010; Strand 2012).

The histogram (Figure 1) below taken from the Government website shows the educational attainment figures for pupils categorised by ethnicity. It shows that Black Caribbean (with the exception of Gypsy/Roma and Irish Traveller) are the lowest group achieving 5 A*-C passes/ at GCSE.

Figure 1. Title: Percentage of pupils getting a strong pass (grade 5 or above) in English and maths GCSE by ethnicity. Location: England. Time period: 2017/2018.



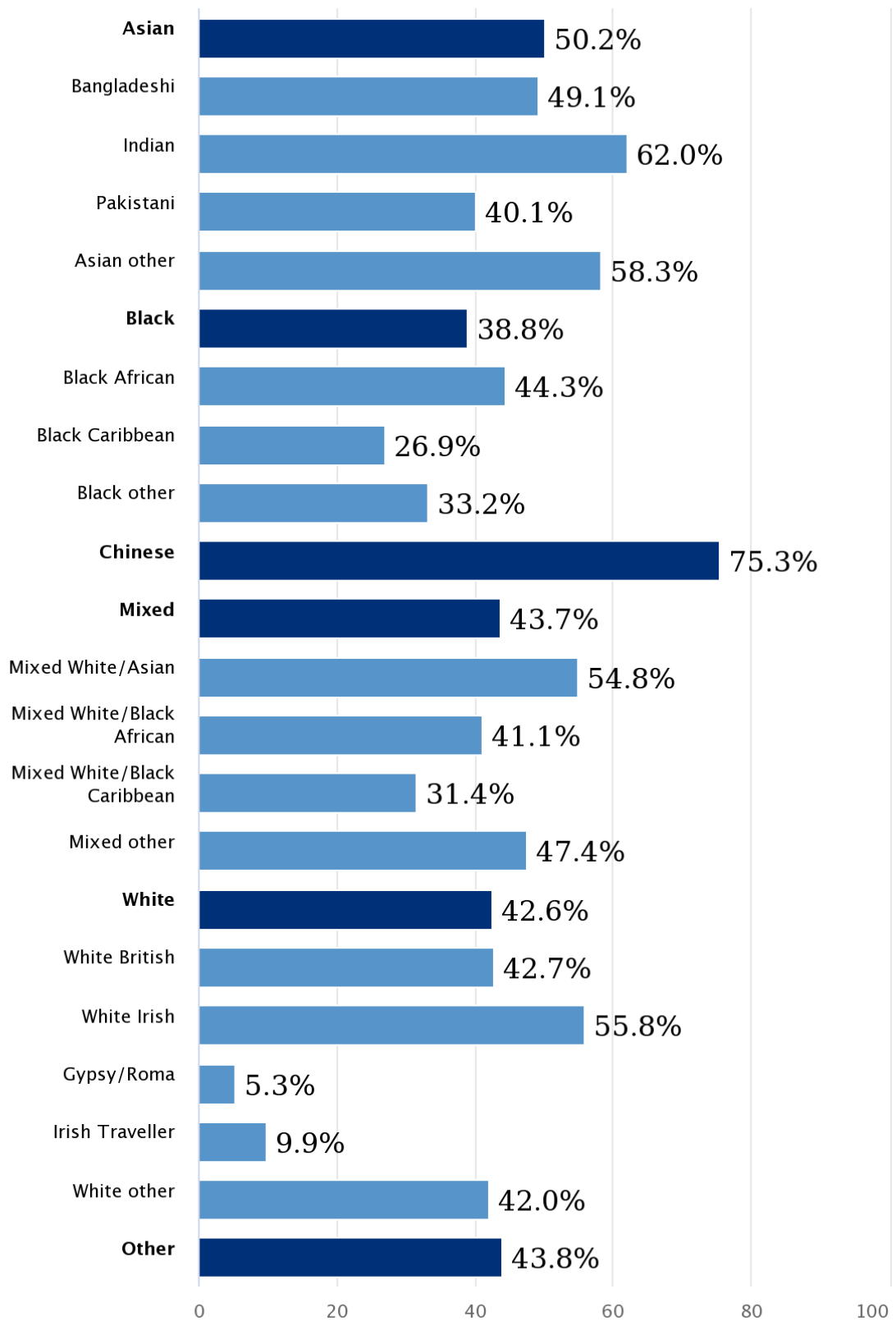| Ethnicity | Percentage |
|---|---|
| **Asian** | 50.2% |
| Bangladeshi | 49.1% |
| Indian | 62.0% |
| Pakistani | 40.1% |
| Asian other | 58.3% |
| **Black** | 38.8% |
| Black African | 44.3% |
| Black Caribbean | 26.9% |
| Black other | 33.2% |
| **Chinese** | 75.3% |
| **Mixed** | 43.7% |
| Mixed White/Asian | 54.8% |
| Mixed White/Black African | 41.1% |
| Mixed White/Black Caribbean | 31.4% |
| Mixed other | 47.4% |
| **White** | 42.6% |
| White British | 42.7% |
| White Irish | 55.8% |
| Gypsy/Roma | 5.3% |
| Irish Traveller | 9.9% |
| White other | 42.0% |
| **Other** | 43.8% |

Figure 1. Source: Key stage 4 and multi-academy trust performance 2018. Ethnicity Facts and Figures GOV.UK

In addition to placement in lower hierarchical teaching sets, school exclusion is also a factor that limits educational success. Scholars have argued that it reduces the possibility of closing the Black/White achievement gaps (Gillborn 2008, Strand 2014). Tomlinson (2008) argues that the abolition of the category of ESN in mainstream schools following the 1981 Special Education Act, resulted in schools using exclusions and suspensions as a 'speedier' process to remove Black Caribbean pupils from mainstream education. Despite the removal of the ESN category Black children continued to be "over-represented in Special schools for the emotionally and behaviourally disturbed" (Ibid p.91), a pattern that remains today. Black Caribbean pupils are disproportionately labelled with SEN, especially Behavioural, Emotional, & Social Difficulties (BESD) categories (Strand & Lindorff 2018). Similarly to parents' concerns about their children being relegated to ESN, and their concerted efforts to force the State to address the issue, school exclusion was also a matter that led to Black parents' activism. An investigation by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in 1984 concluded that stereotyping derived from institutional discrimination was the cause of Black Caribbean pupils' over-representation in school exclusions. Despite the CRE's findings, the over-representations of Black Caribbean pupils continued, resulting in ongoing campaigning within the Black Caribbean community, thus leading to a priority review in 2006 by the DfES (2006). The urgency of school exclusions continues and has received media attention following the publication of the *County Lines Scoping Report* (Hudek 2018), which showed that young people excluded from schools are at a significant risk of involvement in gangs. An issue that initially sparked my interest leading to the completion of this study.

## 1.3. Interest and reason for this study

My initial interest that led to this study arises from both my professional and personal areas of work. I have spent two decades working as an agent in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), during which I have witnessed stark racial inequalities. My activism involved working with parents, mainly mothers, to limit inter-community violence which was ostensibly between Black Caribbean and Somali youth. My experience working in collaboration with statutory and third sector organisations, local residents and local councillors created me significant frustration. This was because of the dominant attitudes of White society which seek to address and understand the issues that affect the lives of Black people.

The attitudes and approaches to addressing and understanding the issues facing Black people

in urban communities positioned them as the problem, which was built on a deficit framework. This was particularly evident in the negative connotations that were attached to the young people, their families and the wider Caribbean community which framed them within a deficit discourse. Discussions regarding the impact of institutional, structural or systemic racism on Black Caribbean youth were seldom had.

Through both my paid employment and community work, I was privy to some of the counter-narratives provided by Black service users and the parents who were members of the community group that I chaired. These alternative stories related to the impact that structural and institutional racism had on the lives of Black Caribbean people. In addition I had completed an MA which explored the attitudes of Criminal Justice professionals in relation to Black Caribbean males involvement in gangs, and therefore intended to provide an extension of that work, this time with the focus on the schooling system.

I had become concerned about the negative and potentially long-lasting impact of schooling and Black boys in particular. I was interested to research if the experience of school is a factor that drives Black boys towards antisocial behaviours and crime, in the context of racism and austerity, and the opportunities offered by gang membership-a sense of belonging and economic success through the drugs business.

In my professional work as a probation officer I have experienced how the Criminal Justice System (CJS) can perpetuate the descent of Black youth towards serious crime, at times more so than providing support onto a path towards being recognised as a valued citizen.

I sensed from my own experience as a Black mother with a teenage son and daughter, and the experiences of my friends who are also Black mothers with sons in the education system, that school seems to be a critical place that influences the path taken by Black boys in particular. I was also aware that Black parents seemed to be judged in a particular way by teachers and the school system, possibly to racially biased perceptions, that limited their possibility to support their son's education. As I immersed myself in my doctoral studies it became clear to me that the focus of my study needed to be the impact of schooling on Black boys and Black mothers' experiences of the education system through their efforts to support their sons. This itself is a large topic and I realised that there is a relative lack of research on the experiences of Black mothers attempt to intervene directly with teachers in support of their son's education.

The context of my research topic has increased in public relevance during my studies. The Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) had garnered public and political attention in ways not envisaged when my doctoral research began. The BLM movement first came to prominence as a social media hashtag in 2017 following the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black African American in the U.S. The movement has now developed into a global movement for racial justice (Ray et al. 2017, 2017a) At this point, in 2017, my research was at the stage of compiling and writing the literature review, as I had completed the empirical research. Recently while I have been writing up the findings, the killing of George Floyd by U.S. police has intensified awareness of racial injustice and White privilege. This has added to my motivation to complete my research and by sharing my findings, to contribute to learning about the various manifestations of racial injustice.

This study therefore aims to explore and analyse the educational perspectives, experiences and strategies of Black Caribbean mothers as they support their sons' through English mainstream schools. The body of work underpinning this study is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and therefore considers mothers' involvement from the disadvantaged position that Black Caribbean mothers are faced with due to racialised social and educational formations, thus placing additional challenges on them in supporting their sons as they journey through school (Crozier 2001).

The CRT framework seeks to expose the failings of the deficit model. It does so by placing race and racism at the centre of analysis, and acknowledges both the direct form, and subtle form that is coded as cultural difference. CRT exemplifies the deficit model which is used as a mechanism to continue the subordination of Black pupils, as argued by Yosso (2005),

> Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because; (a) students enter schools without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education (p.75).

CRT values and privileges the voice of groups subordinated in Western societies and does so by valuing storytelling. By prioritising and valuing the voice of Black Caribbean mothers this study seeks to challenge racial oppression. The focus group method captures and documents their experiential knowledge and lived realities, and confronts the myths perpetuated by the dominant discourses, which are often referred to as majoritarian stories, deriving from stereotypes and misconceptions that are powerful in the maintenance of

subordination of Black people:

> Starting from the premise that a culture constructs its own social reality in ways that promote self-interest, these scholars set out to construct a different reality. Our social world, with its rules, practices and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct it with words, stories and silence. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world (Delgado & Stefancic 2001 p. xvii).

This insight is relevant as it allows the mothers to provide a counter-story to the dominant narratives that position their sons' in a deficit framework, but also to challenge the stories that are destructive to Black Caribbean families. To challenge perceptions that have now become common-sense discourses, this research is conceived as a critical case study. I have adopted Crozier's (1996) definition of 'critical case', researching with a small number of mothers who have some knowledge and experience of the education system. The questions guiding this study are:

> Q1. How do the Black Caribbean mothers involved in the study perceive their sons' experience and relationship to schooling?

> Q2. What is the perception of these mothers regarding the role of racial discrimination in their sons' experience and performance at school?

> Q3. What can be learned from the mothers actions and strategies when interfacing with school professionals on behalf of their sons'?

## 1.4. Structure of the thesis to follow

The study is organised into six chapters, including this introduction which is Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 sets out the literature necessary to examine the issues pertinent to my research questions, methodology and findings. It is set out in eight sections. Following a short introduction, a discussion of the history of CRT and the insights relevant to this study are explained in addition to critiques of CRT from other traditions. I then provide a counter-narrative to the dominant story that has excelled in proffering negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Black Caribbean mothers. There follows a description of significant activism and resistance to oppression from within the Black Caribbean community, and of the Swann Report (1985), an in-depth inquiry which sets the tone for an 'education for all', whilst

giving specific attention to the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils and the factors attributing to the disadvantages faced. I then explore how race became de-prioritised through a colour-blind discourse in education and social policy, following which the challenges to addressing educational disadvantage became more difficult following the demise of multiculturalism. In the latter sections of Chapter 2, I explore some of the in-school factors that impede the educational success of Black Caribbean boys, which derive from low teacher expectations, school settings practices, exclusion and Special Educational Need.

Chapter 3 outlines my chosen methodology, methods and research assumptions. The chapter critically considers my insider researcher status, illuminating the positives whilst navigating the ethical issues of researching with Black communities throughout.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed report of the discussions from my empirical research. It gives an analytical summary of the data which emerged from a thematic analysis of the three focus group sessions. It captured the voices and lived realities of five Black Caribbean mothers as they support their sons through the English state schooling system. Through the use of a critical race framework I use the data to illuminate how dominant stereotypes in wider society influence teachers' negative perceptions about Black Caribbean boys and their families. Following this, Chapter 5 provides some of the key findings deriving from the mother's involvement with their sons' schools and teachers. It also illuminates the mothers' challenges and how they overcome these through certain strategies they employ in order to give their sons the best possible chance of success as they negotiate their journey through the schooling system. Finally I provide a conclusion in Chapter 6.

**Chapter 2. Literature Review**

**2.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the literature that is necessary to investigate issues pertinent to my research questions, methodology and findings. The literature review is produced through the process of critically analysing relevant literature in the field of race and education. It identifies debates within this area and provides a contextualising framework to explore the persistent educational disadvantage of Back Caribbean pupils continuing into the 21$^{st}$ century. Black Caribbean pupils, especially boys, continue to figure highly in unfavourable school statistics. They are one of the lowest achieving ethnic groups in England (Demie & McLean 2017, Gillborn 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016, OFSTED 2002, Rhamie 2012, Strand 2012) and the highest ethnic group in temporary and permanent school exclusion (DfES 2006; 2015; 2018; Wright et al. 2016) and over represented among those identified as having a Special Educational Need (SEN) (Strand & Lindsay 2009, Strand & Lindorff 2018, Tomlinson 2015).

The purpose of this chapter is to identify issues and debates from within existing literature, all of which inform the justification for this study. Through the process of reviewing relevant literature it helps to position my study within a wider body of knowledge and builds up a theoretical rationale for my research. This chapter begins by discussing the history of CRT and the insights relevant to this study. Following this I provide an overview of some of the counter-narratives to the dominant pathological assumptions that have been ascribed to the Black Caribbean family in the UK. In the main, this section draws on the work of Professor Tracey Reynolds to provide an alternative perspective to the dominant story that has excelled in proffering negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Black Caribbean mothers. Section 2.4 will provide an overview of the Swann Report, to highlight that prior to the 1990's, the language of race was present in educational discourse. I then explore how race became de-prioritised through a colour-blind discourse which was initiated by the Conservative Government, through the enactment of the Education Reform Act 1988, and continued throughout successive governments through to the 21$^{st}$ century. I provide a critical review of the issues leading to race and multiculturalism being removed from the political

agenda, thus providing additional challenges in addressing the educational disadvantage of Black Caribbean pupils.

The negative stereotypes attributed to young Black males which portray them as dangerous and a threat inside the nation's borders, and the influence this has on schools and its teachers' is covered in section 2.7. Following this I review critical literature relating to in-school factors to document and demonstrate how these continue to disadvantage and impede Black Caribbean boys' chances of academic success in English schools. The final section presents a conclusion to this chapter, where I review the significant debates from the literature. All of which help to inform my knowledge and understanding of the factors relevant to my study.

*Previous studies involving Black Caribbean mothers.*

Empirical research specifically focusing on the perspectives of Black Caribbean mothers' involvement with their children's education in the twenty first century is relatively limited. Crozier (2001) contends that this is due to the removal of race in educational policy and discourse. Crozier suggests that the deracialisation of policy and discourse reinforces notions of meritocracy that concede that all pupils have equal opportunities which also applies to parent discourse and policy. Crozier argues that homogenising all parents in a "one size fits all approach masks the complexity of needs, the roles ethnic minority parents are playing or the constraints that impede their involvement, and at the heart of this there is structural racism" (p.32).

The colour-blind notion that claims that all mothers are the same (regardless of race, ethnicity, class), has the potential to reinforce prevailing assumptions that "tend to position Black Caribbean families as deficient, uninterested and uninvolved in their children's education" (Rollock et al. 2015, p.2). This blanket assumption "obfuscates the importance of tackling the nature and consequences of structural racism" (Crozier 2005, p. 330). This is exacerbated in Western societies that now chime ideals of post equality (Mirza & Gunaratnam 2014) and post racialism (Warmington et al. 2017). Hence the importance of employing CRT as it challenges notions of objectivity, meritocracy, equal opportunities, colour-blindness and race neutrality. CRT exposes racism by placing race at the centre of analysis, thus working towards the elimination of racism and other forms of oppression (Delgado & Stefancic 2001) (which I will explain in more detail in section 2.2).

Recent studies looking into the causes of Black educational disadvantage from the parents perspective tend to be large scale representative studies. These include Crozier (2005) which involved undertaking semi-structured and community interviews with 25 parents in two cities in the South East of England. A study by Rollock et al. (2015) specifically targeted Black middle-class families and conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with 62 parents in total. Demie and McLean (2017) conducted empirical research using a mixed methods approach with 124 participants including a wide range of education professionals, pupils and parents. Demie and McLean demonstrated that Black Caribbean parents and community should substantially increase their levels of involvement in their children's education, including leadership roles and networking with other parents. Other research however, has shown that this can be difficult because when Black Caribbean parents intervene in their children's education they are frequently marginalised and ignored (Gillborn & Youdell 2000, Wright et al. 2000).

There are very few studies with Black Caribbean mothers that, rather than being a representative sample, are considered as a 'critical case', a definition that I have adopted from Croziers' (1996) study. She defines 'critical case' as mothers who have "educational knowledge and awareness" (p. 254). By this Crozier states that "they have an understanding of the educational process, some understanding of the educational system and parental rights and an understanding of pedagogical issues...All of them place a high value on education and they are active in supporting their children's education" (p.254). Similarly the mothers in this study fit such a definition.

Crozier used semi-structured interviews to obtain data. This method provides rich understandings of participants' knowledge. Focus groups (the method employed in this study) provide a body of material that differs from other methods. They enable participants to elaborate together on stories and themes whilst providing the researcher direct access to language and concepts that participants use to structure their lived realities (Hughs & Demont 1996). The use of focus groups with mothers known to each other, which Kitzinger (1994) refers to as pre-existing groups, also enables a process of parents networking with each other, as recommended in Demie & McLean's (2017) large scale study mentioned above. The issue of recruiting parents for participation can be difficult as was the case for Crozier (1996) who comments "initially we had difficulty gaining access to the schools, where there are significant numbers of black parents" (p.255). Having insider status enabled me ease of access to participants which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. My empirical research

employed in this study pays specific attention to the perspective of Black Caribbean mothers and their shared experience of racism and discrimination.  I had ease of access as they are all known to me personally, they all had concerns about their sons' education which they attribute to being of Black Caribbean heritage.

## 2.2. Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The theoretical approach is informed by Critical Race Theory with its core assumption that racism is endemic in society.  CRT theorists argue that racism is a pervasive social process throughout the Western world, which for many White people such claims are difficult to digest.  This is particularly so given the Western world's dominant cultural framework of individualism and objectivity (Diangelo 2019) of the post-modern era. Diangelo asserts that individualism is the "story line that creates, communicates, reproduces and reinforces the concept that each person is unique and group membership on race, class, gender are irrelevant to opportunities" (ibid, p. 12), as is evident in the blindness to colour and race neutrality of mainstream discourse and public policy. Therefore, given that the concept of individualism is a cherished ideology, many White people are offended by the notion that they are considered racist, as they fail to recognise the racist frameworks that are continually at play.

This study adopts CRT as a theoretical framework and an analytical lens.  It will do so to "challenge the ways that race and racism impact educational structures, practices and discourses" (Yosso 2006, p.74) in relation to males of Black Caribbean descent. The use of CRT enables me as a researcher to raise critical questions and challenge hidden power that disadvantages groups from minority ethnic backgrounds (Gillborn, 2008).  I aim to build on the CRT tenet that scholarship should accord a central place to experiential knowledge (Gillborn et al 2012), by applying CRT to the treatment of people of Caribbean heritage as a means of better understanding and combating race inequality in education.  This will be done through listening to the voices of Black Caribbean mothers who support their sons through school. The reason that this thesis involves researching with mothers is that they can provide an alternative perspective to the educational debate regarding educational inequality affecting Black Caribbean boys and provide a more rounded understanding of their impact because mothers see how their sons' process those experiences in family conversations outside of school. The mothers can also provide a counter-narrative to dominant stories that often malign and misrepresent Black Caribbean mothers (Brown 2020; Reynolds 2005). Furthermore, given that Black Caribbean mothers' voices are marginal in educational

research (McKenley et al 2003) this limits the possibility of dispelling some of the stereotypical and pathological assumptions in mainstream discourse. CRT is relevant to my study, as it goes beyond institutional racism and considers how racism is embedded into the structural framework and is an endemic feature of the British landscape. Given the fact that racism is deeply ingrained through historical consciousness, derived from Britain's expansion overseas i.e. colonialism and imperialism, racism appears natural and therefore more difficult to expose. By taking a critical perspective this thesis helps to address my aims and research questions by placing significance on the centrality of race and racism, acknowledging both the direct and subtle forms that are often hidden beneath a veneer of culture and otherness which depict Black Caribbean males as inherently deviant.

*The history of CRT*

It is argued that the paradigm from which CRT evolved, Critical Legal Studies (CLS), failed to position race and whiteness at the centre of debate, and it was from this omission, that the development of an intellectual critical account of race in the U.S. academic discipline of law grew in the 1970's (Crenshaw 2002, 2011). Pioneers of CRT such as Derrick Bell, Kimberley Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, who initially aligned with the goals and aims of CLS, expressed their uncertainty about its ability to adequately address race related issues (Crenshaw 2002, 2011). Whilst most scholars of CLS did do critical race work, the aforementioned burgeoning CRT scholars, however, were concerned that CLS scholars did not interrogate the reality of racism by considering the domination of racial power through Whiteness. Rather race was considered as something that was outside the walls of the presumably liberal space of CLS, and firmly grounded in liberal individual rights, positioned within structural class inequalities (Crenshaw et al 1995; Crenshaw 2002). Due to the aforementioned reasons, CRT scholars argue that CLS was based on the definition of Marxism and social dominance from Eurocentric perspectives (Rollock & Gillborn 2011, Sleeter & Delgado-Bernal 2004). Therefore, despite their critical race work, CLS still had the potential to neglect voices of colour whilst maintaining racial subordination through the structures of White supremacy, which was fundamental to the paradigmatic shift of some academics of colour, from CLS to CRT.

To be clear, CRT scholarship's commitment to social justice is diverse and therefore does not suggest that other forms of subordination are insignificant, rather CRT places race at the centre of analysis. To evoke Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), CRT aligns scholarship and

activism with the philosophy of Marcus Garvey "who believed that the Black man was universally oppressed on racial grounds, and that any program of emancipation would have to be built around the question of race" (p.62).  Gillborn (2008) reflects the diversity of CRT claiming that "there is no single, unchanging statement of what CRT believes or suggests" (p.251). Rather as a concept CRT is fluid and therefore not linearly defined, which enables it to have a flexible approach.  Gillborn (2008) argues flexibility is necessary in anti-racist work, as the characteristics of racism take many different forms, and are ever changing. Despite not having a linear process, there are several core theoretical tenets that are central to the principles of CRT.  Given that the theoretical tenets of CRT initially evolved in the U.S. and bearing in mind the different legal structures between the U.S. and the UK, I refer to the basic insights outlined by Rollock and Gillborn (2011).  The reason for this choice is that both are leading CRT scholars writing in the area of race and education in the context of the English education system.  Topics they have researched include, the centrality of racism, intersectionality, voices of people of colour, interest convergence, and White supremacy. Discussing each insight in full detail is beyond the scope of this study, I do however, provide a synthesised account.

### *The centrality of racism*

CRT scholars and academics begin with the premise that racism is omnipresent, rather than aberrant; it is normal and widespread in society (Crenshaw 2002, Solórzano 1997). As Delgado and Stefancic (2001) highlight, due to the ingrained nature of racism within Western societies, it remains difficult to oppose as it is often taken for granted and therefore appears natural.  The importance of CRT to my study is that it has a central focus on racism, the type of racial discrimination that is rooted in colonialism and imperialism. It is a continued feature of the British landscape, and as such pervades the institutions within (MacPherson 1999, Phillips 2011).  The significance of placing race at the centre of educational research, is that whilst evidence of racial inequalities persists (Demie & McLean 2017, Gillborn 2006b, 2010, 2016, 2017, Rhamie 2012), there remains a strong argument that class is the main determinant of educational inequalities, and a resistance to place race at the centre of analysis (Chadderton 2013).  Furthermore, as Warmington et al. (2017) point out, the notion of post-racialism, as well as the deracialising of discourse in social policy, has influenced colour blind approaches to research.  It is therefore important that work surrounding anti-racism in contemporary state education is done so through a "critical race conscious lens" (ibid p.15).

*Intersectionality*

Whilst critical race theorists' central focus is on the continuing and embedded existence of racism, there is significant recognition of the layers of subordination and disadvantage culminating in a matrix of oppression.  In its infancy during the 1980's, CRT focused its critique on the superficial response to social justice promised within the Civil Rights legislation in the U.S. (Yosso 2006, p.72).  The main focus was on a two-dimensional binary of Black/White.   During one of several workshops arranged by burgeoning CRT academics during 1988 and 1989, which were designed to establish what constituted CRT, initial disagreements were raised.  These related to CRT having the potential to assume people of colour as being monolithic (Crenshaw 2002). This highlighted the limitations of the Black/White binary discourse which, fails to recognise the range of contributing factors that result in structural oppression, such as sexism, ableism and classism, which Crenshaw (2002) acknowledged are "intertwined in racial power and thus were inseparable from the scope of CRT" (p.1362).   Without this acknowledgement Yosso (2006) contends that CRT limits understandings of the multiple ways that groups from minority ethnic backgrounds "continue to experience, respond to, and resist racism and other forms of oppression" (p.72).

The notion of intersectionality is not a new concept, and early use was by Black feminist thought, and as noted by Wright (2010) can be traced back to bell hooks during the early 1980's. Intersectionality is rather a rearticulating of the multiple social positions and identities that result in multiple disadvantages due to a combination of several characteristics. Black postcolonial and Black feminist thought welcomed an intersectional analysis that incorporates and exposes how social systems of oppression simultaneously structure Black women's lives resulting in various forms and patterns of inequality and disadvantage (Mirza 2009).  Rather than the double or triple jeopardy notion, intersectionality considers the interworking of several identities that can make people vulnerable to various forms of discrimination, for example, Black women can "suffer as black people, women and members of the working class. Each category is seen in intersectionality discourse as being irreducible to the others and therefore avoids essentialising any one category" (Wright 2010, p.307).  I argue that intersectionality is highly relevant with regards to Black Caribbean boys' educational experience as there are several intersecting inequalities which increase their disadvantage. Applying an intersectional lens is also of significant relevance to analysing and exploring how being black and female intersect for the mothers' when they query or challenge aspects

of their sons' educational experiences, as well as paying attention to how class intersects with other identities, which will be discussed later.

Whilst it is important to theorize race in educational research, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that to consider race as Black people's only disadvantage, would be a limiting proposition. Applying an intersectional approach to research is helpful in illuminating the complex nature of racism, along with other markers of oppression, that results in exclusion. For example, Gillborn (2015) uses the concept of intersectionality as an analytical tool to explore the inter-connectedness of race, class, gender and disability in education. An extension of this work is contained in Rollock et al (2015) which seeks to understand how middle-class Black Caribbean families utilise their upward social mobility to support their children's education and how race and class impacts their interactions with schools and teachers, whilst maintaining the centrality of race.

Intersectionality is pivotal to the analysis of this particular study, as it provides an understanding of the complex ways that race, class and gender intersect in the lives of Black women (Crenshaw 2002). It helps to reflect how class shapes articulations of racial identity, particularly in relation to the historical and socio-political context of Black Caribbean people in Britain. As a way of understanding the class fragmentation of ethnic and gender divisions, writing in the U.S, Neubeck & Noel (2001) analyse the effect racism has on welfare policy, which they argue has relied on racialised stereotypes of Black women. The authors elaborate that such stereotypes portray Black women as lazy, immoral and lacking moral and social aspiration. Similarly, in the UK Reynolds (2005) argues the term 'baby mother' has been coined as a reference to Black women having children to secure state benefits. Such racial stereotypes are shown to play an important role in the dynamic of race, class and gender. Despite the fact that literature on Black women has essentialised them working class (Reynolds 2005, Wright et al 2021), there is a growing interest in the Black middle-class over the past few years (Gillborn 2015, Rollock et al 2015). Maylor & Williams (2011) pay attention to Black women's ambivalence to considering themselves or other Black people as middle class, showing that class position based on Black women's self-identification is more nuanced than the more conventional ideation determining middle-class social status.

Despite differences in socio-economic status, Black women, regardless of their class background and position, have united together to resist racism and sexism (Hill-Collins 2002). The historical socio-political position assigned to first generation Black Caribbean

people in the UK was working-class, regardless of their social status in the Caribbean (Sivanandan 1976). Their unity was witnessed in the varied ways that they pushed back to resist the treatment to which they and their children were subjected to. The mothers in this study grew up marked by such histories.

The perception that Black Caribbean families place little value on education and lack the educational aspirations necessary for their children to achieve educational success has been reviewed in section 1.1). The evidence shows it to be a misconception that reinforces the deficit model of Black underachievement. Andrews (2014) highlights the importance of Black supplementary schools in the UK which were an educational strategy in raising Black young men's academic attainment. Such schools were self-reliant community responses, run mainly by Black women from lower socio-economic backgrounds to enhance not only their own children's educational attainment but were an intervention designed to increase the social mobility of the wider Black Caribbean community (Wright et al 2021). Rollock et al (2015) note that middle-class parents equally utilised such educational strategies.

To summarise, contrary to racist perceptions, Black women of diverse socio-economic statuses recognise the importance of their children's education as a route to achieving social mobility. They are motivated to provide direct support as their means allow.

*Interest convergence*

CRT theorists assert that racism serves to maintain systems of oppression and exploitation which further the interests of and advance White Supremacy. Therefore, to eradicate racism would have a significant impact on the status quo that enables White people to maintain their positions of power (Rollock and Gillborn 2011). From this assertion it is evident that if the interests of Black groups do not converge with the interests of White people, then their interests will not be met. The analysis of interest convergence is evident in the work of Bell (1980, 2004) who highlights successful victories obtained through civil rights legislation in the U.S. The author highlights that landmark cases such as school desegregation in the U.S. were not a result of social decency or the sympathy to the persistence of stark Black inequalities, but were in the interest of White people, relating to the concern of international embarrassment. In the UK context, interest convergence has been analysed in Black communities' resistance against racism and demands for racial justice (Warmington et al 2017). For example, when street disturbances in various cities throughout England during the

1980's occurred, the state appeared to converge with the interest of Black communities by way of extensive inquiries, the Scarman (1981) and Swann Report (1985) – both of which will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.4. Similarly, the Cantle Report (discussed in Section 2.6) and Ajegbo Report (2007) followed disturbances in the North of England during the first decade of the twenty first century, and again the state appeared to be converging with anti-racism (a matter I detail in section 2.4). It has been rightly argued however, that such instances are superficial responses resulting in no significant change to the benefit of Black communities (Gillborn 2014). Gillborn notes that interest convergence has often been misunderstood, and argues it does not

> envisage a rational and balanced negotiation between minoritized groups and white power holders, where change is achieved through the mere force of reason and logic. History suggests that advances in racial justice must be won through political protest and mobilisation that create a situation where – for white interests – taking some action against racism becomes the lesser of two evils (ibid. p. 29).

Ultimately interest convergence is a reminder that Black people can receive limited success under a system that privileges the dominant group (Crenshaw 2002, Delgado & Stefancic 2012).

*White Supremacy*

CRT challenges dominant ideology and White privilege. It exposes the self-interested power and privilege of dominant groups in Western societies, through "criticisms of whiteness and white privilege" (Parker and Lynn 2002, P.7). Its commitment to social justice therefore challenges notions of meritocracy, equal opportunities, colour-blindness and race neutrality by exposing their inherent racism and by placing race at the centre of analysis. Developed through Black scholarship, CRT is therefore positioned in Black ontology that is premised on understanding the role and power of White Supremacy, in that, society is racially stratified and unequal and that systematic power processes continually disenfranchise racially oppressed people (Rollock & Gillborn 2011). It is from this ontological position that CRT moves away from the issue of racist intent, such as the crude and obvious forms of racial prejudice, towards looking at the 'unwitting' thoughtless acts which are carried out under the "hidden veneer of normality" (Gillborn 2015, p.278).

CRT considers a set of assumptions, beliefs and practices that place the interests and perspectives of White people at the centre of what is considered normal (Gillborn 2015, p. 278). CRT is therefore an assault on the wider social constructs that constantly reinforce the power of White identification, norms and interests (Ladson-Billing and Tate 1995) that are much subtler and more embedded in mundane actions and policies that shape the world, favouring the interests of White people. This is why Gillborn (2005) contends that education policy is implemented in White supremacy (p.493). It is with this notion, of White being the norm, that Sleeter (1993) argues there are continued unconscious behaviours practiced throughout institutions which reproduce unfair relations of power equating to racism.

## *Voices of people of colour*

CRT places significant emphasis and importance on the voices and experiential knowledge of those who are oppressed and subordinated by White Supremacy. Through placing marginalised participants at the centre of analysis, CRT enables scholars to capture the lived realities and experiences of marginalised groups, which gives a critical understanding about racial subordination (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). The foregrounding of experiential knowledge enables readers to gain an insight into what minoritized life is like, through stories told from a Black perspective. As Delgado & Stefancic (2012) describe, this "invites them into a new and unfamiliar world" (p.48). Storytelling within the framework of CRT is separated into two categories: majoritarian stories (voices of the majority population that dominate the narrative and therefore have the power to subordinate oppressed populations) and counter-stories (voices of those subordinated by White supremacy and privilege) (Solórzano & Yosso 2002). Counter-stories provide a basis for theorising as a means of privileging the voices of those at the margins of a racist society. Although the accounts of Black and minority ethnic people may not represent "one singular truth or reality" (Rollock & Gillborn 2011, p.3) their contributions can provide a competency to speak about race and racism, thus providing a different perspective to dominant narratives and oppressive viewpoints (Solórzano & Yosso 2002).

Critical Race scholars contend that education is the principle means through which White Supremacy is maintained (Gillborn 2014, Solórzano & Yosso 2002, Yosso 2005). Therefore, the importance of counter storytelling in educational research is that it seeks to deconstruct perceptions and knowledge that continue to oppress marginalised groups. Privileging the voices of people of colour allows oppressive structures and action to become visible and

recognisable (Sleeter and Delgado-Bernal 2004). My research seeks to add the voices of Black Caribbean mothers to the educational debate, which Reynolds (2005) highlights Black Caribbean mothers are "rarely a subject of study in their own right, outside of stereotypical and pathological assumptions" (p.1). Their contributions can, therefore, redirect the master narrative and enable others to see a point of view that is underrepresented and overlooked in educational research (Rhamie and Hallam 2012). The mothers' voices are relevant in exposing not only crude and explicit forms of racism but more crucially, the subtleties of hidden racism that are reinforced through the colour-blind narrative articulated in assertions of meritocracy, race neutrality and postracialism (Crenshaw 2011, Delgado & Stefancic 2012, Warmington et al 2017).

The importance of CRT as a theoretical framework lies in the benefits it can also have for the participants of research. Fernandez (2002) for example, contends that storytelling can be beneficial to people of colour participating in the research process, as it allows them to reflect on their lived experiences. Fernandez (2002) further argues that "storytelling can also be transformative and empowering. Sharing one's story with others raises the individual's consciousness of common experiences and opens up possibility for social action" (p.48). Fernandez's comments are of integral importance to my research, as they have extreme relevance to my ethical position as well as my eventual choice of research method, as will be discussed fully in the methodology chapter. Furthermore, as a new scholar taking up the mantle of CRT, I am mindful of Ladson-Billings' (1998) contention, that using CRT to illuminate racism is not enough, rather scholars "need to propose radical solutions for addressing racism" (p.22).

Taking into account Ladson-Billings (1998) aforementioned point, I feel it necessary at this juncture to highlight to the reader, that the Black Caribbean community have a long history of campaigning for social and racial justice, through various forms of resistive acts (as previously discussed in the introduction). My reason for raising this is to highlight the extensive experiential knowledge contained within the community. Also, as Solórzano & Yosso (2002) remind us, storytelling and counter-story telling are reported from the knowledge and experiences of marginalised groups and can therefore" help to strengthen traditions of social, political and cultural survival and resistance that are already present within such communities (p.32). Therefore, by privileging the voice of Black Caribbean mothers, my intention is to contribute to the tradition of cultural survival, resistance and

resilience already evident within the Black Caribbean community, which can give some indications of finding radical solutions to addressing racial inequality.

CRT is interdisciplinary and activist in nature, and whilst it was developed in the field of law in the U.S. during the 1970's and 1980's, it has developed over the decades, and extended into other branches of social theory and extended beyond North America (Crenshaw 2011, Gillborn 2006, Rollock & Gillborn 2011, Parker & Lynn 2002). In the UK for example, CRT is gaining momentum and is being employed by race conscious scholars writing in the field of education, including, but not exclusive to Cecile Wright (2010); Charlotte Chadderton (2013), David Gillborn (2005, 2006b, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015) and Nicola Rollock (2012). All of these academics have used the concept and tenets of CRT to deconstruct and challenge racist educational policies and practices.

Though not as extensive as educational research, CRT in the UK is being employed by scholars in the field of contemporary criminology. For example, Long (2018) and Glynn (2014) utilise one or more of the core tenets in exploring issues of racialisation and criminalisation. Both studies privilege the racialised voices of Black people and provide counter-stories to deconstruct how racialised belief, and actions of agents within the Criminal Justice System, impact the lives of Black people. Glynn for example, provides a counter-narrative to mainstream contemporary criminological research, through promoting the voices of Black males in the U.S. and UK, "to give a platform to those voices rendered invisible by the continuing imposition of white privilege within criminology itself" (p.125). Long (2018) however, shows the importance of counter-stories which build on the experiential knowledge of marginalised voices, in two ways. The first being that they expose the pervasiveness and persistence of racism in the Police force which is evident in the stories shared between generations. Secondly, the experiential knowledge which has witnessed the troubled history of discriminatory policing of Black people in the UK can help future generations negotiate their interactions with the police:

> "Community narratives are important in understanding how Black and mixed-'race' people manage these experiences. Sharing their experiences with white peers, who have less and different experiences of policing, illuminates racialized policing. Further, shared and common experiences with other Black and mixed-'race' people confirm perceptions of racism and serve a protective function through warning of the risks of contact with the police. This finding is useful in challenging the police

perception that anybody who claims that their treatment is racist is using the 'race' card" (ibid. p. 104).

*Critiques of CRT*

The fact that CRT evolved from a paradigmatic shift and has developed across many academic disciplines, spanning across continents over a period of two decades, highlights its staying power as a theoretical and methodological tool (Ledesma & Calderon 2015). Its twenty years of existence, however, has not been without an array of critics. Crenshaw (2011) points out these started as early as 1997, from some individuals within U.S. mainstream legal scholarship who dismissed critical race scholars and CRT as "the' lunatic core' of radical egalitarianism" (p.1310). Similar to CRT's development across the social sciences, criticisms have also come from a cross section of academics. In the U.S. researchers such as Darder and Torres (2004), are critical of CRT as it places race at the centre of analysis in educational debates around racial inequality and exclusion. The authors argue that CRT exalts race to a theoretical construct, which conflicts with the fact that the concept of race remains under theorised. The authors further argue that placing race as the central concept, omits a class analysis and "critique of capitalism" (p.99). However, Ledesma & Calderon (2015) highlight that, when approached systematically, "CRT can be a means by which to more fully theorize race" (p.207).

CRT's commitment to intersectionality acknowledges that Black and ethnic minority groups are not monolithic and can be impacted by several combined factors that culminate in a matrix of oppression such as, classism, sexism, heterosexism etc (as discussed above in the paragraph on intersectionality). Darder & Torres (2004) are not alone in their critiques regarding an analysis of class being central to understandings of racial inequality. Some supporters of Marxism are critical of CRT due to its notion of White Supremacy and White privilege being a main determinant underpinning racial oppression. Cole and Maisuria (2007) critique CRT's notion of whiteness and white supremacy, arguing that it homogenises all white people, thus dismissing the issue of class power and privilege. Arguing, that White working-class pupils do not benefit from White privilege in English schools, this argument is supported by Hill (2009) who also argues that class is the main determinant of educational inequality.

As Gillborn (2009) asserts, CRT has been misrepresented by critics who argue that the notion of Whiteness and White privilege dismisses class struggle. Rather than reiterating the entirety of the intersectionality, class inequality can intersect with racism that culminates in oppression. This is not the case for White people as, unlike Black and racialised ethnic minority groups, White people do receive some advantage from their Whiteness. Gillborn (2009) asserts that this advantage is seen in the fact that "their interests are assumed important and any challenge to their centrality is met with hostility and violence both symbolic and physical" (ibid, p.234). A recent example of this was seen during peaceful BLM protest that took place globally, majority of which involved White people showing solidarity with Black communities thus appearing to take a "genuine active role in deconstructing Whiteness" Gillborn (2015, p.278). Counter-protestors however, turned up to show their opposition, which in many cases involved both symbolic and physical violence against BLM protesters (see Campbell 2020, Horton 2020).

Further criticisms of CRT centre on the use of storytelling or counter-storytelling that often serve to subvert the dominance of majoritarian stories (Delgado & Stefancic 2012, Fernandez 2002, Gillborn 2009, Ledesmo & Calderon 2015, Solórzano & Yosso 2002). CRT critics contend that the use of storytelling as an analytical tool is problematic, and question the trustworthiness and objectivity of narrative, and contend that they are underpinned by a political agenda (Fernandez 2002). However, Fernandez's response highlights that the whole debate regarding objectivity in research is "irrelevant and counterproductive" (p.49) as it is widely recognised by most social inquiry scholars, that qualitative research is subjective (ibid). Though storytelling that is not informed by CRT may also be subject to similar criticism, CRT scholars highlight that there is a significant difference. Solórzano & Yosso (2002) for example, argue that the ideology of racism is created, maintained and justified through the use of majoritarian stories. The master narrative, or dominant discourse as it is sometimes referred to (Solórzano 1997), is generated from a legacy where racial privilege is natural. Therefore, such narratives are "not often questioned because people do not see them as stories, but as natural parts of everyday life" (Solórzano & Yosso 2002, p. 28).

CRT scholars have argued that the hyper-scrutiny of CRT is not surprising, as any work asserting the centrality of racism, challenging colour-blindness and placing race at the centre of debate is likely to prove to be "deeply unpopular" (Gillborn 2015, p.277). From a different position another critique of CRT can be seen from a Black radical perspective. Academics writing from the perspective of Black radicalism contend that whilst CRT exposes the

pervasive and persistent nature of racism with a view to delegitimizing it, this does not seek to end racism in Western societies.  As Andrews (2014) contends, that "the role of CRT then, becomes that of a leading chorus of rebellion against racial oppression" (p.7) rather than embracing a "revolutionary, and therefore radical, politics in response to endemic racism" (ibid p.7).  Writing from the perspective of CRT, Ladson-Billings (1998) does however, argue that to illuminate racism is not enough, rather scholars "need to propose radical solutions for addressing racism" (p.22).

In spite of extensive anti-racist work seen in the actions of collective community activism from the late 1950's onwards, and England having some of the strongest anti discriminatory legislation internationally (Gillborn 2014), Black Caribbean males continue to face systemic disadvantage.  This is seen in the continued over representation of Black males in the Criminal Justice System (Glynn 2018, Lammy 2017, Long 2018); disproportionate numbers of unemployment (Braham 1992, Wright et al. 2010, GOV.UK 2019a);  and underperformance and or exclusion from school (DfE 2018, Gillborn & Youdell 2000, Gillborn 2010, 2011, Rhamie 2012, Rollock et al 2015, Sewell 2007, Wright 2010).  With specific reference to education, social policy initiatives employed to respond to the disadvantages Black children faced in English schools have taken the form of assimilation between the 1950's and 1970's

During the 1980's assimilation was replaced by the notion of integration as noted in the Swann Report (1985) where it was stated: "It is generally accepted that attitudes towards the educational needs of ethnic minority pupils fall into a clearly defined chronological pattern moving from the early days of what is usually termed 'assimilation'" (p.191). Diversity and equal opportunities were the language of integration policies during the 1980's which attempted "to give at least some recognition in school to the backgrounds of ethnic minority children" (Ibid.). The colour-blind approach adopted during the 1990's is considered to be a significant barrier in raising the academic achievement of Black Caribbean pupils (Demie & McLean 2017) which is further hampered by the changes in discourse from race to culture (Gillborn 2014, Sviensson 2008, Wright 2010).  The 21st century continues to witness the de-prioritisation of race, and any progress and advancements in achievement of Black Caribbean pupils are made even more difficult due to a "post-racial fallacy" (Gillborn et al. 2016, p. 4), which now suggest that Western society as advanced in race equality that race is no longer an issue (Warmington et al. 2017).

It is clear that the changing nature of racism requires a different approach if anti-racist research and practices are to survive and thrive in educational scholarship (Gillborn 2006). A great deal of mainstream anti-racist research and practices in education placed the emphasis on systems to increase attainment levels. Gillborn (2006) contends that this is extremely important but insufficient, as the fundamental issues such as the shape, scale and the purpose of the educational system itself is left untouched. He therefore argues that scholars and academics need to be dynamic when addressing issues of race and racism in education, thus building on the success, failures and frustrations of previous anti-racist work.

In summary, CRT offers several useful tenets that will enhance the process of this study's investigation. It places race at the centre of analysis and exposes how race and racism operate to sustain and maintain disadvantage faced by Black people, thus challenging and exposing racial inequality that appears ordinary and mostly unrecognisable because racism is "such an ingrained feature of our landscape" (Delgado & Stefancic 2013, p.2). The process of counter storytelling by people of colour challenges racial oppression. By valuing the voices and listening to the experiences and lived realities of the mothers in this study it is my intention that this research can help to confront the myths, stereotypes and common assumptions that maintain the subordination of Black people (Solórzano & Yosso 2002).

Although counter stories are important to interrupt dominant discourses, Delgado & Stefancic (2013) argue that these should not solely give attention to responding to majoritarian narratives, rather unheard stories that derive from histories and lived realities of Black people can demonstrate and "strengthen traditions of social, cultural political survival and resistance" (p.32). This is of value in itself. In order to fully understand how racism works it is important to understand how race intersects with others axes of oppression (Gillborn 2015) such as class, gender and disability. The intersectionality tenet is of significant relevance to this research as it enables me to explore the possible connections between race, class and gender in relation to Black Caribbean boys' educational disadvantage. The empirical research focuses on the experiences of Black Caribbean mothers supporting their sons through school because as Collins (1989) claims, "centering on Black women's experiences produces not only new knowledge but new ways of thinking about such knowledge" (p.44). Applying intersectionality as an analytical lens is important in providing sufficient understandings of social trends centring race. Rather than essentializing one dimension or comparing bi-modal inequalities of race, class and gender, these need to be considered as simultaneous and intersecting with each other (Mirza & Gunaratnam 2014).

## 2.3. Black Caribbean mothers.

In this section I consider the counter-narrative to the majoritarian stories that have excelled in proffering negative stereotypes and pathological images of Black Caribbean mothers. I will also consider the intersections of race, gender and class and the effect these multiple positions have on the social realities of Black mothering.  This is particularly important given that the vast majority of academic research and scholarly literature gives primacy to the experiences and identities of White middle-class mothers, so that Black Caribbean mothers "are measured against the yardsticks that reflects the norms"  (Reynolds 2005, p.1) of this particular group. Failure to acknowledge and conceptualise the multiple positions such as race, ethnicity, gender and class, leads to inaccurate understandings of the social realities confronting Black Caribbean mothers (Mirza & Gunaratnam 2014).

According to Flynn (2015) there is a long tradition of researching and analysing the practices and lives of Black Caribbean mothers from White middle-class norms, thus positioning them as deficient. Flynn (2015) contends that the Black Caribbean family as an institution, has been "repudiated and venerated" in sociological and anthropological research from as far back as the 1930's (p.371).  Analysed within a Eurocentric framework, lower class Black families in the colonial Caribbean were viewed as being female dominated, in which men were considered marginal to the family (Ibid.). Such negative characterisations of the Black Caribbean family remain in contemporary discourse in the UK, in which mothers continue to feature as central to these discussions (Reynolds 2005) and then are "vilified for supposedly raising violent children (mostly boys)" (Flynn 2015, p. 371).

*Pathologising Black Caribbean mothering-Blame the mother*

Collins (1990) argues that sociological writing on mothering and motherhood in Western societies are structured by racist, capitalist and patriarchal systems whose agenda serve to control Black communities. The tendency to dismiss the intersections of various identities then create and maintain the subordination of Black mothers and their loved ones (Reynolds 2005). Supporting this view, Brown (2020) contends that Black Caribbean mothers' experiences are often understood in isolation from the matrix of oppressive structures, thus failing to gain an understanding of the complexities of raising children in a racialised society. This is most likely due to what Reynolds (2005) highlights, that very little is known about

Black Caribbean mothers beyond the stereotypical misrepresentations in the UK, as they rarely attract scholarly attention in their own right. Rather they tend to be referred to in larger studies, such as Phoenix's (1991) study of young mothers, in which Phoenix addresses and challenges negative assumptions that early motherhood of single women is a Black issue. She highlights that the rate of early motherhood in single White women increased by 35 percent over a period of two decades which signifies that Black single early pregnancy is more likely a trend rather than a "consequence of black cultural patterns" (p.15).

*Invisibility of Black women*

Little is known about Black Caribbean mothers due to the relatively limited research (Crozier 2001; McKenley 2001; Reynolds 2005). This lack of research is unsurprising given that Black women are less likely than any other group to be heard or recognised. This can perhaps be understood because Black women are at the intersections between two major marginal groups, female and Black. Literature exploring sexism tends to place White women at the centre of debate and when researching race, the emphasis is mainly on Black men (Ladson-Billings & Donnor 2008). Patton & Njoku (2019) assert that the focus mainly on cisgender Black men lends to the presumption that their experiences are "comprehensive enough to serve as a proxy for all Black people's experiences (i.e. Black men=Black people)" (p.1164), thus rendering Black women invisible. As Ladson-Billings and Donner (2008) contend, Black women's multiple subordinate identities are located within the broader systems of oppressions, particularly patriarchy and White supremacy. Both serve to maintain unequal societal orders and regardless of their achievements, qualifications or status Black women remain at the margins of society,

As already noted, the silence of Black women's voices in mainstream research and literature has led to Black mothers being publicly stigmatised. Patton & Njoku (2019) argue that "Black women need not utter a word before they are being misrepresented and being subject to stereotypes and misconceptions which result in chronic forms of marginalisation" (p.1163), which is argued to be an aspect of oppression (Crozier 2001). The overall disregard for Black women in and by society leads to incomplete narratives about their lived realities, which Crozier (2001) contends is a form of oppression. Patton & Njoku (2019) and others (Robinson & Werblow 2012, Rollock et al. 2015) argue that the public have been conditioned to fear Black women thus positioning them as a threat. Crozier (2001) notes that this is evident in the reaction of the dominant group who tend to assert their superiority at which

point Black women are reconstructed and stereotyped as deviant or "rendered invisible" (p.337). Black women are only focused upon when problematic issues are being examined Put another way, Black women's "lives are only given consideration or attention in the context of "what their sons or baby fathers are doing" (Brown 2020 p.7).

There are few scholars that come to the defence of Black Caribbean mothers in the UK, with the exception of Professor Tracey Reynolds, who has written extensively about Black Caribbean mothers in the UK (Reynolds 1997, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2010). Through her research with Black Caribbean mothers, Reynolds has dispelled some of the myths, stereotypes and misrepresentations proliferated through mainstream discourses. In her study *Caribbean Mothers: Identity and Experience in the UK,* Reynolds (2005) highlights that the tabloid press have promoted the pervasive notion of Black Caribbean matri-focal families, to the point that it has "transformed itself into common-sense discourse" (p.29). Reynolds (2005) is not seeking to argue the respectability or social acceptability of Black single mothers. Rather she deconstructs the dominant negative representations that portray pathologised and racialised images of Black Caribbean mothers in the UK, the 'babymother' and the 'superwoman' (p.29).

Reynolds (2005) qualitative research study is with 40 mothers of a range of ages, social and marital backgrounds and different family formations. She debunks the misleading representations that fail to recognise the cultural diversity of mothering which can differ in terms of Caribbean regions and countries (Phoenix & Husain 2007) and in diversity of parenting styles of single mothers (Zuccotti 2015) and in lower and upper social class positions. Each create misleading notions of Black Caribbean mothers. Reynolds (2005) illuminates the voice of Black Caribbean mothers which is crucial to challenging the damaging categories that prevail - such as the super-strong career oriented and economically independent mother who is generally portrayed in dominant discourse as Black men's biggest critic, accused of demonising them as financially incompetent and promiscuous. In addition to the Black 'superwoman', dominant assumptions include the urban poor welfare dependant mother, vilified for placing a drain on the public purse, despite the fact that research has consistently shown that Black Caribbean mothers are the highest group in fulltime employment regardless of class background, since 1997 (Reynolds 2001, Zuccotti 2015) and the highest group in combining paid work and children (Platt 2007).

Brown's (2020) study exploring the views of Black Caribbean mothers' involvement on limiting urban gun crime, shows that the majority of Black mothers combine children and employment, as demonstrated in her study. The mothers involved in Brown's research stress two important reasons for being in paid work. Firstly, to provide a positive example for their children: secondly to counteract and overturn damaging stereotypes of the 'welfare dependent single Black mother' (Ibid). This highlights that Black Caribbean mothers react to the damaging dominant stereotypes by taking it upon themselves to counter them for the benefit of their children. What is less clear is whether they do this because they consciously recognise the stereotypes and counter it as a 'political' act, or if they have unconsciously internalised the stereotype and act because they accept the mainstream damaging criticism.

## *Absent fathers*

Black Caribbean mothers continue to bear the "brunt of responsibility for the breakdown of the Caribbean family life and male absence" (Reynolds 2005, p.1) thus suggesting the Black Caribbean family is in crisis. The continued scrutiny of the Black Caribbean family is seen through debates about Black educational underachievement and gang talk. A prime example of this can be found in 2008 when the then Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, called for absent Black fathers to take more parental responsibility, headlined in the Daily Mail (Chapman 2008). Ten years later Tony Sewell (2018) wrote a report in the Telegraph titled 'Let's Talk about gang culture's elephant in the room: absent black fathers'. The lone mother blame narrative continues to receive public stigma, for example Rod Liddle (2019), a journalist writing for the Sunday Times had a piece published with the title, 'Half of black children do not live with their father. And we wonder why they're dying'. These narratives reinforce the pathological discourse of the Black family in crisis. Reynolds (2010) disputes such simple conclusions regarding Black Caribbean father absence correlating with educational underachievement of Black boys. She contends that they are misleading and dangerous without substantive evidence and argues "most public knowledge about absent black fathers is based on myths, folklore and sensationalised media images" (no pagination).

The lack of scholarly literature on fatherhood is recognised by Phoenix & Husain (2007) who argue that parenting studies do not focus on fathers, unless they are examining their marginalised position in their child/ren's lives. This pre-occupation with the Black absent fathers as "resulted in little attention being given to fatherhood in general" (p.18) Reynolds (2005) study exploring Black British families demonstrates that fathers living outside of the

family unit (and resident fathers) make significant contributions to the lives of their child/ren, and were not considered as 'absent'. Reynolds (2010) challenges Tony Sewell's criticism of lone mothers being responsible for some of societal ills especially urban gun and knife crime and educational underachievement. She emphasises that Sewell's (2010b) claims are based on old-fashioned traditional norms of gender roles within two heterosexual family formations, thus relying on "outdated and stereotypical notions of appropriate gender roles for parents ignoring the diversity of family forms and relationships people now live in" (Reynolds 2010, no pagination).

*Impact of misrepresentations on policy and practice*

Although studies specifically examining the Back Caribbean family unit in the UK are limited, what research there is shows that regardless of the family formation the vast majority of Black Caribbean children are being raised in loving, caring stable family units (Brown 2020, Chamberlin 1991, Reynolds 2005). It is clear that critics such as Sewell (2010, 2018) and Liddle (2019) have 'essentialised' Black Caribbean mothers at a stroke and continue to fuel pathological extant narratives of the Black Caribbean family, especially lone mothers. Reynolds (2005) highlights that the dominant racialised constructions are damaging to family relationships and detrimental to policy formation. For example, the aforementioned career orientated 'superwoman' has been portrayed as responsible for Black male unemployment "as a result of them taking Black men's' jobs" (Ibid., p.30). Whereas the so-called lazy welfare dependant labelled the 'babymother', "is viewed as sustaining a cycle of poverty" through having numerous children due to "welfare greed" (Ibid).

According to Mokhtar & Platt (2009) and Phoenix (1996) the preoccupation and anxiety regarding lone mothers over the past few decades has led to the radicalisation of means tested benefits. Mokhtar & Platt report that despite growing numbers of lone parenthood, the UK discussion has not been racialised as is the case in the U.S. Phoenix (1996) however, argues that racial stereotyping of Black Caribbean lone mothers is more subtle and is less explicit here in the UK than in the U.S. in terms of the radicalisation of state benefits. As an example, Phoenix refers to the Child Support Agency (CSA), formed in 1991 and had the powers to enforce absent fathers to take financial responsible for their children. Although the CSA was intended to be of benefit to the children, Jones (1994) argues that it was "designed to work in the best interest, not of the children, but of the treasury" (p.97). Despite it being a universalistic system targeted at fathers in general, Phoenix (1996) argues that Black

Caribbean men were disproportionally investigated. Money obtained from the fathers would be deducted from means tested benefits, therefore Black families reliant on state benefits were disproportionally affected, thus showing that it had a racialised context to it.

The dominant misleading discourses pathologising the Black family unit, especially lone motherhood, also has implications within the structures of the education system. Crozier (2005) for example, acknowledges the evidence that teachers' low expectations of Black Caribbean children is related to racialised bias. She argues there is also a wider view relating to Black Caribbean family structures, the perception that Black Caribbean children are raised in broken homes, raised by lone mothers. This reinforces the deficit view of underachievement and other forms of educational disadvantage of Black Caribbean children (Ibid), rather than recognising the institutional racism (MacPherson 1999) and teachers' biased attitudes (Crozier 2005, Gillborn & Mirza 2000, Wright et al. 2000, 2010). Furthermore, it dismisses the evidence that shows that some lone mothers do successfully raise boys (Brown 2020).

*Survival and resistance despite the odds*

In addition to the normal concerns of mothers raising children, Collins (1994) highlights additional anxieties and pressures for Black mothering in Western societies identifying that they have to negotiate complex and complicated decisions and strategies when raising their children. This can include, encouraging their children to fit in through the process of assimilation for survival reasons, which means they may unwittingly "become conduits of the dominant ideology" (p.59). Others, however, note that some parenting practices involve a process of specific forms of racial socialisation, which they deem necessary to help their children survive and thrive in Western societies (Barn et al. 2006). These authors report that research over the past couple of decades shows that racialised minority parents have tended to shift from assimilation thinking to the notion of bicultural and racial socialisation Supporting this view, Brown (2020) reports that Black Caribbean families recognise the importance of instilling forms of racial socialisation into their children in order for them to deal with racism, but also to provide them with a sense of pride and identity.

Gilroy (1987) and Sewell (1997) highlight that many second-generation Black Caribbean youth formed hybrid identity in an attempt to manage in a society that appeared to deny them acceptance. The Denby & Alford (1996) study with African American parents in the U.S., refers to this as bicultural identity. They found that migrant parents encouraged bicultural

identity in their children to help them adapt to the dominant society. Some of these strategies are crucial aspects of Black mothering in an attempt to ensure the emotional, psychological, spiritual and physical development and health of their children.

Chamberlin (2006) asserts that despite the difficulties and challenges facing Black Caribbean families they have survived and continue to develop against remarkable odds. Such survival is evidenced by the concerted actions of the first-generation Black Caribbean's who accepted the invitation to come to help rebuild Britain's economy following the Second World War. This invitation was not only viewed as an economic opportunity but, given their high regard for education, Caribbean parents believed that Britain would enrich their children's educational prospects, thus enhancing their future economic mobility (Channer 1995). It became evident that this was not the case, McKenley (2001) notes that Black Caribbean parents recognised that their "views of the 'mother country' and their hopes and dreams for themselves and their children were infantilised and for the most part deprecated" (p.318). The polemic work of Bernard Coard (1977) raised the problem of the inequalities facing Black Caribbean children in English schools, Phillips & Phillips (1998) contend that early indicators of the societal racism confronting the Windrush generation was that the educational system and its institutional actors perceived that children from the Caribbean struggled to cope in English schools, thus resulting in many being relegated to Educationally Subnormal Units (Coard 1977).

Recognition of the disadvantages propelled Black Caribbean parents into individual and collective responses to address the educational inequities. Their activism both formal and informal (as discussed in the introduction) forced the state to initiate various public policy responses including the enactment of several iterations of race equality legislation. The nature and extent of the racism in Britain was such that race equality acts were inadequate to address the inequalities that racialised oppression within education and employment continued to limit social mobility. Black Caribbean pupils were failing to acquire basic qualifications required for employment. Significant factors were the disproportionate numbers of Black children subject to temporary school exclusions, and placements in lower status curriculum subjects (Modood & May 2001). In parallel Black youth were the target of discriminatory policing (Hal et al. 1978; Long 2018). The labour market crisis which resulted in the recession throughout the 1970's, was manifested in disproportionately high levels of youth unemployment which combined with racial discrimination meant that Black youth in particular were increasingly being pushed to the margins (Braham et al.1992). This led to the

children of the Windrush generation strengthening their resolve "against systematic persecution and prejudice" in the 1980's, witnessed in the riots, more accurately termed the uprisings, across various cities in Britain (Olusoga 2016, p.517),

These uprisings were instrumental in the state's response which gave consideration to the disadvantage confronting the Black Caribbean community (Scarman Report 1981), including the first ever examination of achievement in relation to students' ethnic origins (The Swann Report 1985). Lord Scarman's inquiry concluded that the 'Brixton riots' were a spontaneous outburst of resentment by Black youth which were attributable to problems of inner-city decline plus racial disadvantage in housing and employment. Lord Scarman found unquestionable evidence of disproportionate and indiscriminate use of police stop and search powers against Black people and recommended the repeal of *sus laws*. Keynesian-led interventions, (an approach that invested resources in development that would enable Black communities with the intention of reaping the economic benefits when the economy grew by becoming more diverse) were recommended to address the inequalities and discrimination affecting Black communities. In spite of Scarman identifying significant systemic discrimination, it was considered as a setback in the analysis of racism, in that Lord Scarman denied the existence of institutional racism (Bourne 2001). The result was that the institutional structures that create racial barriers were left unchallenged. The Swann Report appeared to be more progressive in terms of identifying institutional racism as a cause for concern within education and recognised the need for establishing a democratic pluralist society (DfES 1985).

## 2.4. The Swann Report

The Swann Inquiry took place in the mid 1980's following the public outrage demonstrated in Brixton, and several other cities. The prior activism of the Windrush generation, their struggles and sacrifices, were a significant factor, as acknowledged in the preface to the Swann Report, "the origins of the committee can be traced back to the concerns expressed by the West Indian Community during the late 1960's and early 1970's about the academic performance of their children"(DES 1985 p.vii).

Concerned Black Caribbean parents and activists had placed pressure on the Labour government in 1977 for an in-depth inquiry looking into the causes of poor educational performance of their children. This was supported by the Select Committee on Race

Relations and Immigration (SCORRI) and resulted in the Black People Progressive Association and Redbridge Community Race Relations 1978 which recommended that:

> ...as a matter of urgency the government (should) institute a high level and independent inquiry into the causes of the underachievement of children of West Indian origin in maintained schools and the remedial action required (DES 1985, p.vii)

The 807-page report expressed enthusiasm for a realistic 'education for all' with 769 mentions of 'West Indians' it gave specific attention to the underachievement of Black pupils and, in particular what was attributing to the disadvantages they experienced. The report identified that institutional racism was as much a cause for concern as the prejudiced attitudes of individual teachers, concerns that were also expressed in other studies during the 1970's and 80's. Channer (1995) highlights several qualitative studies during the 1970's and 80's that examined teacher-pupil interactions. The majority evidenced teachers' negative stereotypes and low expectations of Black Caribbean children. Rex & Tomlinson (1979) illuminated how deeply entrenched teachers' views were, for example quoting a head-teacher who claimed that "They (West Indians) are bound to be slower, it's their personalities, they lack concentration' and West Indian children are boisterous and less keen on education than Asians. This is known obviously" (Rex & Tomlinson 1979 cited in Channer 1995 p.13). Acknowledging this, the Swann Report states that there are "only a very small minority of teachers that could be said to be racist in the commonly accepted sense. However, it went on to argue that a "teacher's attitude towards, and expectations of, West Indian pupils may be subconsciously influenced by stereotyped, negative or patronising views of their abilities and potential, which may prove a self-fulfilling prophecy, and can be seen as 'unintentional racism" (p.xix).

Despite this the Swann committee was optimistic about the education system being an avenue to providing the foundations for a more harmonious society, signalling that multicultural education would enable "all ethnic groups, both the minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping society" (DES 1985, p. 5). The report's contents and recommendations however were criticised from both the left and right perspectives. Much of the reaction from the right stemmed from a sense of loss of nationhood and belonging. Political figures commented on the report being "contemptuous of the rights of the native inhabitants of the UK" (Pearce 1986 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p.84). Absurd assertions about the report's recommendations were published in right wing media outlets prior to the Swann Reports publication. An article

in the Daily Mail claimed that "every school would be obliged to offer the entire curriculum in Guajarati and Punjabi, and morning assemblies so as not to favour Christianity over Hinduism, Islam or presumably witchcraft" (Ibid). Radical changes to social structures were not the Swann committee's intentions, rather a proposal to extend the existing pluralism of the "multi-racial context in which we all live" (DfES 1985, p.7).

The reaction from the left stemmed from the report's underlying assimilationist discourse. Despite the Swann committee's thrust for inclusive multiculturalism and the acknowledgement of allowing ethnic minorities to maintain their distinct identities, they suggested they do so in the private confines of their own communities and homes, as the focus remained on their participation in society being within a "framework of commonly accepted values"(DfES 1985, p.5), which were simply "assumed rather than debated " (Modood & May 2001, p.307). In short what was termed as multicultural, had an underlying assimilationist discourse which concurred with the cultural racism under a blinkered vision and traditionalist approach of identity and belonging (Gillborn 1997). The Swann Report acknowledged linguistic diversity as a "positive asset" (DfES 1985, p.406) but made no recommendations for the potential of bilingual education, with the exception of pupils transitioning from their mother tongue to English. The Swann Report's strong emphasis on learning English - "the emphasis must therefore we feel be on learning of English" (DfES 1985 p. 325, p. 407) - was critiqued by the NCMTT (1985). Tomlinson (2008) highlights that the period of the Swann inquiry was a high point towards establishing a multicultural non-racist society, but she contends, was a missed opportunity, due to the Swann Report's failure in providing a blueprint for the implementation of overt anti-racist strategies.

The Swann Report's emphasis on multiculturalism which encouraged the rhetoric of treating all people equally, with a focus on fostering and learning from other cultures, later developed into New Labour's Community Cohesion policy (see section 2.6). This was referred to as the incarnation of the three S's, sari's, samosa's and steel bands (Ahmed et al, 1986). Empowerment of Black and minority ethnic pupils in schools raising their self-esteem and confidence, was of little value because there was a failure to acknowledge the dominance and extent of racism in British society and therefore there was no foundation on which to oppose racism (Tronya & Hatcher 1992). Without a clear understanding of racism, multiculturalism was open to criticism from all sides. Anti-racist educationalists argued that the approach of multicultural education, as encouraged in the Swann Report, deracialised the discourse of

schooling and was an attempt to minimise and dismiss the ongoing Black struggle, by failing to acknowledge the "wider political dimensions and power structures" (Grinter 1990, p.212).

A deracialised discourse was also becoming a feature in wider political spheres, promoted through a colour-blind narrative, for example as conveyed in the 1983 Conservative party election poster (see below Figure. 2). This poster advanced a colour-blind perspective that promoted nationhood. In effect, according to the logic of this poster, in order to be accepted as a true British national authentic Black expression must be forfeited. Alexander (1996) asserts that Black expression was considered through the images of Black Caribbean males in particular. Negative images had proliferated through the media, such as, the "folk devils- the Black mugger, the Rastafarian drug dealer, the rioter" (p.9), a perception that remains core to racist reasoning today.

Figure 2. 1983 Conservative party election poster



With the Conservatives, there are no 'blacks', no 'whites', just people.

Conservatives believe that treating minorities as equals encourages the majority to treat them as equals.

Yet the Labour Party aim to treat you as a 'special case', as a group all on your own.

Is setting you apart from the rest of society a sensible way to overcome racial prejudice and social inequality?

The question is, should we really divide the British people instead of uniting them?

**WHOSE PROMISES ARE YOU TO BELIEVE?**

When Labour were in government, they promised to repeal Immigration Acts passed in 1962 and 1971. Both promises were broken.

This time, they are promising to throw out the British Nationality Act, which gives full and equal citizenship to everyone permanently settled in Britain.

But how do the Conservatives' promises compare?

We said that we'd abolish the 'SUS' law.

We kept our promise.

We said we'd recruit more coloured policemen, get the police back into the community, and train them for a better understanding of your needs.

We kept our promise.

**PUTTING THE ECONOMY BACK ON ITS FEET.**

The Conservatives have always said that the only long term answer to our economic problems was to conquer inflation.

Inflation is now lower than it's been for over a decade, keeping all prices stable, with the price of food now hardly rising at all.

Meanwhile, many businesses throughout Britain are recovering, leading to thousands of new jobs.

Firstly, in our traditional industries, but just as importantly in new technology areas such as micro-electronics.

In other words, the medicine is working.

Yet Labour want to change everything, and put us back to square one.

They intend to increase taxation. They intend to increase the National Debt.

They promise import and export controls.

Cast your mind back to the last Labour government. Labour's methods didn't work then.

They won't work now.

**A BETTER BRITAIN FOR ALL OF US.**

The Conservatives believe that everyone wants to work hard and be rewarded for it.

Those rewards will only come about by creating a mood of equal opportunity for everyone in Britain, regardless of their race, creed or colour.

The difference you're voting for is this:

To the Labour Party, you're a black person.

To the Conservatives, you're a British Citizen.

Vote Conservative, and you vote for a more equal, more prosperous Britain.

Source. Gilroy, P (1987). There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack (p.58)

The poster identifies what is considered appropriate if Black males are to be accepted into British society. This poster places a Black man in a suit, whilst the more prominent political discourse and mainstream media coverage during the 70's and 80's presented Black Caribbean youth as deviant, through stereotypes of Black criminality, as highlighted by Hall (1978) and more recently Long (2018). Overall "the term 'Black youth' came specifically to denote a problem category" (Alexander 1996, p.9). Despite the suit signifying what is required to be considered acceptable in British society, Black males continued to be viewed with suspicion, based on racial characteristics. As Hirsch (2018) points out in her book *BRIT(ish) on Race, Identity and Belonging*, when a Black male aged 18 years was invited by Teresa May as a keynote speaker at the Conservative party conference in 2014, he explained that he was stopped and searched 45 times by Police officers, from the age of 13 years old.

> There are times when I have been in a stop and search routine and I was in a suit and I was on my way to work experience with a law firm. And for me to get stopped and searched in a suit, it kind of broke my heart. It made me feel like even when I'm wearing their uniform, the uniform of the corporate, of the upper class, going to a law firm, I still cannot get away from injustice just because I'm a black person (p. 239).

The above quotation illuminates that stereotypes of Black males, despite them doing the so called 'right thing', continue to make them subject to injustice throughout the British landscape.

Given the fact that Black Caribbean children still appear unfavourably in school statistics, an important question is raised as to what is it that Black Caribbean mothers have to do to ensure that their third generation children, are provided with equal opportunities in an educational system that continues to operate to the disadvantage of Black Caribbean children (Demie & McLean 2017, Gillborn et al. 2016). The system that is characterised by policies informed by notions of liberalism promoting achievement through unfettered merit, neutrality and colour blindness "which masquerades as fair and just but, because of the uneven playing field of contemporary racist society, they actually function to ensure the continuation of race inequality" (Gillborn 2009, p. 2).

The interest convergence principle is relevant in that it helps to explain Tate's (1997) argument: that claims of neutrality, colour-blindness and meritocracy mask the self-interest of those with dominant power in society. This insight also helps to explain why there are moments of what appear to be impressive justice, whereby those who are not usually in

support of racial equality policies, suddenly align with racialised minorities and show support by making certain concessions, which have a tendency to be short-lived, as explained by Gillborn (2014)

> When calls for change become so great as to threaten the stability of system (then temporary at least) the interests of the white majority are seen to converge with those of the protesting minority group and certain concessions may be granted, but they are then reigned in or removed completely (p.37).

Taking the example of the Swann Report, two decades prior to the Swann Inquiry, Black Caribbean parents, community and educational activists were calling for government support to address the educational disadvantages of Black Caribbean children. It was not however, until the uprising in the early 1980's that forced the government to publish a major report, albeit with "grudging enthusiasm" (Bell & Stevenson 2006, p. 62). The Swann inquiry is not a standalone situation as Gillborn (2008) highlights:

> In England every notable development taking forward antiracist education has arisen in some way as a direct result of action by minoritized people. Often the catalyst for change nationally is a major protest or public injustice, frequently involving bloodshed, even death (p.118)

Such claims are supported by Trevor Phillips 2005 who at the time was the Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality:

> Race equality legislation it seems is always born out of outrage, and all too often tragedy. The 1965 Act came in the wake of the death of the carpenter Kelso Cochrane in Notting Hill, the riots that followed in 1958, and the bus boycott led by Paul in 1963. The 1976 Act followed the rise of the National Front and street clashes which were later to claim the lives of two young men - Kevin Gately and Blair Peach. And of course, the 2000 Amendment Act would never have come about without the death of Stephen Lawrence (no pagination)

In short there appears to be no moral imperative by the government, to ensure the equality of, or racial justice for racially minoritized groups. Despite the Swann Report's ten pages of recommendation for education to develop a pluralistic society with equal opportunities (Tomlinson 2008), the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 firmly embedded a colour-blind approach, at which point educational policy was de-racialised (Tronya 1993) thus leading to race and education becoming de-prioritised.

## 2.5. Racism embedded into the seams of education

Scholars have identified how changes to education policies and the imposed measure, that operate through a market model of education since the Education Reform Act 1988 have negatively impacted on Black Caribbean pupils; (Ball et al. 2012, Gillborn 2005, 2008; Gillborn & Youdell 2000, Rollock et al. 2015). The 1988 Act severed ties with the welfare state principles that had underpinned the Education Reform Act 1944. Rather than a focus on a democratic education that encouraged equity and justice, the 1988 Education Reform Act was concerned with choice, competitiveness and individualism based on neo-liberal ideology (ibid). The move to a market-oriented ideal of the UK education system was designed to force schools to raise educational standards. At the time of introduction, the 1988 education reforms made changes to almost every aspect of educational policy including, devolved funding and restructuring of how schools are financed, parental choice, raising educational standards, diversity and competition, surveillance and control, and curricula control. Given the extent of the substantial changes to the educational policies central to the Education Reform Act 1988, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the effect that all the policies had on Black Caribbean pupils. I will, however, explore how the removal of race from educational policy has, and continues to have a negative impact on Black Caribbean pupils (boys in particular).

From a CRT perspective, education is considered to be the principle means through which White supremacy is maintained (Gillborn 2005). Although Gillborn acknowledges that race inequity may not be an intentional act of educational policy, he argues "neither is it accidental" (Ibid. p.485). His argument is likely to refer to the introduction of the national curriculum reforms which were initially implemented in the Education Reforms in 1988, in which Gillborn (1997) highlights that the national curriculum is a clear example of how discrimination is reinforced as a simple and self-assured form of racism. He argues that promoting a deracialised discourse about nationhood, heritage and a common culture opens a door to racist thinking in educational policy and practice. This will inevitably happen in a structurally racist society blind to race. The implementation of the National Curriculum, imposed by the Conservative government, made a strict set of content that had to be learnt. Ball (1994) claims that the curriculum was part of a New Right 'cultural restorationist' movement which emphasised traditional forms of education and 'real knowledge', which was influenced by Nick Tate, the then chief executive of School Curriculum and Assessment

Authority.   Nick Tate's idea was that the National Curriculum should serve the purpose of focusing on the dominant cultural norms of Britain, which in turn would help British society to maintain its cultural identity. Watley & Sinclair (2013) argue that this was an ethnocentric curriculum based on middle-class values which denigrate Caribbean culture, whilst at the same time reinforcing imperialist views of White being the 'norm'.  These authors argue that in effect, this serves to make Black pupils feel alienated from the school process and thus impedes their learning.

Although the left and liberals expressed the need for a pluralist education, as set out in the Swann Report (1985), the media and proscribed groups (e.g. National Action) showed intense support for a curriculum based on a White British national identity.  Tomlinson (2008) contends that, given that the majoritarian view was that education, or the curriculum, did not need to address issues of racism, explains the lack of political will to examine multiculturalism in schools or develop initiatives to promote race equality during the 1990's.

## 2.6. The changing nature of racism

In this section I will address the more recent period of British racism by considering cultural racism contained in neo-liberal[2] ideology.  I explore how a politically deracialised discourse, encompassed in the notion of colour-blindness and race neutrality is fundamental to the persistence and pervasiveness of racism. Rather than promoting equality as neo liberal ideology contends, Mutua (2006) argues it rather "cements the privileges of whiteness" (p.394).  This has serious implications for Black Caribbean males and raises the important question as to whether they can ever be considered as accepted members of British society that is based on White British cultural norms.

From the position of power and privilege, racism operates on both an individual and structural level (Braham et al. 1997; Shah 2008).  Although acts of overt racism may have to some extent subsided in British society, by the late 1990s they had not disappeared, as noted by Mirza (1998), who states that "good old fashioned biological racism is alive and well and living in a place near you" (p.12).  Without seeking to dismiss the pain that colour prejudice can cause, its effect has no systemic authority Sivanandan (2005). Structural and institutional

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[2] Neo-liberal politics- individual choices exercised within a system of economic market exchange rather than collective political decision making through an interventionist state.

racism, however, has not lost any of its strength and continues to pervade Western societies (Anderson 2010). The issue of racial injustice is a matter that has resurfaced following the killing of a African American male-George Floyd by White police in the U.S. The murder created a public outrage which led to renewed momentum to the BLM movement, witnessed in people from all racial backgrounds fighting against racial injustice, globally.

*From race to Culture*

The removal of race from educational and social policy is seen in the adoption of a colour-blind and deracialised discourse, rather than race the emphasis is on culture. The erasure of race from policy discourse is directly linked with the Thatcherite Project and continued through the conservative administration 1979-1997 (Gillborn 1997). New Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair in 1997 appeared willing to address issues of race inequities, an emphasis removed by the previous Conservative government. New Labour initially appeared interested in exposing and combating racism and other forms of discrimination through the ideology of the Third Way[3]. Tony Blair claimed that education would be the avenue to creating a fairer Britain and reduce the barriers faced by Black and Asian communities in the public. This was clear in Blair's Campaign speeches during April 1997, where he professed that his top three priorities were "education, education, education" (Tomlinson 2008, p.126). Furthermore, his commitment to multiculturalism was affirmed in a speech at the Prime Minister's Millennium Message in December 1996, "Nations that succeed will be tolerant, respectful of diversity, multiracial, multicultural societies" (ibid.). In reality, Blair did little to dismantle the ideological principle of Thatcherism (Heffernan 2014), this was evident in the fact that New Labour continued the political position informed by neoliberalism, and the continuation of a colour-blind discourse, especially in education policy. The lack of reference to race in New Labour's Department for Education five-year strategy, was a clear indicator that race and multiculturalism in the area of education in the twenty-first century, was to become a thing of the past (Gillborn 2005).

The Macpherson Report born out of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (which examined the Metropolitan Police Force mishandling of the racist murder) identified institutional racism in most of Britain's institutions and led to the late 1990's and the turn of the new millennium being a positive step towards the inclusion of cultural diversity in Britain (Tomlinson 2008).

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[3] Third way: A political philosophy developed in the UK akin to centrism that attempts to reconcile right-wing and left-wing politics.

This, however, was short lived and by the mid 2000's race equality and multiculturalism were largely erased from the political agenda. Warmington et al. (2017) contend that by 2010 the race equality momentum from the 1990's had totally diminished. It is suggested that two specific factors were fundamental to the erasure of race equality and the death of multiculturalism in Britain. The first one relates to education and social policy discourse being largely deracialised (Tomlinson 2008; Warmington et al. 2017) and secondly (as we shall see) inter/national antagonisms and urban unrest in various towns and cities throughout Britain which occurred during the first two decades of the twenty first century (Alexander 2014, Gilroy 2012, Kudnani 2012).

David Gillborn and Heidi Safia Mirza were commissioned by OFSTED in 2000, as part the legacy of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry to examine the links between race, ethnicity and educational attainment. The official enquiry led to increased funding to raise the educational achievement of minority ethnic groups contained in the Excellence in Cities Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EIC/EMAG) which provided funding for large scale initiatives such as the Aiming High strategy, which was part of the London Challenge in raising the attainment of Black Caribbean pupils (Tickly et al. 2006). Despite the initiative yielding positive results, funding was cut, and by the mid-2000s the State's interest diverged from issues of racial inequality. This resulted in initiatives on multi-cultural education being abandoned, which Gillborn (2012) argues was a result of the discourse of "White racial victimhood in education" (p.122).

Gillborn's (2012) argument relates to the fact that certain minority ethnic groups were academically outperforming White working-class boys. The sub-categories (introduced in 1992), show that some ethnic minority groups, such as pupils designated as Indian and from other parts of Asia, were achieving significantly higher attainment levels than White working-class boys (Gillborn 2004). This led to government and parliamentary reports and coverage in the mainstream media reporting that ethnic minorities were doing significantly better than poor White boys. Thus the high achievement of some minority ethnic groups is likely to have been the start of the reasoning that racism is no longer a barrier to educational success. Ethnic achievement figures were cited as evidence that systemic racism is not an obstacle to academic achievement (Sewell 2009, 2010). Gillborn (2004) however, highlights that racism works differently for different racial groups which is not taken into account. More detailed examination of this is beyond the scope of this thesis. I have however, given the

reader an insight into the historical experiences of Caribbean migrants in Britain from the Windrush era, demonstrating the forms of discrimination and stereotypes that first-generation Caribbean people were subject to, many of which remain relevant today (see chapter 1).

Whilst it is true that some ethnic minorities were outperforming White working-class boys, this does not include Black Caribbean boys.  In fact, Gillborn (2005, 2011, 2014, 2017), Gillborn and Youdell (2000), Tomlinson (2005a, 2005b, 2008) show that the implementation of education reforms since 1988 into the twenty first century has continually disadvantaged Black Caribbean boys (and girls but in different ways). This has been further hampered by interest divergence strategies, which have been employed through the notion that White working-class boys are the true victims of underachievement.  Another factor that has impeded any progress in Black Caribbean boys' positive school experiences is the absence of equality impact assessments which were introduced following the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and implemented in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRA 2000).  The importance of collating data on patterns of underachievement was set out in the consultation document for the Aiming High initiative, stating

> The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report identified 'institutional racism' in our public institutions.  Institutional racism, because it is unintended, is often difficult to detect.  But, using the data collection methods, we can now identify patterns in ethnic underachievement and look for possible causes in the way education system operates (DfES 2003 p.11)

The RRA (2000) placed a legal duty on public institutions including the government to promote race equality and ensure initiatives do not negatively affect racial equality and there could be consequences if institutions failed to adhere to such provisions.  The Commission for Racial Equality, for example, had the power to enforce the specific duties by issuing a compliance notice (Ibid).   The introduction of the Community Cohesion Agenda (discussed in the next section) however, has resulted in race being significantly de-prioritised.  This has had serious implications for identifying racial inequalities because the CRE which was established in 1976 following the implementation of the Race Relations Act 1976, was disbanded in 2007, at which point its functions were taken over by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (Tomlinson 2008).  Exposing stark racial inequalities has been hampered by the Equality Act (2010) which superseded the Race Relations Act, thus replacing anti-discriminatory laws with a single Act.  It is argued that the Equality Act 2010 has had the

effect of diluting the action to challenge systemic racism (Warmington et al. 2017). Also, David Cameron's announcement in 2012 that new policies will not be subject to explicit equality impact assessments, is a further blow to achieving racial equality (Gillborn 2014). Gillborn argues that the absence of equality impact assessments has and will continue to have a significant effect on Black Caribbean pupils, because "as past experiences show, unless safeguards are consciously included, the effect of new policies is frequently to reinforce race and class inequalities" (p.31). This was the case with the "standards agenda" (Ball et al. 2012) whereby successive governments have implemented educational reforms to increase standards of attainment. Tony Blair for example, introduced new benchmarks for success in 2006, by adopting the "Gold Standard" five GCSE's at the higher pass of A*-C with the inclusion of English and mathematics, which made the benchmark more onerous. The Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2011 believed that the benchmark set by their predecessors was not sufficient and introduced further measures in the form of the English Baccalaureate (EBac). This required five passing grades in English, Mathematics, double science, history or geography and a modern or ancient language (Gillborn 2017). The White Paper (2010) claimed that the EBac policy will "allow all children equal opportunities" (ibid. p.6) and will allow for schools to be a vehicle of upward social mobility by creating a level playing field because pupils will be assessed on a similar range of subjects. The policy does not lead to greater equality because it discriminates in relation to social class which remains a strong predictor of educational achievement (Reay 2012; 2017, Taylor 2011).

Social class is an important issue when considering educational achievement in schools, however, evidence shows that Black students in higher economic positions do not accrue the same advantages as peers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Strand 2007, Gillborn 2015) especially males (Rollock et al. 2015). Black Caribbean boys are disproportionately placed in low ability sets and denied access to higher level qualification as, Gillborn (2011) argues, is clearly evident in relation to the EBac. In an article published in the Guardian, *There's no black in the baccalaureate* Gillborn (2011) argues that "the [EBac] measures introduces a clear race bias into any selection system that adopts it" (p.1). Whilst the implementation of new educational policies impacted the achievement of all groups, Gillborn (2017) argues that Black boys were more severely affected. Gillborn (2011) highlights that 15.8% of all students achieved the EBac in 2011. "The achievement level of Black Caribbean students was 6.8%" (ibid. p.1). Based on these statistics, if universities use the EBac as a candidate selection tool, this will create an automatic race bias. Therefore, confirming

Gillborn's (2011) argument that the implementation of new educational policies designed to drive up standards of attainment do not work favourably for Black Caribbean pupils.

Increasing race bias through the implementation of new measures for success is not an intentional act, rather the introduction of criteria that seeks to raise academic standards into a flawed system will automatically impact on those already at a disadvantage (Gillborn 2017). In relation to Black Caribbean boys, there are considerable systemic and institutional factors that potentially limit their levels of attainment and overall academic achievement. These are wide-ranging and include, school-based selection processes which have the potential to deny educational opportunity. Overwhelming research shows that Black Caribbean boys are disproportionately entered into lower ranked teaching groups due to low teacher expectations (Channer 1995, Gillborn & Gipps 1996, Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Gillborn 2008, Rhamie 2007, Youdell 2004) which results in restricted curriculum opportunity (Gillborn & Youdell 2000, Gillborn 2008, 2014, Strand 2012, Demie & McLean 2017). In school factors include disproportionate numbers in permanent and temporary school exclusions, (CRE 1984, DfE 2018, Gillborn 1995, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Tomlinson 2008, Wright et al. 2005, Wright et al. 2010, Wright et al. 2016), and Black Caribbean boys being much more likely to be subject to harsher punishments than their White peers when accused of same misdemeanours (Gillborn & Youdell 2000, Gillborn 1990, Mirza 1992, Wright 200, Wright et al. 2016). In addition to this, disproportionate numbers of Black Caribbean boys are labelled with special educational needs (SEN) (Coard 1971, Canner 1997, Lindsay et al. 2006, Rollock et al. 2015, Strand & Lindorff 2009, 2012, 2018). These will be discussed in more detail in section 2.8.

In summary, attempts to make success more difficult to achieve have resulted in the widening of existing equality gaps as new measures tend to "reflect the hierarchies of status and treatment that define the racialised education that students receive" (Gillborn 2017, p. 9). Regardless of whether inequality gaps are intentional or not, from a CRT perspective, educational policy seeks to secure White privilege as it "largely serves to manage race inequality at sustainable levels while maintaining or even advancing white dominance of the system" (Gillborn 2014, p.37). Furthermore, the State's use of interest divergence also exacerbates racial disadvantage, thus privileging the interest of White people. Gillborn (2014) highlights that there are clear moments where the state diverges from the interest of racial inequalities which has led to the death of state multiculturalism both in wider society

(resulting from international and national antagonisms discussed in the next section) and in education. This is witnessed in the absence of equality impact assessments and multicultural education, which has been framed in a discourse of White victimhood (Gillborn 2012). The focus on academic improvement, by continuing to raise the bar in educational policies focusing on assessment criteria, has continued to ignore the impact this will have on Black Caribbean boys, who are already disadvantaged in a system saturated in inequalities. I now turn my attention to the second issue that led to the death of multiculturalism.

*International and national antagonisms*

To explore the second factor fundamental to the removal of race and multiculturalism in political discourse during the first two decades of the twenty first century, I will consider the work of Gilroy (2012); Kudnani (2007, 2012); Tomlinson (2008); and Warmington et al. (2017). International and national antagonisms and urban unrest across the UK since 2001 have been argued to have "fed into popular anxieties of multiculturalism, self-segregation, radicalisation of young Muslims and perceived urban lawlessness" (Warmington et al. 2017, p.6) thus contributing to multiculturalism being under attack in government social policies. The coordinated attacks on the U.S. in 2001 (9/11), street disturbances in northern cities in England during the summer of 2001 and London Bombings in 2005 (7/7) are significant in creating populist anti-Muslim views based on politics of fear (Kudnani 2007, Alexander 2014). The argument of cultural diversity being a threat to nation and state security is not a new concept that has created populist views, such arguments however in the past have been expressed by the politics of the right. For example, Margaret Thatcher's public speech in 1978 referred to Britain being swamped by people of different cultures, namely immigrants from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan. The speech had a profound effect on the public, as a survey by the National Opinion Polls showed, the Conservative Party took an immediate lead over Labour following her speech (Runnymede Trust 2008).

These discourses were also a feature of the liberals and the left in the 20th and 21st century (ibid). Curran-Vigier (2008) observes that the New Labour government appeared to reaffirm support for a multicultural Britain, "The, New, Modern Britain was held up as a place of racial diversity, outgoing and embracing change, a stark contrast to the stuffy Britain of the 1970's" (p.75). This author does however, argue that Tony Blair's leadership was not about multiculturalism rather "the Blair project was to develop into an insidious campaign against

British Muslims...The designation of the Muslim community as self-segregating and hostile to British values was a product of the ideological orientation of New Labour" (Ibid. p.65)

The three-way street disturbances between minority ethnic and White populations, and the police in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001 provoked a series of commentaries by politicians and media outlets, which focused on the counter-productivity of multiculturalism. Kudnani (2007) in conjunction with others (Gilroy 2012, Lea & Hallsworth 2012, Alexander 2014) argues that the industrial decline in the Yorkshire textile and steel industries combined with racial discrimination in employment, left minority ethnic young people (mainly Asian) competing with Whites for scarce jobs. Rather than the realities of youth unemployment, poverty and Islamophobic attitudes being explained as fundamental factors leading to the violent conflicts, 'Muslims' and minorities were accused of refusing to integrate.  In the discussions surrounding these disturbances Lea & Hallsworth (2012) highlight the significant transformation of politics, from Keynesian management based on social democracy as seen in Scarman's (1981) recommendation following the Brixton 'riots', to modern day neo-liberal politics.  The message following street conflicts in the early 1980's was that the state had failed certain communities and was thus responsible to ensure the future integration of Black Caribbean and minority communities.  Whereas, the inquiry into the disturbances during the early 2000's led by Ted Cantle, implied that the deficit was within the minority community, expressed in his 'bemusement of how anyone could fail to succeed in a market-orientated society' (Lee & Hallsworth 2012).

Cantle (2001) concluded that it was the existence of parallel cultures that was a fundamental factor to the conflicts in the northern cities, and he called for an agenda based on community cohesion, to connect citizens to a shared sense of Britishness.  This led to policies of integration within the rhetoric of diversity and inclusion.  Sveinsson (2008) contends that this language of diversity and difference has led to a further distancing from the discourse of race, and it is within this context that further problems in addressing racism have been created. Sviensson argues that the rhetoric of diversity and difference is conceptualised in a notion of culture which for him is problematic in two respects.  Firstly, a deracialised discourse suggests that society has advanced so much so, that race is no longer an issue (Ahmed 2009, Gillborn et al. 2016).  This established 'post racial fallacy' is a script that is effective in terms of silencing the discussion on racism (Warmington et al. 2017). The overall tone is that society needs to move on from race equality and "those who contest racism are the source of the problem" (ibid. p.12).  Secondly Sveinsson (2008) argues that racial understandings of

diversity are conceptualised in the notion of culture, which he suggests can lead to certain negative behaviours being associated with certain communities.  An example being the issue of violent youth crime, which Sveinsson argues is habitually invoked as a specific notion of culture to explain the perpetration of gang violence. He explains that this is considered as a "cultural phenomena' which leads to a fallacy attached to certain communities defined by their ethnic identity...thus resulting in that entire community being criminalised based on their culture" (p.6).

Further cultural and religious antagonisms in 2005 led to the naming and shaming of multiculturalism as the reason behind a separatist Britain.  Violent clashes between Asian and Black groups in Birmingham, four British born Muslims who became suicide bombers in 2005, and the fatal attack on Anthony Walker, a young Black male in Liverpool, by men who were associated with a far-right nationalist group (Tomlinson 2008) were all factors used to de-prioritise race and equality.   The Community cohesion agenda was firmly established. Despite claims that it was a strategy for inclusion, it was criticised for its significant step back in race relations. For example, both Gilroy (2012) and Alexander (2014) argue that community cohesion is encompassed in the neo-liberal ideology of modern British politics which seeks to confine a racially diverse Britain within the liberal values of homogeneity and a shared sense of British values, which are assumed by the White majority. Alexander (2014) suggests that the values that constitute Britishness and define the boundaries of citizenship have been influenced by the fear of separatism.  It is within this context that Andrews (2013) argues that community cohesion invokes a spirit of assimilation arguing that "it is based on the fear that the so-called separate lives that minorities (and in particular Muslims) are living create not only civil unrest and distrust but also potential terrorists.  Therefore, it is minorities who can no longer be indulged with multiculturalism and "who need to sign up to the community cohesion agenda" (p.57) and assimilate to the majority culture. This type of modern British racism seeks to discourage difference and alienate those who appear to maintain ties within specific shared cultures and traditional customs, and thereby become subject to hyper-vigilant screening because they breed mistrust towards the state.   This mistrust is evident in the war on terror under the Prevent[4] Strategy (Lea & Hallsworth 2012). New Labour have been condemned for stoking fears of terrorism posed by Muslims, as Tony Blair announced that " terrorism and immigration were the main public concerns" (Tomlinson 2008 p.162).

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[4] The Prevent Strategy: Government strategy to prevent people from becoming involved in extremism.

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*Community Cohesion and education*

The conflated fear of Muslim extremism led to five million pounds being allocated to Local authorities in 2007 to work with young Muslims identified as being vulnerable to violent extremist acts. Community Cohesion was a key phrase under New Labours education policies, and various individuals were allocated positions to firmly embed the agenda in schools. Keith Ajegbo, a former head-teacher and education advisor took the lead on a review of the curriculum and suggested that cultural diversity and social justice were integral to Diversity and Citizenship, (Ajegbo Report 2007), a matter that was also supported by the OFSTED infrastructure (Warmington et al. 2017).

Following the Ajegbo Report (2007), schools had a duty to promote Community Cohesion, which was established in the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This was later overturned when the Liberal/Conservative coalition governments scaled back OFSTED's remit in 2010, when they signalled changes from Community Cohesion to policies of integration through the Big Society narrative. Overseeing the diversity and citizenship aspect of the curriculum became a leadership role within schools (Shepherd 2010). Commentators in support of the Community Cohesion agenda criticised the changes. David Blunkett for instance, opposed the changes on the grounds that cohesion enabled understanding and tolerance of other cultures, and therefore inspections to ensure appropriate delivery in schools was crucial to its fundamental cause. Rowe et al. (2011) support David Blunkett's claims, their research found that most teachers struggled to interpret the guidance and criteria for the delivery of cohesion, but the fact that it was inspected resulted in schools aiming to develop and improve their provision. Although the intention of the diversity and citizenship's aim was to teach pupils to be respectful and tolerant of other cultures and prepare them for the realities of living in a multiracial society, Tomlinson (2008) argues that it did not have the desired effect. Research examining pupils' racial attitudes shown that White pupils segregated from other groups had more intolerant attitudes than those in diverse schools (Ibid.).

The fact that children from predominantly White schools were less tolerant of other cultures highlights the possible limitations of teachers' and schools' ability to firmly deliver the cultural diversity necessary to equip the next generation for life in a diverse racial, ethnic and religious society. Pearce (2005) found that many White teachers felt unprepared to deal with issues of race and culture. This was due to various factors, including their lack of

understanding of institutional racism, due to the subtle ways it presents. Fear of being accused of racism or appearing patronising to other cultures therefore impeded teachers' confidence and ability to interrupt racism, and in Tomlinson's (2008) words to "remain silent is to selfishly ignore the fate of others...It's a no-win situation, and that situation is caused by the fact that white people have always placed themselves outside of race relations" (p.169). Diangelo (2018) observes that as a White person her "race is held up as the norm for humanity, Whites are "just people"" (p.56). She goes on to explain that as a White person she does not have to "carry the psychic weight of race" or racism because she has not been taught to see this problem as her responsibility. This type of attitude has been identified in the views of teachers representatives, as "Teachers Unions pointed out that it was unfair to expect teachers to 'compensate for society" (Tomlinson 2008, p.169). Although there had been some positive action in ongoing professional development of teachers to improve their awareness and capabilities on issues of citizenship education, this tended to be mainly for those teachers who work in diverse classrooms, rather than being embedded into the curriculum of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). De-Luca (2012) has made such observations, highlighting that ITE programmes struggle with, and find it challenging to prepare teachers to confidently address issues of diversity and inclusivity in their classrooms in the UK.

Teachers lack of insight and understanding of racism, as well as the inability of diversity and citizenship education to promote cohesion in schools, was evident in an ongoing project between 1987 and 2002 examining the position of ethnic minority children in predominantly White schools. Although the fourteen schools included in the study claimed they had no issues with racism, the findings showed that "pupils produced stereotyped and negative misinformation about minorities" (Tomlinson 2008, p.168). Similar issues were identified in Carroll's (2002) study which found that Black and ethnic minority pupils attending predominantly White schools were subject to racism on a daily basis. The fact that racism and a lack of tolerance for other cultures were found in predominantly White schools indicates that there is a wider societal view that racism is not White people's problem rather "racism is something that happens to people of color and has nothing to do with us" (Diangelo 2019, p.64), thus leaving racialised minority communities and individuals to find ways of dealing with various racisms (Tomlinson 2008). This requires nothing from the majority of White people and as noted by Diangelo (2019), "reinforces unequal power relations" (p.64) by expecting oppressed communities to expose racism. It ignores the "historical dimensions of race relations... as it disregards how often people of color have

indeed tried to tell us what racism is like for them and how often they have been dismissed" (Ibid.).

As a challenge to the community cohesion agenda, which de-racialised race from educational and social discourse and policy, scholars and anti-racist practitioners collaborated to produce a book that reprinted Bernard Coard's (1971) polemic study of *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System*. The book highlights the impact that structural racism in the educational system has had on Black pupils education and on their longer-term prospects. Despite the reprint exposing the catastrophic consequences on young Black people and the Black community more widely, race continued to be de-prioritised in education policy and discourse. Although the decline of multiculturalism started with New Labour it was finally pronounced dead by the establishment when the Coalition government came into power in 2010 (Gilroy 2012). This was made clear in a speech made by Prime Minister David Cameron, in which similarly to his predecessors he condemned multiculturalism for a lack of integration of other cultures, which he accused of denigrating British values: "Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream" (Cameron 2011).

The speech clearly distinguished racialised minorities apart from British society and rather than an acknowledgement of systemic disadvantage and institutional racism David Cameron insinuates that such cultures are not part of the British mainstream. Such views are powerful in reinforcing negative stereotypes, which are influential in maintaining the disadvantages of Black Caribbean pupils in the education system.

## 2.7. The impact of stereotypes

The impact of stereotyping can affect people in different ways, and it has been argued that some of the implications for Black Caribbean males are evident in educational progress (Gillborn 2013, 2014, 2016), interactions with the police, and harsher treatment including overrepresentation within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Gilroy 2008, 2012, Long 2018).

The impact of stereotypes and toxic associations of Black and/or Muslim youth being labelled as a terrorist, extremist or gang members has serious implication at an agency level. Research conducted with young Black and/or Muslim men subject to probation supervision showed a consensus that their treatment within the CJS reflected this, which has been

exemplified by the gang's agenda (Shepherd 2015). Toxic associations generally derive from less personal interactions and are most likely influenced by wider systems of communications. Various media outlets are extremely influential in providing the public with information relating to events and situations that are outside of their direct experience, especially on the subject of ethnic diversity (Sveinsson 2008). Media influence extends beyond the general public and, as Sveinsson (2008) argues, has immense influence over "elite institutions including, civic society, corporations and politicians" (p.7). This was particularly evident following several gun-related and high-profile murders of teenagers in London in 2007, which captured journalists' attention, resulting in a string of debates. The then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, clearly felt compelled to add his own interpretation to the debates. Whilst the media did not distort his comments, it did amplify them, at which point Alexander (2014) argues it resurrected the notion of the Black 'folk devil', encompassed in 'street gangs'. Alexander (2014) is referring to the 1970's during a period of what was considered the 'mugging crisis', Black Caribbean youth were considered as part of a gang sub-culture subsumed in the Rastafarian themes, the media representation of which created a moral panic whereby Rasta's were cast as the 'folk devil'. The moral panic resulted in criminal stereotypes in the image of the 'Black mugger' at which point Black Caribbean males were considered the enemy of the state, as the term "mugging and Black crime became virtually synonymous" (Hall et al. 1982, p.217).

Tony Blair's speech in 2007 was significant in creating racialised connotations associated with 'street gangs'. His comments, and the media's amplification were extremely influential in regenerating populist anxiety about dangerous Black youth residing within national borders (Alexander 2008). The discourse in his speech is coded within the notion of culture, evident in his choice of words, which include Black kids, gangs and criminal cultures (Daily Express, April 2007). In an expansion of the speech later that year he stated that gun and gang crime is about a specific problem within a specific culture (Alexander 2008). It is widely recognised in 'gang' literature and academic research that urban poverty; social exclusion and marginalisation are factors strongly correlated to young people's involvement in gang activity (Deuchar 2009, Gunter 2008, Hallsworth and Silverstone 2009, Pitts 2008). Rather than address such issues, an exaggerated fear of youth crime, particularly so-called violent and dangerous Black Caribbean youth, became a smokescreen to detract attention from the collapse of Britain's diminishing welfare and social systems (Hallsworth and Young 2008).

The fatal police shooting of the young Black man, Mark Duggan, in Tottenham, London in 2011 led to what were initially peaceful public protests by the local community outside Tottenham Police station. The subsequent police failure to communicate with the community led to an escalation which resulted in riots across London and other major cities throughout England (Densley 2013, Lea & Hallsworth 2012, Long 2018). These riots, which were multi-ethnic, have been considered more concerning than any other street protests that have taken place in the UK to date (Lea & Hallsworth 2012). Although the spark to the initial riots in Tottenham has been considered as being politically motivated (the community wanting justice for Mark Duggan and his family) (Akram 2014), those taking place in other parts of London and England have been characterised  by Zizek (2011 cited in Lea and Hallsworth 2012) as "zero degree protest, a violent action demanding nothing" (p.31). Zizek argues that the social status of many of the individuals involved in the riots  (CJS figures shown many arrestees' were overwhelming young, poor, educationally disaffected, unemployed and had antecedents in petty crime) highlights a generalised "rage of a dispossessed population angry at a system that has failed them but with no vision of an alternative" (ibid. p.31).

Zizek's comments seem to bear significance especially given the global and national economic crisis in the first decade of the twenty first century. The financial crisis from 2008, whereby many banks were on the verge of collapse, led to a recession resulting in significant austerity policies (which initiated many mass demonstrations and sometimes violent protest over the tightening of the public purse) was clearly more likely to impact most on those already at the greatest risk of poverty. In his book *Poverty Safari* Garvey (2017) highlights the anger and displacement of people from deprived communities all around Britain.  He argues this will continue to spill into wider society if there is no remedial action against poverty.  Rather than a national conversation on poverty, austerity and class deprivation or even the everlasting issue of police brutality towards Black communities, criminality was in a large part the only available political narrative. Hallsworth & Brotherton (2011) contend that the government had to make someone responsible for the riots.  The coalition government followed in the 'folk devil' footsteps previously imprinted by Tony Blair's New Labour government. Their political response was condemnation. Politicians and the media proliferated and projected a "narrative fit for public consumption...gangs and gang culture were identified as the masterminds behind organising the riots" (p.3), at which point David Cameron declared an all-out war on gangs and gang culture. (Densley 2013, Hallsworth and Brotherton 2011, Lea and Hallsworth 2012).

Young Black Caribbean males were already heavily connected with the gang culture from previous media and political commentaries, including those mentioned above. This became profoundly worse following David Cameron's gang culture combat declaration, and in the grip of gang fever, many discussions in various media outlets occurred. One highly racialised discourse in particular, suggested that Black youth were not only responsible for the riots, but were also infectors of gang culture and just like a disease they had passed it to sectors of the White working class (Hallsworth & Brotherton 2011). To give an example of how Black people were blamed for the riots and responsible for the actions of non-Black people involved, the historian Dr David Starkey used his televised appearance on BBC 1 Newsnight (whilst paying tribute to Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood speech') to make the claim that "A substantial section of Chavs have become Black. Black and White, boy and girl operate in this language together which is wholly false, which is a Jamaican patois that has been introduced into England, and this is why so many of us have this sense of literally living in a foreign country" (Starkey 2011, cited in Hallsworth & Brotherton 2011 p.4). The significance of raising Starkey's comments is that they demonstrate how white supremacy uses its access to influential mainstream media, which Phoenix & Phoenix (2012) argue is "designed to be opinion (in)forming" (p.67) and is thus extremely influential in fuelling negative stereotypes.

Stereotypes of Black Caribbean males and gangs were firmly fixed in the imagination of the British consciousness many years prior to Starkey's inflammatory comments. Media reproductions in the late 1990's created images and stereotypes of Black Caribbean people and the link with drugs proliferated through the imagery of drugs, gangs and yardies. In the UK context the term yardies refers to Jamaicans who are involved with drugs and violent crimes (Long 2018). The proliferation in media reproductions can be seen for example in an article in the Guardian by Thompson (2003) which headlined 'Without a gun, you're dead': "Yardies have brought a horrific level of violence to Britain". Coded through culture, the racialisation of Black males and gangs arose as a result of an entire police unit, Operation Trident in 1998, which was dedicated to focus on what was referred to as 'Black on Black' violent crime. Operation Trident was initiated to tackle shootings and other forms of violence within the Black community which were considered to be perpetuated by Jamaican gangs (Long 2018). As noted by Akala (2018) the implementation of a police unit dedicated to tackling 'Black on Black' crime with the focus on Jamaican, gangs, speaks volumes "about the perceived relationship between Blackness and depravity in this culture" (p.276).

The over-policing of the Black community has been a long-standing contentious issue, much of which has long been argued to lead to the criminalisation of young Black males (Hall et al. 1982; Gilroy 1987; Long 2018; Amnesty International UK 2018). The 1970's and 1980's witnessed discriminatory policing through use of the *sus laws*, although these were repealed in 1981, discriminatory policing of Black males remains a source of tension due to the disproportionate numbers of Black males in police stop and search figures (Home Office 2014, Dodd 2016, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2013, Lammy 2017, Long 2018, MacPherson 1999, Scott & Spencer 2013, Waddington et al. 2004). Long (2018) contends that the ongoing over representation in police stop and search figures is an example of how stereotypical constructs of Black men continue to embody the criminal threat.

In the following section of this thesis I will explore how stereotypes manifest in the schooling system and the impact these have on Black Caribbean males schooling experience. Three main areas covered include, settings in schools, school exclusions and teachers' low expectations. These areas highlight key issues that the mothers in my research spoke about in relation to how they perceived the impact of racial discrimination in their son's school experience, which questions 1 and 2 emerged from.

## 2.8. In-school factors
### *School exclusion*

Removal from mainstream education, through the use of school exclusion, has been a long-standing and contentious issue for Black Caribbean pupils. They have for a long time been over-represented in the figures for both temporary and permanent exclusions which is a significant factor in denying access to a fair and equitable education (CRE 1984, Gillborn 1995, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Tomlinson 2008, Wright et al. 2005, Wright et al. 2016, GOV.UK 2018,). This thus increases their risk of social exclusion and marginalisation. During the 1980's the extent of the over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils' subject to school exclusions in Birmingham resulted in the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) conducting a thorough investigation. A report published in 1984 found that Black pupils were four times more likely to be suspended than White pupils. Whilst disproportionate exclusions of Black Caribbean pupils were ascribed to inter alia deficits, cultural differences and family practices, these were dismissed by the CRE as causes leading to suspension. Rather the report identified evidence of stereotyping and concluded that institutional discrimination was integral to the over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusions. The

misinterpretations of Black pupils' behaviour and failing to take account of cultural characteristics, such as hair styles, were factors underlying their over-representation in suspension (CRE 1984).

School exclusions remained a major concern for the Black Caribbean community and led to perennial campaigning during the 1990's and early 2000's, resulting in the DfES conducting a priority review in 2006. It was important that education departments took on board an appropriate focus on disproportionate exclusion rates, as without this commitment some parents and activists in the Black Caribbean community believed that state education was not serious about addressing issues of race equality. A report produced in September 2006 titled *Getting it, Getting it right* clearly highlighted the negative impact school exclusion can have longer term (Runnymede Trust 2010). Confirming Gillborn's (1995) argument regarding the denial of basic education, the report stated..."the continued existence of the exclusion gap means that Black pupils are disproportionately denied mainstream education and the improved life chances that go with it" (DfES 2006, p.15), including significant risk of negative involvement with the criminal justice system (Runnymede Perspectives 2010). The clear message in the 2006 DfES report concluded that the exclusion gap is caused by systematic, racial discrimination in the application of disciplinary and exclusions policies. Yet despite DfES initiatives and policies put forward by mainstream educationalists and the advice and guidance of community activist and parent groups, the disadvantage prevails. Black Caribbean pupils are three times more likely to be permanently excluded than their white counterparts and mixed-race pupils have the highest rate of both temporary and permanent exclusions (DfE 2018).

Despite the CRE findings and the priority review, critics argue that little has changed, and schools continue in their use of exclusion mechanisms to "rid themselves of black and other pupils regarded as undesirable" (Tomlinson 2008, p.123). Wright (2010) argues that teacher stereotyping and constructions of Black pupils "work within the context of institutional racism - that is the discourses, procedures and expectations within the education system" (p.317). For example, the discourse surrounding the policies on behaviour is bound up with notions of what a good academically successful student looks like, including what to wear, when to arrive, when to leave, when and when not to talk etc" (Ball et al. 2012 p.130).

Such discourses become normalised within the individual institutions and the wider context. They sculpt and shape institutions, workers and student identities. Whilst the language in school policies may not be explicit, the notion of what is considered a good student is implicit within the discourse, which is translated in to what is considered an ideal or desirable student (Ball et al. 2012), therefore students who are considered as less desirable are more likely to be at risk of punitive measures. Thus, the issues of black exclusions may not be evident in direct overt racialised attitudes, but rather inferred through implicit discourse which is then interpreted by teachers. It is argued that this results in Black boys being perceived as undesirable students, based on White British norms. For example, Wright (2010) contends that the undesirability of Black pupils is considered from the norms of middle-class teachers or those teachers who choose to assimilate to a white middle-class identity. Wright therefore argues that, it is from this race and classed position that "teachers construct the "stereotypical 'ideal pupil', which is imbued with whiteness" (p. 316) which therefore has particular implications for Black boys.

For example, in her two-year ethnographic study, Wright (2010) focused on secondary school processes leading to Black exclusion and found that hegemonic whiteness is implicated in teachers' views of Black children. White hegemony is considered as a systemic structure which emphasises and reinforces racist ideology of White superiority in pedagogical and societal practices. Wright (2010) argues that White hegemony is intersected with race, class and gender to categorise Black males who are part of a black subculture which is interpreted as intrinsically deviant as they are diametrically opposite to whiteness. This relates to how teachers perceive Black youth as larger, aggressive and loud, which Wright (2010) contends is also gendered as having male attributes. The adoption of a Black subculture, which has been referred to by scholars such as Sewell (1997) as Black masculinity, makes Black boys hyper-visible and leads to teachers perceiving Black Caribbean males as anti-establishment (Wright 2010). A study by Alexander (1996) shown that some participants recognised that aspects of Black identity, such as the use of patois vernacular, was associated with a negative image or a lower social status. As a result, some of the Black youth in the study chose assimilation approaches in an attempt to set themselves apart from being viewed as working class Blacks. As Rollock et al. (2015) have demonstrated, regardless of social class, this does not act as a protective factor against disadvantage within the British schooling system.

Sewell (1997) notes that Black sub-cultures have long been a source of contention and

conflict in teacher perceptions and attitudes, leading to discrimination towards them. Hair, music, style of dress and dialect have all been contentious issues, deriving from Rastafarian philosophy, which included dreadlocks, reggae music and wearing specific colours symbolising the ideology, hip hop and more recently ragga (deriving from reggae music). All of this, Clay (2003) argues, is not solely about performance but includes presentation and appearance which are part of a cultural package associated with Black subcultures. These, Wright (2010) argues, are interpreted as anti-establishment and a "challenge to authority...and incommensurate with the desirable learner" (p.316). As such the identities and behaviours of Black pupils are pathologised and punished more harshly than their White counterparts, such "differential treatment of Black students results in disproportionate suspension from school" (Gibson 2012, p.7).

In stark contrast other writers dispute internal school factors as reasons for Black exclusions. Perhaps one of the most outspoken critics is Tony Sewell, a Black academic and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the charity, Generating Genius. Dr Tony Sewell founded his charity in 2005, which offers Black boys educational training and mentoring (Sewell 2010b). Sewell writing for the Runnymede Trust in 2010, argued that the educational failure of Black boys is due to father absence which results in the over feminizing of Black Caribbean boys due to being raised and living in lone mother households without active male role models (Runnymede Trust, 2010). The impact of absent Black fathers has led to interventions designed to address gaps in education which have focused on male mentoring approaches (REACH Report 2007 and the Mayors Mentoring Programme London 2018), which often has the undertone that Black Caribbean family deficits or more specifically absentee fathers are the reasons for educational inequalities (Runnymede Trust 2010). Reynolds (2009) provides a direct challenge to claims of over-feminized boys due to absent fathers. Reynolds found that, even when Black fathers are not living within the family home, they are still active in their children's lives and therefore are not considered absent. Furthermore, it has been argued that consideration needs to be given to the valuable support provided by extended Black Caribbean male family members, who are integral to younger male generations in terms of providing them with notions of manhood (Chevennes 2002).

Although the reasons regarding Black exclusions continue to be contested and debated within the academy, in the news and media, there is an emerging consensus that school exclusions have a strong correlation with negative involvement in the Criminal Justice System CJS for

all ethnic populations. Charlton et al. (2004) contend that the majority of men in custody had been excluded at some point in their schooling career. The message is stark as is evident in the words of the former Director General of HM Prison Service, Martin Narey: "The 13,000 young people excluded from school each year might as well be given a date by which to join the prison service some time later down the line" (cited in Akala 2018, p.276). The over representation of Black males in exclusions from school, this suggests a continued trend in the over representation of Black men in custody. Concerns regarding links between school exclusion and crime are not new, but more recent concerns relate to the specific issue of excludees being considered vulnerable to involvement in gangs and therefore being at risk of perpetuating or falling victim to serious violent crimes (Christle et al. 2005, Pitts 2008, Deuchar 2009, Scott and Spencer 2013). In 2018 this issue received significant media attention following the publication of the *County Lines Scoping Report* (Hudek 2018).

Under the Education Act 2002 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a pupil can be permanently excluded from school if school policy has been seriously broken or if s/he is thought to be at risk of seriously harming the welfare of others in school if they were to remain in the establishment. The Local Authority, however, must provide alternative education from the sixth day of the exclusion. If subject to a fixed-term exclusion, pupils may not be barred from school for more than forty-five days within any school year, and the Local Authority (LA) is obliged to make alternative provision if the fixed term exceeds five days (Parkes 2012). Despite the intent of the policy it is argued that this is flawed in practice as on average according to research in 2013 only 15 percent of those excluded went back into education (Scott & Spencer 2013). For African Caribbean boys in particular, those excluded from school were extremely critical of alternative provisions and "soon made the decision to drop out anyway...they are then disadvantaged in the job market because they lack the qualifications that employers are looking for" (ibid. p.58). It has been widely argued that those who are excluded are then further hampered in an unfair job market that discriminates against Black men (Braham et al. 1992, Virk 2012, Scott and Spencer 2013, Li & Heath 2016, 2018).

Even for those Black Caribbean males who do not experience school exclusion the academic performance of Black Caribbean males has long been considered a factor that leads to wider social exclusion and limited opportunities. It is identified as a factor linked to an increase risk of criminal activity (Christle et al. 2005, Gunter 2008, Sebates 2008, Glynn 2014) and

joining gangs (Deuchar 2009, Scott and Spencer 2013, Factor et al. 2015)

*Teachers low expectations*

Attainment levels and educational underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils has been given much focus over the decades and is documented in a plethora of literature from the 1960's onwards. Some writers in the area of race and education contend that the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils is directly linked to explicit and implicit acts of racism which influence school practices through teacher assumptions and assessments. For example, in their study Rollock et al. (2015) highlight that many of the Black Caribbean parents they interviewed are recounting similar problems of low teacher-expectations regarding potential academic ability in the 21st century to that of their own experience in 1960's, 70's and 80's. Teachers are viewing Black boys as having less academic potential than that of their white peers, due to negative stereotyping of Black males in British society. The parents in the study are not alone in their concerns as Sue (2003) argues that the negative portrayal of young Black males as violent, aggressive, misogynistic and disruptive has reinforced some teachers' negative attitudes towards Black males, thus resulting in ongoing disadvantage in terms of educational achievement.

Whilst it has been documented that teacher attitudes towards Black Caribbean males is a significant factor in terms of the Black/White achievement gap (Mirza 1998, Rollock et al. 2005, Gillborn 2010, 2011, Gillborn et al. 2012, Reay 2017) anti-black racism is both an individual and structural characteristic of the English education system (Gillborn 2017). The individual element is seen in the way that educational professionals present themselves, but it is not solely the personalised system of actions that contribute to educational inequalities. It is also the systematic processes which makes anti-black racism "so resilient…and thus, remains unaltered" (ibid. p 2) which is why CRT is important in educational research as it places race at the centre (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, 1997, Solórzano 1997, Parker and Lynn 2002, Lynn et al. 2002, Chatterton 2013, Gillborn 2005, 2015, 2017).

As I have noted earlier racism is not only systemic but reinforced by the actions of individual actors. The Black Caribbean community has persistently argued over many decades, this is a significant contributory factor in limiting their children's academic potential. As noted by

Rollock et al. (2015) "Teachers not only teach but decide the academic fate of students who are selected to different teaching groups and curricula options from the moment they enter schools" (p.62). Students entering secondary schools are assessed on entry and for Black Caribbean pupils, especially boys, they are more likely to be placed in lower attainment groups that restrict curriculum choice and determine entry to low status examinations (Gillborn 2006, 2008, 2010, Tickly et al. 2006). The stark evidence of discrimination relating to teacher assessments was clearly identified when David Gillborn and Heidi Safia Mirza were commissioned by OFSTED in 2000, as part the legacy of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (see MacPherson Report 1999) to examine the links between race, ethnicity and educational attainment (Gillborn & Mirza 2000). They reviewed baseline assessments from six Local Education Authorities (LEA) using a mix of data, which included written tests and teacher assessments to measure the level of intelligence of pupils when they entered school aged five.

Several issues similar to those of eugenics-based assessments were identified. The review highlighted compelling evidence of discrimination towards Black Caribbean pupils. The examination of the data shows that despite Black pupils having the highest scores of all ethnic groups on entering school aged five, in all six LEA's surveyed the relative educational attainment position of Black Caribbean pupils worsened as they moved through the school system and they left school as the lowest performing group (Gillborn & Mirza 2000). The report received media attention at the time and although institutional racism was clearly identified in the MacPherson Report (1999) across many areas of the British landscape, the inadequate national policy response to the evidence of clear racialised patterns of educational discrimination across all six LEA's is argued to have further reinforced educational disadvantage for Black Caribbean pupils. The implementation of the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) a non-empirical assessment method of assessing children's potential academic ability, which is based on individual teacher's judgement, before being moderated by the LEA. This has resulted in a continuing trend of underestimating Black Caribbean pupil's academic intelligence (Gillborn 2008, Rollock et al. 2015).

Phoenix (2009) argues that since the migration of Black Caribbean people following World War II, teachers have projected inferiority on Black Caribbean people, especially in schools, by restricting their education and adjusting their career aspirations downwards due to their bigoted beliefs. Whilst teacher racism has been identified as a factor in the underachievement of Black Caribbean boys, by placing them in hierarchical sets below their academic potential,

King (1991) contends that this is not solely related to direct and overt bigoted beliefs, but rather 'dysconscious' racism, a concept that King (1991) contends "is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges" (p.135). The author further suggests that this is not unconsciousness, but rather that it is an impaired or distorted consciousness of the way teachers think about race. This is what CRT theorists contend is a socially constructed identity which signifies a set of beliefs, assumptions and practices that serve the interests and perspectives of White people, as it is a taken for granted privilege of Whiteness (Ladson-Billings 1998, Picower 2009, Sleeter 2011).

It is important to state that teachers are not a homogenous group, but even for Black educators their identities as teachers are located within White privilege. They themselves have been educated within institutionally racist structures of white supremacy, arguably this does not best place them to look critically at how whiteness is the normative standard (Delgado & Stefancic 2012) and how this affects their treatment and judgement of Black Caribbean boys. It has been claimed that, many "adopt an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes and assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given" (King, 1991, p.135). Therefore, the use of CRT in educational research is integral to challenging this social construction that constantly reinforces the power of white identification, norms and interests (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). I draw a similar conclusion in the behaviour section of this chapter. It is this identification that frames Black Caribbean boys as problematic.

For example, through her study Clay (2003) explores the importance of Hip-Hop culture as a form of cultural capital and its relationship to Black youth identity and how they use Hip Hop in their everyday interactions with peers. Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capital as the knowledge, skills, values and experience that provide advantage which give them high status in society. Clay (2003) explains that the most popular youth are those who appeared accepting of their Black identity, those that were able to perform to Hip Hop in a style that was natural, not just a matter of performance, but with presentation and appearance, including aesthetics, manipulation of gestures and fashion, all part of the cultural package. Clay states that "Cultural capital is a tool that acts as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go in the fields of production-struggles in which the agent wields strengths and obtain profit proportionate to their mastery of this objectified capital" (ibid. p.1354).

Similar to the issue raised earlier regarding Black males' adoption of Rastafarian philosophy as a way of negotiating a hostile environment, current forms of cultural capital are crucial to acceptance with peers. Such popularity, however, does not extend to mainstream society, and means very little outside of the Black community (Clay 2003). This is what Youdell (2003) highlights within her notion of 'identity trap' which is crucial to explaining how Black students fail at school. Whilst elements of Black youth sub-cultural identity are also forms of cultural capital that place some Black boys in a position of privilege amongst students and in relation to popular culture, that capital is considered as a form of resistance to White cultural hegemony. It is thus framed as deviant and a challenge to white authority within the school institution, thus framing Black Caribbean students as "deviant and as undesirable learners" (Youdell 2003, p.5).

There is tension within the debate relating to the underachievement of Black Caribbean boys. Some take a position that is at odds to the arguments summarised above. Such arguments relate to deficits within the Black Caribbean community majority which has caused contention within the debates relating to Black Caribbean pupils' underachievement and stem back decades. For example, in the 1960's and 70's Black Caribbean underachievement was blamed on authoritarian parenting (Bagley et al. 1978), which Phoenix (1988) argues contributed and redressed such pathological debates of Black pupils' deviance and behavioural difficulties. Black underachievement continues in the context of deficit families. Rhamie (2012) contends this is situated within the prevailing myths about Black parents' lack of interest and support for their children's education. He does, however, state that the findings suggest this is not the case. Rhamie's claims are supported in the small number of studies that have been undertaken with Black Caribbean parents, such as Crozier (2005) Demie & McLean (2017) Rollock et al. (2015). Rhamie (2012) does acknowledge however, that some Black Caribbean parents themselves are in need of guidance on the best and most appropriate way to support their children in the education system; a system that they too may have been exposed to and experienced the hostility of blatant racism of the 1960's, 70's and 80's.

There appears to be little regard given to Rhamie's acknowledgement of parents' own experience of racism at school, or the challenges Black mothers face in a racialised structured society and its institutions that are intent on damaging their loved ones (Brown 2020). In both the U.S. and UK, scholars argue the claim that Black parents are uninvolved with their child/ren's education tends to be because schools consider involvement based on traditional

participation activities such as, attendance at PTA meetings, school governance and volunteering in classroom based activities (Crozier 1996, 2001, Demie & McLean 2017, Gillanders 2012, Lawson 2003). Writing in the U.S. Lawson (2003) argues that a significant factor prohibiting racially minoritised parents from involvement in school centric activities is due to the gulf between teachers' and parents' worldview, in that teachers and schools fail to acknowledge the classed and raced position of Black and other racialised groups, and how notions of race neutrality and individualism influence teachers negative perceptions of racially minoritised parents and their children. Crozier (2001) argues that the deracialisation of parental involvement, due to race neutral education and parent involvement policies "masks the complexity of needs masks the roles that ethnic minority parents are playing or the constraints that impede their involvement" (p. 330).

Crozier (2001) also asserts that for many school activities that teachers define parental involvement based on 'universal values', in practice based on English identity and notions of Englishness and nationality, thus equating to the cultural norms of Whiteness. Therefore parental involvement in the "normative sense is, in fact, underpinned by the specification of the good parent: constructed on the principles of universalism in the sense that they must be shared by everyone regardless" (Ibid. p. 333). Basically, to be involved and valued by teachers, Black parents are required to assimilate to the norms and values of Whiteness. This is potentially problematic, as such assimilation requires Black parents to assume and agree to the norms of White society, which position their children, families and communities within a pathological and deficit framework.

*Special Educational Need (SEN)*

In this section I will consider how the intersections of race, gender, class and disability contribute to the educational disadvantage of Black Caribbean boys. Research shows that boys are significantly over-represented in most categories of SEN. Black Caribbean boys in particular are twice as likely than their White peers to be labelled in the category defined as Behavioural, Emotional, & Social Difficulties (BESD). Gender is also correlated with socio-economic disadvantage in the identification of SEN (Lindsay et al. 2006, Strand & Lindsay 2009, 2012, Strand & Lindorff 2018). Gillborn (2015) however, shows that unlike the White middle classes, social class and cultural capital offer little protection to Black Caribbean boys in the area of dis/ability and SEN. Despite a growing number of Black middle classes in the

UK, Black Caribbean families are assumed to be working class (Rollock et al. 2015), a matter highlighted by Channer (1995) over 25 years ago. The process of identification for categories of BESD is of particular concern as they are identified and diagnosed from pupils' behaviours which are interpreted on expected patterns of norms, and therefore are socially constructed (Lindsay et al. 2006). This clinical judgement made by education professionals has proved problematic for the educational outcomes of Black Caribbean pupils over many decades. Race conscious scholars have argued that such educational 'norms' are assessed and interpreted from school professionals, whose understandings, assumptions and expectations are embedded in White middle-class values (Coard 1971, Demie & McLean 2018, Gillborn et al. 2012, Gillborn 2015, Sleeter 1993, 2001, 2011, Wright 2016). The identities and behaviours of Black Caribbean boys (which have been, and continue to be, based on negative stereotypes in schools and wider society) are defined as diametrically opposite to the White middle-class background of educational professionals (Wright 2010).

The troubled history of race and SEN in the UK, was evident in the publication of *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System*, which sold over 10.000 copies. This polemic work by Bernard Coard (1971) was fundamental in exposing the scandal of systemic discrimination evident in the over representation of Black Caribbean pupils being placed in segregated facilities. It is suggested that initially Black Caribbean parents in the 1960's and 70's were happy for their children to be placed in segregated facilities. They were told that their child would receive intensive support and eventually be placed back in mainstream education. Richardson (2005, p. 31) claims that Black Caribbean parents on the whole responded well to such offered support, "believing them to be intentionally good" According to Coard's analysis, the evidence clearly showed that there were no positives to Black Caribbean pupils' relegation to Educational Subnormal Units (ESN) rather it was based on biased attitudes seen in what was considered as low teacher expectations of this particular group. Such bias was reinforced through psychometric tests designed to measure ability and potential intelligence via standard IQ tests. Such forms of testing were favoured and considered credible as writers such as Jensen and Eysneck (1971) argued that IQ tests measured something real and significant known as intelligence, an innate capacity of the mind. Mirza (1998) argues that such 'expert' opinion provided palliatives for a system happy to be reassured that the educational failings of Black pupils were a reflection of their own inner deficits rather than an unfairness in the schooling system.

At the time of writing his famous polemic, Bernard Coard identified White supremacy as a significant factor in the negative labelling and stereotyping of Black Caribbean pupils (Coard 1971). As Richardson (2005) has written, a key argument was the claim by Coard that White middle-class teachers and psychologists "believed their standards to be right and superior" (p.35). Eventually, many years after Bernard Coard's publication the establishment did undertake a review of some of the contentions that had been raised in the form of the Swann Report. However, as previously noted this was also as a result of public outrage by the Caribbean community, progressive educationalists and scholars were involved in mass campaigns to secure equitable education for Black children (ibid). Unfortunately, the situation of Black Caribbean children labelled and stereotyped as having SEN remains a contentious issue in contemporary education (Tomlinson 2015). The current situation regarding Black Caribbean pupils and SEN is that they continue to be disproportionately assessed for, and labelled with, the two most frequently diagnosed categories of SEN, Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD). Whilst there is limited national representative studies exploring SEN demographics in England over the past two decades, two studies by Strand and Lindsay (2009, 2012) revealed that Black Caribbean pupils are disproportionately identified and labelled with MLD and BESD. These findings have been supported by other studies during this time period, Lindsay et al. (2006) and Strand and Lindorff (2018).

As noted earlier, disproportionate numbers of Black Caribbean pupils relegated to ESN in the 1960's and 70's was as a result of teacher perceptions and racist attitudes, which continues to be a contemporarily factor. However, Lindsay et al. (2006) suggest the situation is much more nuanced and simple generalisations about Black pupils cannot be made because not all categories of black groups are over-represented in BESD. In fact, the evidence shows an under-representation in SEN for pupils in the Black African category (Lindsay et al. 2006; Strand & Lindsay 2009, 2012, 2018). Similar to under-representation in identification of SEN, Black African pupils are not overrepresented in other areas of negative statistics such as, school exclusions and low attainment, unlike Black Caribbean boys (Strand 2012). Lindsay et al. (2006) contend that both over and under-representation of Black and ethnic minority pupils identified in figures of SEN is problematic, as both can result in lower educational outcomes. For example, when analysing the under representation of some minority ethnic groups with English as a second language, teachers may not consider such groups as having an additional learning need, but rather issues relating to language barriers.

Although much of the literature relating to disadvantage focuses on over-representation in SEN, under-representation can also be problematic because pupils whom have additional learning needs may not receive the necessary support and interventions. Whereas those groups in the figures of over-representation face additional dilemmas, including stigmatisation and labelling, thus potentially exacerbating low academic performance (ibid.).

There are various factors that relate to reasons for under and over-representation in numbers of SEN amongst different ethnic groups however, when considering the over and under representation of Black pupils in the category of BESD, teacher attitudes are inextricably linked. Lindsay et al. (2006) contend that "teachers' perceptions and expectations of minority ethnic pupils, their understandings of different cultures, pupils' responses and reactions to this, and teachers' reactions to behaviours which they consider challenging" (p.9). A considerable amount of literature has identified that prejudiced attitudes and teacher racism has led to their perceptions of Black Caribbean pupils' identities and behaviours as severely challenging and has resulted in exclusionary practices (CRE 1984, Gibson 2012, Gillborn 199, Smith & Tomlinson 1989, Wright 2010, 2016), which is also a contributory factor in this group being placed "in stigmatised SEN categories" (Tomlinson 2015, p.25).

When considering the stark disparities of under and over-representation in SEN between different categories of Black pupils, I feel it is important to refer back to the issues discussed at the beginning, in order to remind the reader of the importance of the history of race relations in Britain. Strand and Lindorff (2018) refer to the recent nature of migration as being a possible factor relating to the difference between Black African and Black Caribbean pupils identification in SEN. Larger numbers of Black African populations have recently migrated to the UK, whereas Black Caribbean populations arrived in the late 1940's. To be clear, it is important to state that Black people from both the African and Caribbean diaspora were present before increasing numbers of Caribbean migrants came to Britain during the 1940's and 1950's as both the work of Fryer (1984) and Olusoga (2016) demonstrates. Fryer for example, reports that people of African heritage were present in England as early as the 14th century. The initial hostility towards Black Caribbean migrants by sections of the white indigenous populations, was fuelled and reinforced by the media. The continuation of hostility has remained, but in a different form, as racism is fluid and ever changing.

Although both Black African and Black Caribbean have the same racial characteristics, a

deracialised discourse as led to culture being the main determinant of racism (Sveinsson 2008). This contemporary form of racism is seen in the demonization of Black Caribbean males proliferated through aggression and criminality encompassed in the notion of culture, particularly Jamaican culture. Tomlinson (2015) has argued, that these stereotypes "may not mention 'race' but are firmly related to student, family and community 'cultural' deficiencies (p.25). Although Strand and Lindorff (2018) refer to the recency of migration, I believe that Tomlinson (2015) raises a pertinent issue which highlights the historical views encompassed in the legacy from the social structures of imperialism which have led to different forms of racism. These continue to influence distorted educational views about migrant populations and inform modern day assumptions in education. Tomlinson highlights that those arriving from former slave and plantation societies were regarded less educationally aspirant, compared to those from parts of Western Africa, Indian and Indian sub-continent who were viewed as more likely to aspire in business and considered more educable (Ibid.).

The deficit perspective is seen in the fact that some teachers feel that additional learning need is linked to a lack of parental support, research findings however, have shown that this is not the case, and at an individual level ethnic minority parents are highly involved in supporting their children with additional learning needs in schools (Lindsay et al. 2006, Strand & Lindsay 2009, 2012). Tomlinson (2015) argues that the model of deficiency has led to further difficulties for Black Caribbean boys, because it is regarded as an individual problem requiring expert intervention. This has therefore led to the de-politicising of SEN, which limited the possibility of societal conversations which influence and drive equal opportunity policies (ibid. p.10). In the area of policy, the marketisation of education is a significant factor that has exacerbated issues in the area of SEN (Lindsay et al. 2006). Competitive market forces have encouraged schools to compete with each other for students, and with publicly published league tables documenting schools examination results, this has, in many cases, led to a rejection of pupils considered 'undesirable' or perceived as less likely to achieve what is considered the benchmark for success. Given that teachers believed that Black Caribbean students are more likely to have emotional or behavioural problems, which is a code for behaviour troubling to schools it has led to an increased risk of Black Caribbean boys facing exclusionary school practices (Tomlinson 2015).

Although Rollock et al. (2015) contend there is "clear evidence of an assumption that disability represents a stable, unyielding, life sentence of educational underachievement"

(p.92), these authors fully acknowledge that, with the appropriate support and interventions, pupils with additional learning needs can achieve positive educational outcomes. However, the decision to pursue a formal SEN assessment, for Black Caribbean parents in contemporary times is not taken lightly. This is because they are aware of the potential dangers of their children being negatively labelled in schools (Ibid.). Parental advice contained in the government's advice for parents of children with disabilities (DCSF 2009) documents a series of steps in obtaining the necessary support for young people with additional needs and highlights the necessity of a shared understanding of SEN between both parent and teacher as well as a trusting relationship between both parties.

What is clear in the study by Rollock et al. (2015) was that regardless of the fact that some children can reach their full academic potential when necessary modifications are made, having the necessary cultural and social capital is also a major benefit in ensuring the best outcomes. However, Rollock et al. contend that "the majority of Black students do not have parents with the necessary capital in order to increase the chances that schools follow formal procedures to actually conceive of a way forward" (Ibid. p. 92). They also found that those parents with the necessary professional knowledge "are dismissed so readily by the school" (Ibid. p.83). Previous research also shows that Black Caribbean parents are frequently marginalised when engaging with the schools on behalf of their children (Crozier 1996; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Wright et al. 2000)  This reinforces the cultural deficient debate as teachers continue to regard Black Caribbean parents as "deficient, uninterested and uninvolved in their children's education" (Rollock et al. 2015 p.2). There is however, a long history of Black parents and sectors of the Black Caribbean community engaged in informal and formal actions to combat the educational disadvantages of their children as detailed in the introduction. Furthermore, "the attendance of almost a thousand Black parents, across various social backgrounds, at the regular London Schools and the Black Child conference is just one example which immediately discredits such generic claims" (Rollock et al. 2015 p. 2).

## 2.9. Conclusion

The aim of my research is to explore the experiences of Black Caribbean boys in mainstream schools from the perspectives of their mother. It seeks to examine how 'race' and ethnicity continues to place boys of Black Caribbean heritage in a disadvantaged position. This chapter

has therefore reviewed scholarly literature that has enabled an analysis of the continued existence of racial inequalities faced by Black Caribbean people in British society from the Windrush era to modern day. Drawing on relevant scholarly literature I have shown that the racialisation and politicisation of immigration was the point that anti Black racism was embedded into the seams of British society. Through an analysis of the Black Caribbean community's resistance to racism as a necessary response to the racial inequities, it is evident that the state will employ both interest convergence and interest divergence strategies to benefit White supremacist ambitions. The political shift from Keynesian style political management to neo-liberal politics and a meritocratic ideology has further exacerbated racial inequalities. The de-racialised and colour-blind discourse with a specific emphasis on the non-biological notion of culture, has been effective in 'othering' the Black Caribbean community especially males. This chapter has also analysed contemporary fears that have been proliferated to the mass British public through political and media narratives, which have been successful in creating racialised stereotypes of the dangerous, aggressive drug-dealing, gun-wielding gang member, which are powerful in influencing schools and teachers' negative perceptions of Black boys.

The review of relevant literature has highlighted some of the factors that have been critical to maintaining the educational disadvantage faced by Black Caribbean boys in the English school system. Through the review of race conscious scholarship, it is clear that the pathological view of Black Caribbean boys that is so evident in wider society, is also embedded in the school institution. This along with the avalanche of educational policy changes from the 1980's through the first two decades of the twenty-first century continually conspires against Black Caribbean boys' educational success. The market ideal of education characterised by neo-liberal perspectives of meritocracy, policy implementation for new benchmarks for success, have all been ineffective in creating educational equity for Black Caribbean pupils, as educational policy, whilst maintaining and advancing White dominance (Gillborn 2014). Through analysing the work of educational scholars, it is clear how the colour-blind discourse, the language of culture and diversity and the erasure of race, is critical to the cumulative negative school experiences, evident in the patterns of Black Caribbean boys' over-representation in all aspects of negative school statistics.

This chapter has also considered the intersectional oppressions, such as race, gender, class and ableism. The analysis of literature that considers social class position, however,

highlights the fact that social class has little advantage for Black Caribbean children as they continue to be disproportionately labelled with SEN (Tomlinson 2015). Taking into account the growing Black Caribbean middle classes in England, the empirical evidence shows that social class position has little benefit in improving the educational outcomes of this particular group (Rollock et al. 2015). A further explanation for the educational disadvantage of Black Caribbean boys in educational literature is the alleged lack of parental involvement with schools and therefore keeping in tradition with CRT, section 2.3 of this chapter considered some of the literature exploring the voice of Black Caribbean mothers contained in scholarly social research. Whilst this area of research is limited, it is effective in providing a counter-narrative to the assumptions and prevailing myths about Black Caribbean parents' lack of support of their children in the English educational system, albeit in forms that is undervalued by schools and teachers.

From a review of the literature I have revealed that there are patterns of cumulative negative disadvantages facing Black Caribbean boys in the English school system. I have highlighted how the insidiousness of modern-day racism makes it difficult to address issues of racial disadvantage, and that the notion of living in a post-racial era provides a barrier in exposing racial discrimination. Furthermore, the master narrative is effective in producing damaging stereotypes proliferated through political and media discourse, thus reinforcing the deficit-model as an explanation for Black Caribbean boys' educational disadvantage. Reviewing this literature has assured me that CRT is the most appropriate theoretical framework to support the aims of my research and continue to place race at the centre of debate whilst seeking social justice. I am confident that my research can build upon and contribute to the continual development of CRT in education in England, which I intend to do through valuing and exposing the voices of Black Caribbean mothers. As with any research there are potential ethical implications, however, research with Black communities raises additional dilemmas, and there continues to be a culture that research on Black communities raises questions as to what benefits it has for the community (Ochieng 2010). This along with other ethical cautions will be the focus of my next chapter, where I will also outline and explain my methodological approach.

**Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology**

In this chapter I introduce and justify my chosen methodology, methods and research assumptions. I have drawn upon CRT as my theoretical framework, and in this chapter, I clarify and explain its application to this study. My positionality as a researcher is critically considered in relation to my methods and approach, and my ontological and epistemological position will be clarified in this chapter. I explain why I decided to adopt focus groups with mothers of Black Caribbean descent, all of whom are known to me, as my main primary research approach and discuss the implications of this decision. Throughout this chapter I navigate important ethical issues on the role of research in Black communities.

**3.1. Methodology**

Methodology is a process of describing the choice and justification for the research methods used to obtain data. As Sikes (2004) argues, it is important to justify and clarify through critical analysis the methods that will enable the researcher to understand and improve knowledge about the subject area under scrutiny. Researchers in the area of the social sciences must understand that "multiple perspectives and interpretations are almost inevitable" (Ibid. p.15). Sikes therefore advises that " a good rule is never to think that anything is straight forward and 'obvious, never take anything for granted and never to leave any assumptions unquestioned" (Ibid). Throughout this chapter I will introduce and evaluate my methodological approach to justify the process of attaining knowledge and I will establish a framework for considering the most appropriate methods through which to collect and analyse data.

The aim of this research is to explore Black Caribbean boys schooling experience through their mothers perspective. I employ a qualitative approach as qualitative research seeks to understand people's lives and how their worldviews have shaped their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). I decided to examine the issue through the eyes of mothers of Black Caribbean descent to obtain accounts of their experiences of supporting their sons through the English schooling system. Why did I decide to do this? The nature of my profession has required countless interactions with young people, and whilst they appear happy to engage in discussions, I have witnessed the distress that reliving certain aspects of their circumstances (some of which has been no fault of their own), has caused. I am aware that research has the

potential to cause harm to any participants. That is why ethical review is essential. Children and adolescents, unlike adults are still in a period of rapid social development which involves learning the skills that enables them to relate safely to others. It is important for children to build a positive sense of identity in the context of overt and covert racism evident within British society, including in education establishments. As I was not sufficiently confident that my research would not contribute to emotional harm, by stimulating past trauma and without a therapeutic context to support it. I decided not to involve children and adolescents as participants. The inspiration to research with Black Caribbean mothers arose during my activism (discussed later in the interpretivism section) which involved working alongside Black Caribbean parents, mainly mothers.

During this work I was able to experience empowered mothers, a contrast to the dominant discourse that reinforces negative stereotypes, thus contributing to misrepresentations of Black Caribbean family life, particularly the role of Black Caribbean mothers (some of which I have outlined in chapter 2.3). Rather, what was clear was something that Brown (2020) highlights in her auto/biographical research using an intersectional analysis to explore the views of Black Caribbean mothers engaged in community activism, addressing issues of urban gun crime. Like Brown (2020) I witnessed the "love and commitment and aspirations that Black Caribbean mothers had for their child/ren, and the emotional and intellectual labour needed in their daily strategies to keep them from harm" (p.1). Most of the mothers' strategies were directly supporting and educating their sons to negotiate a society that views them as subordinate, and dangerous. As I have outlined in the introduction chapter, this fear of Black boys is a distinct feature of racism, which differentiates the schooling experiences of boys and girls. Strategies involved interactions with various professional and state agencies, including regular interaction with their child's school, in attempts to limit their sons being influenced into inappropriate or illegal avenues.

McKenley (2001) argues that Black Caribbean voices are relatively silent in the educational debate because Black Caribbean parents are rarely being asked to contribute. Reynolds (2005) highlights that Black Caribbean mothers' voices in particular, are marginal in scholarly social research in the UK., or presented with stereotypical and pathological assumptions. Therefore, by researching with Black Caribbean mothers I could contribute to an area that is significantly limited in educational research. In addition, privileging the voices of Black Caribbean mothers can help to reverse the negative narrative and reveal how these

mothers can offer different perspectives and solutions to ongoing educational disadvantage faced by Black Caribbean boys in English schools (Crosier 2005). In addition, researching with Black Caribbean mothers created a space where Black Caribbean women could reason and share their experiences of motherhood and mothering "in a racist society and centre what is habitually ignored" (Brown 2020, p.1).

I recognise that from a CRT perspective, the pervasiveness of racism creates additional challenges to Black Caribbean mothers' commitment to their children, which extends beyond the care and protection of their sons. Rather, societal racism demands that Black Caribbean mothers actively challenge pervasive norms and values that are not only damaging to their loved ones (Brown 2020) but that also identify Black Caribbean children as inferior (Reynolds 2005). The CRT perspective was a crucial element in defining the choice of methodology and methods. Like the mothers participating in this research, I describe myself as a mother of Black Caribbean heritage, who has supported my children through the English school system. Both my theoretical perspective and insider relationship (which I will discuss later) are significant factors in the philosophical approach to this research. Sikes (2004, p. 5) recognises this and states that:

> Usually, the most significant factor that influences choice and use of methodology and procedures is 'where the researcher is coming from' in terms of their philosophical position and their fundamental assumptions.

By acknowledging my positionality, I open myself and my research to scrutiny and take on the importance of acknowledging potential biases in design and interpretation. My positionality is also a methodological benefit, enabling me to build rapport with my interviewees and go deeper into complex and sensitive issues than might otherwise be possible. This and related ethical issues are addressed later in this chapter – see *Insider researcher, Ethical guidelines and Reflexivity.*

*Interpretivism*

My theoretical approach follows an interpretivist position which is largely associated with qualitative research methods. There have been ongoing debates over the decades surrounding objectivity, subjectivity, positivist and interpretivist approaches in the social sciences (Silverman 2013). From my perspective one of the most important challenges to positivist

methods of research comes from feminist researchers, "who maintained that the scientific positivist approach itself represented a masculine understanding and interpretation of the social world and that dominance of understanding and interpretation of the social world led to inequality" (Matthews & Ross 2010, p.40). Therefore, feminist approaches based their research on how the material conditions in a gender unequal world negatively impact on the lives of women.

Feminist researchers have been pivotal in developing and encouraging qualitative approaches to social research with the focus on the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Other critical perspectives have built on the philosophical attitudes and constructs for attaining knowledge in educational research. For example, Dillard (2000) draws on theories of feminist thought and conceptualises an 'endarkened' feminist epistemology. In contrast to 'enlightened' feminist epistemology, the author states that an 'endarkened' feminist epistemology "embodies a distinguishably different cultural standpoint, located in the intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socializations of race, gender and other identities and the historical and contemporary context of oppressions and resistance for African-American women" (Ibid. p.661). Dillard (2000) is suggesting here that epistemologies need to be from a Black perspective which will require research communities to be exposed to theories, perspectives and views that emerge from the experiential knowledge of marginalised communities (Milner 2007).

My research is exploring issues relating to race, with Black female participants. It is therefore important that the methodological approach does not reinforce issues of inequality. Silverman (2013) highlights one of the main reasons and justifications for using qualitative research methods. It is one that complements my chosen theoretical framework, "researchers are often interested in the stories that people tell one another and researchers" (p.352). From a CRT perspective, knowledge is generated through storytelling and counter-narratives that emerge from Black peoples' experiential knowledge. By privileging and valuing the voice of racially minoritized participants this enables them to become empowered participants in the research process, making their experience central to the research process and providing a commitment to social justice (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Another important factor behind my decision to employ an interpretivist approach to this research, is because in contrast to the positivist stance, qualitative approaches accept that

their research is not value-neutral and employ methods or procedures that make no attempt to "separate the researcher from the researched to obtain objectivity" (Greenbank 2003, p. 793). The latter statement does not authorise total subjectivity in research, rather it is an acknowledgement that educational research will inevitably be influenced by the researcher's values (Banks 1998, Hammersley 2000, Sikes 2004). Sikes (2004) argues that researchers need to be aware that their values may unavoidably influence the type of methodologies and methods and the implications and consequences can make any type of research problematic. Others, however, contend that the implications and consequences of researcher values can be problematic, dependant on whether they are conscious or unconscious (Banks 1998, Hammersley 2000). If researchers accept that the production of their research is value-laden, then they are more likely to identify and explicitly examine their own values, ethics and motives influencing their research (ibid). I will now explain the situational factors that underpin my philosophical assumptions influencing this study.

My relationship to this study is guided by both professional and personal factors. Having spent over two decades working for the Probation Service, I have been exposed to the realities of the stark racial inequalities in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Additionally, I have been engaged in community activism working with parents, mainly mothers, to address issues of inter-community violent conflict. Both roles have involved me working with young males of Black Caribbean descent, many of whom were involved in both non-violent and violent offending. My role in community activism involved working with parents, mainly mothers, some of whom, but not all, had sons at risk or vulnerable to inter-community conflicts. Both roles involved endless encounters with agents from many state and voluntary institutions, many of whom were positioned at senior levels and had significant influence in terms of policy making and professional practices.

Through my activism I witnessed first-hand the negative stereotypes and assumptions (some subtle, others not so) that were attached to Black Caribbean parents, especially mothers, regarding our ability to parent Black boys. I witnessed the discourses of professionals which were rooted in the pathologizing of Black family structures, and attitudes that suggested that Black Caribbean cultures (especially males within those cultures) are inherently deviant or predisposed to violence. This was despite overwhelming evidence that many of these young males (involved in acts of criminality or not) were disaffected by high levels of school exclusion and underachievement, over policing practices and disadvantaged in the job

market. Possible institutional actions to address disadvantage were seldom considered. Rather interventions and policies influenced by the government's Risk agenda, (especially the gang agenda) were given priority. These directives dominated criminal justice operations and disproportionately impacted Black males (Shepherd 2014). Given my role as a Probation Officer I was required to work within the boundaries of these operations, and therefore, part of my motivation for leaving my permanent role as a Probation Officer arose when I realised I was powerless in a system dominated by whiteness, that perceives Black males as a problem, rather than considering the failure of a society centred on whiteness to treat Black males equally (West 1993), thus limiting their chances of success. Therefore, I knew that I could not be part of the solution whilst I was a significant agent involved in the problem. Rather I wanted to explore critically the possible relationship between educational disadvantage and criminality.

As a mother of Black Caribbean heritage supporting my son through the English state educational system, I have experienced certain worries and anxieties about how to help him navigate to survive and also thrive in a system saturated with inequalities that continually disadvantage and disaffect Black Caribbean boys' educational experiences. It is these professional and personal factors that underpin my philosophical assumptions and have influenced this research. They therefore need to be explicit making clear that I am not a detached researcher, for example, I am researching with women I have known in a personal capacity for thirty years or more, all who, like me, define themselves as being of Black Caribbean heritage and are supporting sons through the English schooling system.

### 3.2. Insider researcher

I believe that the insider approach provides many advantages to the research process whilst at the same time providing greater rigour that serves the goals of qualitative research for social justice in minority communities (Banks 1998, Chevez 2008). However, some scholars challenge such claims. In summary of these criticism (Banks 1998; Chevez 2008) claim that insiderness is problematic. They suggest that researchers who have deeper insights about the people, communities or events they research are likely to create biases that complicate their ability to interpret or observe. Chevez (2008) contends that the insider bias argument relates to the notion that insiders may be "overly positive or negligent if the knowledge, culture, and experience she/he shares with participants manifests as a rose-colored observational lens or

blindness to the ordinary" (p.476). Chevez (2008), however, acknowledges that such claims are not based on any empirical evidence.

Chevez (2008) argues that there is little structured guidance to preparing novice researchers for researching from an inside perspective. Traditional training in research methodologies and epistemologies are from the outsider perspective, and consider issues such as developing rapport, trust, and gaining access. Chevez (2008) suggests that an insider approach is in reverse to the outsider perspective, whereby researchers should develop some understandings of themselves, and how their social positions may differ to their participants. She does contend that it can be a difficult foresight to have, especially when preparing for complications. Rather these tend to become evident through critical reflection. Glynn (2018) discovered that tensions and ethical issues continuously arose during the process of his research with males involved in the criminal justice system, some of which were not anticipated and therefore had to be dealt with on an "individual and daily basis" (p32).

There are many advantages to the insider approach to research, such as, gaining access and rapport building. Having what Chevez (2008) refers to as a 'blended status' a researcher with personal connections with research participants, I found my entry into the research process antithetical to how some describe it. For example, Rabiee (2004) identifies the challenge of gaining access, recruitment of participants and building rapport with participants from minority ethnic backgrounds, which he relates to a possible lack of informants confidence and low self-esteem, especially if partaking in groups. Whereas, Ochieng (2010) highlights that rather than issues of confidence and self-esteem, there are possible issues of mistrust and cynicism from Black communities. She reports that due to her race and ethnicity "members of these groupings were enthusiastic about the research, commenting that there had been too little research with an African-centric focus" (Ibid. p.1726). Also adding that "a number of potential participants were cynical about the value of my research, commenting that previous work directed at people of African descent within the region had not yielded perceivable benefits" (Ibid. p.1727) My insider status with individuals with whom I had pre-existing relationships with, thus afforded me "ease of entrée" (Chevez 2008, p. 482).

These insider factors were of significant advantage. An important aspect of embodying insiderness relates to a fundamental issue underpinning feminist criticism of traditional based research and concerns ethical considerations. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) refer to co-

construction between the researcher and the participants. Rather than researching 'on', the insider approach encourages a collaborative process of researching 'with' participants. Feminist researchers critiqued positivist research because of its smokescreen of "impartiality, and objectivist neutrality" (England 1994, p.243), which has the potential to result in exploitation of participants and treat people like objects (Ibid.). Feminist researchers therefore argued for a process which contrasts starkly with the outsider perspective, encouraging and "seeking reciprocal relationships based on empathy and mutual respect, and often sharing their knowledge in the research process" (England 1994, p.243).

Furthermore, a development from feminist and other critical epistemological positions (such as decolonising, endarkened feminist approaches) is the notion of supplication, which England (1994) explains is a process which involves the researcher "exposing and exploiting weaknesses regarding dependence on whoever is being researched for information and guidance" (p.243). This aligns with my theoretical framework. To explain, Critical Race Theory values the voice and the experiential knowledge of marginalised groups, through the use of narrative. CRT perspectives therefore acknowledge and respect that the participants are experts in the production of knowledge, based on their own lived experiences and realities. As such, "the researcher explicitly acknowledges his/her reliance on the research subject to provide insight into the subtle nuances of meaning that structure and shape everyday lives" (Ibid. p.243). On the particular note of participants' information and knowledge sharing, my familiarity with the mothers is likely to have created a safe space and a more comfortable environment to reveal in-depth intimate and frank details of their lives, as they are aware of my empathy of their situation (Brewis 2014). Such empathetic and advantageous aspects of insider research, however, are juxtaposed with other ethical considerations which are not experienced by outsiders. This is discussed in the reflexivity section later in this chapter.

*Participants*

The study involved five mothers all of whom define themselves as of Black Caribbean heritage and live in the city in which the study took place. A concern regarding insider status suggests that the process of selection can be biased. In order to safeguard against this I selected friends who had one or more sons between the age 8-18 years, all of whom had attended or were currently attending a state school in the city. The mothers' perspectives

derive from seven different schools.

## 3.3. Ethical guidelines

Although the women in this study are close friends of mine, the study followed the full ethical guidelines informed and agreed by Sheffield University (see appendix 1). Ethical principles included information about the study, informed consent and issues of confidentiality and privacy. Although I know the women in a personal capacity, informed consent is important as defined by Frankfort-Nachmais and Nachmais (1992). It protects and respects the right to refuse to participate, explicitly highlighting that participants can withdraw at any point. I acknowledge that the research took place in my home (which they were all familiar with as they had been to my home in a personal capacity) and therefore participants' withdrawal may not be as easy as if it was somewhere considered more neutral. Chevez (2008) found that doing research with participants with whom she has intimate relationships was advantageous. She was able to detect hidden behaviours and perceptions, that aided her in knowing when to and not to press for further information to obtain data, in other words "mediating when an interviewee no longer wanted to participate in the research game" (Milner 1997, cited in Chevez 2008, p.488).

Similarly, I felt that my familiarity with the participants was an advantage because, knowing the women for such a long time, I was able to gauge other identifiers of language, and was well positioned to see if any of the women were uncomfortable during the process. Although having the advantage of recognising other identifiers of language had its benefits, I was also conscious that as an insider researcher who has a long-standing intimate relationship with these women, I needed to remain cautious about issues of power and representation in relation to the ethics of interpreting and theorising about the unspoken data. In particular, I was sensitive to historical emotional trauma that the women in this study have experienced. Henderson et al (2017) identify that Black people educated and socialised in societies saturated with racism are likely to suffer 'race-related trauma', a concept that occurs as a result of the effects of racism, particularly in the school environment. This is a result of adverse interaction, whether that be at conscious explicit level or due to institutional and symbolic racism which these authors define as "beyond individual acts and through macro-level interaction that takes place in often unconscious ways" (p.927). It is depicted in the

policies and practices that create unfair educational conditions and experiences for Black youth.

I was conscious of the image that I present here about the emotionality of Black women. Few et al (2003) rightly point out that as a Black female researcher, with the privileged position as a conduit of presenting Black women's lived realities and experience into the academic field, I am accountable not only to those in this study but to the wider Black community. I have a responsibility not to reinforce race and gendered stereotypes and assumptions. This requires significant caution when analysing and interpreting the emotionality of Black women who, as Ashley (2014) highlights, have been characterised as "aggressive, ill-tempered, illogical, overbearing, hostile and ignorant" (p.28). Such characterisations lend to the view that Black women have a 'chip on the shoulder', a term used to suggest that Black women hold grievances to readily provoke disputation. This falsification is acknowledged by Doherty (2020) who argues that "the logical claims levelled at Black women, then, are that she would find any opportunity - real or imagined – to identify a problem, gain a bad attitude and be generally mean" (p.555). Therefore whilst understanding the emotional trauma present during the mothers' discussions, it was evident the women used their "collective histories to counteract racism" (Mama 1995 cited in Wright et al 2021, p.40). This was the focus of interpretation: the positive coping strategies and internal strength demonstrated in their resilience, evident in the ways that they support their sons as they journey through the English state schooling system.

Prior to providing the participants with any official information and a consent sheet, I had an informal conversation with each one individually, either face to face or by telephone. This involved asking them if they would be willing to take part, although all the women were aware that I was studying and the subject area, it was important that I gave them information about the focus of the study, criteria on which I based selection of participants and choice of methods I was considering.

I also informed them all about other women I had asked to participate and welcomed their thoughts about the whole process. In light of the fact that two of the mothers had another child in the past two years, it was suggested that the venue needed to be suitable for babies and young children, such as having appropriate feeding and resting facilities. I suggested my home, as I had recently had a grandchild living at my home, so it was child friendly. In

addition, all the women were familiar with my home, and were all in agreement. All of the women were enthusiastic about the choice of method as it would give us all an opportunity to get together, as it had been a while since some of the mothers had seen each other. I suggested that I would send out some potential dates, which I did via text message. I had invited six women in total, however, on the trial run, one of the women did not attend and did not contact me to say that she would not be taking part. I was concerned that she had not made contact, whilst at the same time not wanting her to feel pressured. I decided to send her a text message to check that she was ok but was mindful not to mention the focus group session. She did not attend any of the focus group sessions, a topic that has not been mentioned between us, and has not affected our friendship. In order to protect the mothers anonymity, they all chose a pseudonym of their choice, as detailed in below:

| Pseudonyms | Age | Profession | Comments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cleo | 40-45 | Probation Officer | Cleo completed her compulsory education at a local state school and went straight to college, aged 16 years old. Following the completion of a BTEC in Health and Social Care, she defied advice from teachers and career advisers, who had suggested she should consider working entering straight into unskilled manual labour on leaving school. Cleo instead attended university and obtained a Batchelors Degree in Social Work. She has worked in the public sector for 24 years. She has two sons who at the time of study one was in year 5 and the other was in his first year at college. |
| Venus | 45-50 | Business Owner in Retail | Venus completed her compulsory education and obtained several CSE qualifications, explaining that she was not allocated to sit the higher exam papers (O Level). Venus reports a positive school experience, she relates this to the socialisation aspect of schooling. On leaving school Venus worked in the leisure industry for several years, until the birth of her son, following which time she decided to leave her paid employment, but undertook activism working with women seeking asylum in her local community. When her son entered secondary school, Venus established her own business in retail in which she currently works full-time in.<br><br>Venus has one son who left school at the time of this study |
| Olivia | 40-45 | Teaching Assistant | Olivia reports a negative schooling experience. She recalls being excluded at the age of 14, having been accused of assaulting another pupil. Olivia was allocated to another mainstream school but |

acknowledges that, following false accusations and being placed in a different school from all her friendship networks, with many of whom she had attended primary school, she became demotivated. Olivia did not sit any formal exams at school and recounts her parents dismay at her underperformance at school, given the high regard they had for the English schooling system. Olivia explains that her parents did not fully appreciate the impact that racism had on Black British born children. Following the birth of her third child, Olivia returned to education, initially attending college and completing her GCSE's in Maths, English and Sociology before enrolling onto an access course to enable her to enrol at university, where she completed her Batchelors Degree in Early Childhood Studies. She explains that her motivation to return to education was to feel better prepared to support her sons through their educational journey. Olivia is currently studying an MA in Social Work. She has three sons who at the time of study were in year 4, year 7 and eldest one in his first college year

| Tallulah | 40-45 | Probation Officer | Tallulah was born in the city of study, works full-time. Attending an all-white secondary school, Tallulah describes experiencing racism on a daily basis which resulted in her becoming extremely demotivated. She left school prior to the compulsory leaving age, failing to sit any formal exams. Tallulah described that her return to education was soon after the birth of her first child, as she wanted her children to believe that they could "achieve whatever they wanted to". Tallulah describes her initial return to education as extremely daunting and recalls enrolling on a Return to Learn course at a local community hub. She went on to complete her GCSE's, an Access Course, a Batchelors and MA degree. She has undertaken local community activism in attempts to limit gang behaviour in her local community. She has two children, one son and one daughter. At the time of this study Tallulah's son was in year 11 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Amy | 35-40 | Beautician | Amy was born in a town in North East England and moved to the city of study at the age of 12. Amy states that she truanted a considerable part of her secondary education, describing feeling bored and alienated in the school environment, much of which she believed was a result of moving to new city at the age of 12. Amy did not achieve any formal qualifications from school. Although she recognises the value of education which she believes is a vehicle to upward social mobility, on reflection she also believes |

that the teachers at her school showed little interest in her abilities, explaining that she really enjoyed and did well at primary school. Amy states that "if she could turn back time, she would not have made it easy for them (the teachers) by reinforcing their lack of belief in my abilities". Amy's experience has been extremely influential in supporting her children through their schooling journey, including challenging teachers and schools if she feels that her children are not receiving the educational entitlement. At the time of study Amy was on maternity leave, and had 3 children, two sons and a daughter. Her eldest son had left school the year before this study at which time he was not engaged in education. Her youngest son was under school age at the time of study.

## 3.4. Reflexivity

The process of reflexivity involves the researcher turning the gaze inwards enabling them to be reflective and self-critical, inducing self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self. This is what England (1994) refers to as the reflexive 'I' of the researcher, which she argues replaces the objectivity and observational distance of positivist approaches to research by the researcher recognising the potential subjectivity of human interaction during the process of research design and interpretation. The importance of reflexivity in relation to this study focuses on how my role as a researcher played out in terms of power dynamics. Given that the participants in this study are close friends, whom I have always viewed as equals, critical reflections or what Chevez (2008) refers to as "looking insider out" (p.480) raised ethical dilemmas, in relation to power dynamics.

As previously stated, I do not claim impartiality. Whilst my insiderness provided many advantages to the research process, it is not without potential conflicts and complications. Impression management is one particular issue that I recognised during the data collection process, but not for the reasons that other researchers have identified. Hockley (1993) states that insider researchers may be required to align with the views of the participants, thus demonstrating that the insider researcher is not "manifesting out-group or undesirable characteristics" (p199). Hockley's explanation is what Banks (1998) refers to as 'the indigenous-outsider', arguing that the researcher was raised and socialised in the indigenous community, but assimilated into the oppositional community, thus sharing the perspectives,

views and values of the outside community.  This was not my situation.

In his article, *Race, Culture and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen and Unforeseen,* Milner (2007) highlights that what both Banks (1998) and Hockley (1993) are highlighting – there is a potential danger when a Black researcher studies Black community. Milner asserts that the researcher may focus on the negative attributes of communities of colour, as they have been "kidnapped into believing that they are inferior" (p.388).

My awareness of impression management raises an ethical issue.  Because the women trusted me and they knew of my intentions and investments in the Black Caribbean community, there was a possibility that some of the women may seek my validation of their experiences.  This was evident in their words, as occasionally individuals directly asked me 'that's right isn't it' or 'do you think so', and their non-verbal communications, including direct looks after making a statement or nodding their heads at me, seeking clarification.  I explained to the women that I consider them to be experts by experience and value their personal voice.  I was conscious that my confirmations or disclosures may help construct a particular perspective or picture in my friends' minds (Chevez, 2008). On reflection, however, I realised that this notion of supplication that I originally believed to be a positive ethical consideration (discussed earlier in insider researcher section) in reality can, as England (1994) contends, be considered exploitative.  England argues "essentially, the appeal of supplication lies in its potential for dealing with asymmetrical and potentially exploitative power relations by shifting a lot of power over to the researched" (p.243).  It is important, however, to critically consider the power relations in even this type of research encounter.  One particular issue that raises a dilemma as an insider researcher was what feminist researchers have referred to as 'textual appropriation'. England (1994) argues that 'textual appropriation' is being an inevitable consequence of fieldwork research, which she acknowledges can create discomfort for researchers, who like me want to engage in truly critical research (for me conducting this critical study is about transforming this academic study into action for social justice). However, as England (1994) argues, as qualitative insider researchers we cannot totally avoid the contradictory position in which we find ourselves.  For example, I listened to the women divulge and reveal some of the shocking stories relating to themselves and the most important people in their lives (their child/ren) and, whilst listening empathetically, also found myself "thinking how their words will make a great quote for my paper" (ibid. p.250).

Various solutions to reduce any adverse consequence of 'textual appropriation' have been proposed. These include sharing prepublication reports with the participants as a measure to avoid misrepresentation, or to identify any specific personal data that participants request be removed, or to produce lengthy direct quotes to 'give voice' to the researched (Bryman 2008, Chevez 2008, Ellis 2001, England 1994). The validity of such processes is questioned as ultimately the researcher has control over what quotes are used, and other contextual editing of the overall argument of the study, and whose voice to use in the final published text (Nygreen 2006). The process of this study raised these ethical dilemmas. I realised that I have more capacity to affect these women's lives than if I was a stranger. This relates to what Brewis (2014) says in relation to the frankness and depth of the narrative collected by respondents who are also friends. I had to ask the question, is it ok to move our private moments of exchange into what will eventually be a public realm.

Brewis (2014) highlights that it is "difficult to envisage how it will feel to have our personal stories recounted in an academic publication" (p.855). Whilst I had been explicit prior to gathering empirical data about ethical considerations such as confidentiality, this was about the data being written up and available to people in the academic field. I had not given much thought to the possibility of publications, at which point we do not control, who chooses to cite the work further or in what context it is used. Despite discussing these issues with the women, who all agreed they were happy to allow their stories to enter a public realm, I felt some unease. It highlighted that regardless of how much I wanted to ensure the integrity of my research, I had to accept that there is an inherent hierarchy in the researcher-participant relationship, one that involves "instrumental use of another" (Platt 1981 cited in Hockey 2006, p.212), even if they are friends.

### 3.5. Focus Groups

Although focus groups were developed by pioneering researchers such as Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton in the 1940's, they have gained popularity in collating qualitative research in the social sciences in the postmodern era (Onwuegbuzie et al 2009; Smithson 2000). Scholars have identified that research should consider the knowledge of the psychological and social processes of the "norms, values and experiences of the particular population under study" (Hughes & DuMont 1993, p.775). These authors conclude that focus groups are a

positive way to facilitate such goals. Onwuegbuzie et al (2009) contend that focus groups are "less threatening to many research participants" (p.2) because informants are not required to answer specific individual questions, as is the case with one-one interviews, rather focus groups can afford safety in numbers" (Barbour 2010, p.4). The following arguments around the benefits of focus groups highlight that there are also reasons to be suspicious of them insofar as they are successful in gaining access to groups that are considered hard to reach groups. Such as those who have antipathy towards authority, individuals not engaged in services (Barbour 2010) or those mistrusting of services and research, such as individuals from racially minoritized backgrounds (Gillanders et al 2012).

Gillanders et al (2012) studied African American, Latino and low-income students across Pre-kindergarten and primary grades, using focus groups to collect data to identify minority parents' educational goals and aspirations for their children. Gillanders et al (2012) conducted focus groups with participants because they recognised that the school's traditional forms of collecting data - surveys and questionnaires, may be a barrier to collecting information from minoritized groups. Focus groups can have the advantages of participants feeling safe, having a sense of belonging and cohesiveness and providing a socially orientated environment (Onwuegbuzie et al 2009). In my study, one of the participants asked me to cook a Caribbean dish. Given that food plays a significant part in many of our social gatherings, I felt this would encourage a socially orientated environment, thus making the focus group sessions more relaxed. By producing a Caribbean dish this allowed us all to share something of cultural significance, as a precursor to the respondents being asked to produce and share their data with me and each other via the conduct of the focus group. Whilst some argue that heterogeneous groups provide diversity, Hughes & Dumont (1993), others contend that sameness is advantageous especially when researching perspectives from people from minority backgrounds (Burman et al 1998, Barbour 2010, Smithson 2000). Gillanders et al (2012) recognise the advantages of sameness, and placed mothers and moderators from the same ethnic background together as they believed this would make the parents feel more comfortable to discuss issues that concerned them, whilst ensuring less barriers, language and social norms for example.

Whilst I recognised the benefits of some of the aforementioned issues, (same ethnic background, socially orientated environment), other factors influencing my decision to conduct focus groups came from my theoretical framework that values the experiential

knowledge and privileging of the voices of racially minoritized groups. As previously stated in section 2.3, Black Caribbean parents, especially mothers, are relatively silent or pathologised in scholarly debates and academic research. A focus group methodology provides a safe space (Onwuegbuzie et al 2009) where Black Caribbean women can reason and share their experiences with each other (Krueger & Casey 2008) and to some degree frame and normalise their accounts (Burman et al 1998). In addition to this, given the intimacy of my relationship with the participants, focus groups seemed to be less artificial. I am aware of some of the challenges and complications the mothers have had in supporting their sons in education, and therefore asking direct questions, in one-to-one interviews for example, would appear artificial.

The focus group is considered to be less artificial because it "emphasises group interaction" (Bryman 2008, p.487), which is a familiar part of social life. Silverman (2013), however, cautions researchers about suggesting that conversations are either natural or artificial as, regardless of the research methodology, they are occurring in a controlled setting. Silverman therefore advises that when analysing data collected from focus groups, they should be analysed with consideration of the fact that they have occurred within a controlled setting. From this perspective, I argue that focus groups are "a social event that includes performances from all" (Smithson 2000, p.105) and able to offer less artificiality due to their approximation of a more natural social event than is offered via 1-to-1 interviews. This therefore allows for a "greater opportunity to derive understandings that chime with the lived experiences of women" (Bryman 2008, p.487).

Sharing experiences with other participants can enable the mothers to put their experiences in a bigger context and to see possible institutional and systemic issues affecting Black Caribbean boys, thereby offering an alternative to the populist explanations of underachievement in deficit models. Focus groups can be empowering in that the women can be "collectively powerful as they have access to shared knowledge" (Smithson 2000, p. 112). In addition, given that all the women share similar characteristics (race and ethnicity, age, mothers) this within-group status "prompts focus group participants to elaborate stories and themes that help researchers understand how participants structure and organise their social world" (Hughes & DuMont 1993, p.776). This is further advantaged by the fact that I too share similar attributes and characteristics. Similarly to the moderators in Gillanders et al (2012), my insider status limits the potential for constructing the participants as the 'other'

(Smithson 2000).

I conducted three focus group sessions with five mothers of Black Caribbean heritage with sons between 8-18 years of age, a range that spans key decision-making and transition points in the English education system (Gillborn 2015), over a period of five weeks. My reasons for planning to meet more than once and having a relatively small number of respondents was because the nature of the research is personal to the group members. Their experience as mothers having children educated in the English schooling system, as well as their own experience as pupils, means that participants would likely have a lot to say. Bryman (2008) advises smaller groups "when topics are controversial or complex and when gleaning participants personal account is a major goal" (p.479). Krueger & Casey (2008) endorse Bryman's view suggesting that smaller groups are more advantageous if participants have experiential knowledge as they may have more to say. By having more than one meeting of the focus group allows for memories that have been re-awakened in earlier sessions to be shared, and for respondents to reflect on the emotional impact of having shared their stories in those earlier sessions.

Interestingly, Smithson (2000) highlights that participants with experiential knowledge tend to dominate discussions about subjects they are familiar with. For example, Smithson (2000) draws examples from ten focus groups from a research project across five European States, exploring young people's expectations for the future, examining employment and family orientations of young men and women between the ages 18-30 years. Smithson highlights that participants with experiential knowledge, such as those that were already parents, dominated discussions relating to parenting and childcare. She does however report that participants from ethnic minority backgrounds did not raise or discuss issues relating to race and ethnicity, unless their minority ethnic group was the majority within the focus group. Smithson's example confirms Barbour's (2010) argument about safety in numbers and Gillander et al. (2012) decision to employ 'sameness' of ethnic background together. These factors encourage an inclusive environment so that marginalised groups feel safe to air their opinions, experiences and perspectives, thus their voices can contribute to scholarly research and academic debates. Furthermore, it also speaks to one of the most common forms of racist expression, the gas-lighting of Black people's experience by those from the majority group. Sharing in a group where the minority ethnic group is in a majority means not having to expend time and energy convincing others that the experience happened or having the

subsequent discussion then centred on supporting the majority ethnic person's emotional response to hearing about that experience.

The first focus group session was viewed as a trial run. This would also allow the mothers to see if the practical issues worked for them.  Certain aspects of the initial focus group highlighted changes that needed to be made. Oppenheim (1992) and Morrison (1993) both highlight the issue of testing the data collection process, which was an area that required adjustment.  When I had tested the voice recorder prior to the pilot session taking place it worked fine.  I did not anticipate however, that when more than one person was speaking it was not clear or easy to understand, sounding distorted and muffled, making it inaudible at times.  Bryman (2008) notes that people's voices are not always easy to distinguish when conducting focus groups, especially when people are talking over each other, hence it is important to ensure the recording equipment is tested and satisfactory in a group setting.  I decided to use my iPad, which produced much clearer sounds, and knowing the women I had the advantage of being able to recognise their voices in the recording.  Vaughn et al (1996) suggests that researchers should provide full transcripts of the focus groups, even if the participants discuss unrelated topics. This was my initial intention, however, on listening to the recordings which lasted approximately one and half hours per session, I decided that I would not transcribe the entire sessions which related to ethical issues.  Topics discussed were often not relevant and, in some cases, very personal.  This was an understandable result given that the research was conducted with friends in my home and therefore the decision to provide a selective transcript is an ethical one. At times the women turned the recorder off when discussing personal issues or even requested that I did not included such conversations or comments. I listened to the recordings several times and transcribed the elements that directly related to the contents of the topics being discussed, which Barbour (2010) contends can provide rigorous data collection if done in a systematic process.

Another practical issue was changing the days for future sessions. Although Saturday was initially considered to be the better day, four of the mothers were not available until 6pm due to other commitments on Saturdays.  Although the trial run lasted one hour, the women who had not seen each other for a significant period of time (two had recently had another child) therefore spent considerable time socialising and did not leave my home until midnight.  One of the mothers contacted me to say that she felt that Sundays may be better, as she had no commitments on Sundays. I contacted the other participants and they too agreed that Sundays

would allow us to start earlier. In addition to reviewing practicability the trial provided rich and useful data which was used to inform this research.

<u>*Stimulus material and facilitator involvement*</u>

Encouraging discussions in focus groups can occur in a variety of ways, basically there is no hard and fast rule, some moderators or facilitators may produce newspaper articles, video clips and ask participants to respond (Onwuegbuzie et al 2009). In the trial run, I opted to provide two statements from leading educational scholars with very different perspectives of the reasons for Black Caribbean boys' underachievement. The first quote was from the work of David Gillborn, an academic who has written extensively on Black underachievement in English schools. He is currently a leading CRT scholar in the U.K:

> "Research has consistently shown that black children especially black Caribbean pupils are disadvantaged when teachers decide who should be entered for the top exams. Black children are most likely to be placed in lower teaching groups and denied the most sought-after subjects regardless of their achievements, their social class and their gender"
> David Gillborn (2011 no pagination.)

The second quote is from a Black academic Tony Sewell, who has written in the field of education, with specific reference to Black Caribbean boys in the English education system. He is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the charity Generating Geniuses (discussed in the literature review):

> "What we now see in schools is children undermined by poor parenting, peer-group pressure and an inability to be responsible for their own behaviour. They are not subjects of institutional racism. They have failed their GCSE's because they did not do their homework, did not pay attention and were disrespectful to their teachers."
> Tony Sewell (2010 no pagination.)

The reason for providing statements with opposing views is to offer different perspective and see which perspective resonates most with the mothers, and provide a prompt for discussion.

I was not surprised that the mothers found Gillborn's quote more aligned with their own perspectives. Interestingly, it was immediately evident that the mothers did not know the racial background or characteristics of either scholar. There was a consensus that Tony Sewell was, in the words of one of the mothers "just a racist", which the other four women agreed with, either verbally or non-verbally. The participants' views about Tony Sewell highlights that the mothers' expectations that Black academics would likely argue for the existence of issues of institutional and systemic racism, as opposed to framing disadvantage in deficit models.

I found this contrasting perspective process helpful in the focus group sessions as it highlighted that, having similar characteristics, in this case race and ethnicity, does not necessarily mean that individuals hold similar perspectives or single truths for that matter (Gillborn & Rollock 2011). This was further demonstrated during a discussion relating to the Brexit debate (which was a popular public topic of debate at the time of this research as the European Referendum vote had recently taken place) that occurred between the mothers in the trial run focus group. Whilst I do not go into depth regarding this discussion, and it is not analysed in the findings, it highlights how individuals with similar identities can hold polarised views. One of the participants was shocked by the fact that another participant had voted to leave, expressing her concern that the UK was being overpopulated with migrants who were placing a strain on the National Health Service (NHS), a view expressed in the popular media. I refer to this to highlight an issue I discuss in the literature review: the power of media reporting in creating populist anxieties about the 'other'. It also demonstrates how quickly these political and societal discourses become internalised and how the inherent contradictions of these discourses with people's lived experiences can be ignored

The theoretical framework of CRT stresses the importance of storytelling, in the second focus group I asked the participants to each share an experience that they had had with the school and the outcome, either positive or negative. My reason for this was to gain information of the mothers' experiences without them being prompted or guided by any stimulus material. The mothers' stories all related to negative issues. The third and final session focused on whether schools contribute to Black males entering the Criminal Justice Service (CJS), an issue that one of the women began to raise at the end of the previous focus group. At the start of the session I gave a short introductory talk:

one of the things I would like to mention is that on last session Venus finished by saying it's not just racism in schools it's about how it starts to look in other institutions, I think you said that you see the impact of young black men in the CJS that have been failed by education.  Looking at some of the research around that, and it's not rocket science that there is overrepresentation of Black males in custody and in CJS and its quite a significant overrepresentation.  I want to start the discussion off by asking, do you think there is anything that education may contribute towards that... (Me fg3)

This was an indirect way to explore whether the participants' views and perspectives revealed any data relating to what was originally the overarching question to this study: Do schools contribute to Black Caribbean boys' vulnerability to involvement in gangs.

*Facilitator involvement*

Moderator involvement in the conduct of a focus group can range from having substantial involvement, for example providing regular questions and stimulus into the group, or less involvement such as initially introducing limited amount of stimulus materials (Bryman 2008).  My reason for using less structure was based on the fact that the mothers are the experts from the perspective that CRT places on voice of marginalised groups. Therefore, I wanted them to have as substantial a level of autonomy in the sessions as possible. I preferred the approach that Barbour (2010) recommends that instead of requiring participants to "address their remarks via the moderator...rather they talk across the moderator" (p.2). Having less direct active involvement was also important as I did not have another person to help facilitate the sessions.  This is significant, given that the moderator is required to keep "several balls in the air at any one time" (Barbour 2010, p. 2) as focus groups require the researcher to generate data, through stimulating discussion and to practice active listening, whilst anticipating analysis which involves remaining alert to the content of the discussions, varied opinions and perspectives or  nuances of difference (ibid).

In light of such demands on the researcher Onwuegbuzie et al (2009) recommends having an 'assistant moderator'.  I decided that this could have a negative impact on the dynamics of the group.  The women know and trust me, therefore bringing in someone to directly monitor

their non/verbal communications may have had a negative effect on the dynamics of the group. Vaughn et al (1996) suggest using flip chart to identify non-verbal cues important in analysing the group collective and identifying key ideas and themes. I took notes on A3 sized paper during all three focus groups, but this was mainly to document non-verbal actions that may help in the analysis, such as "proxemic (use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes) ...Kinesics (i.e. body movements or postures)" (Onwuegbuzie et al 2009, p. 10). Whilst video recording the sessions would have captured non-verbal actions, my decision not to do so was because children were present, which I thought would be too much of an invasion of privacy.

Interpreting participants' kinesics was important to ensure that the more dominant voices did not over-power others. This was evident in the trial run, when I noticed that Amy continually leant forward but each time she attempted to intervene, she seemed to struggle to find an opportunity to speak, eventually sitting back and listening to the others. At this point I felt it was important that I intervened to ensure that Amy did not feel that her voice was being marginalised. Although some members of the group were less vocal than others, I noted that Tallulah was silent throughout much of the focus group sessions, which I did not view as a problem as "silence is an enduring feature of human interaction that is present in communicative context as elsewhere" (Poland & Pederson 1998 cited in Smithson 2000, p. 108). I must also add that Tallulah had a young baby who was teething and therefore she spent a lot of time consoling her child, and when the baby was settled seemed less likely to engage as fearful not to stir the baby.

When considering analysing focus group data there are differing perspectives as to what unit is the most appropriate unit of data analysis; group interaction, individual data or group data (Onwuegbuzie et al 2009). Bryman (2008) contends that researchers are more likely to view group interaction as the most appropriate method because in focus groups the researcher will be interested in how people in the group respond to each other and build a view out of the interaction that takes place within the group. Others contend that this is problematic as it limits the importance of voice, and therefore the group or the individual processes are the most appropriate units of analysis (Barbour 2010, Onwuegbuzie et al 2009, Wilkinson 1999). Whilst the individual as the unit of analysis does enable the researcher to focus on voice, it has limitations. It may limit the information from group members who are less vocal and are expressing consensus views through nonverbal contributions indicating 'conformity of

opinions' (Simms 1998 cited in Onwuegbuzie et al 2009, p. 3), or 'collaborative arguing' (Smithson & Diaz 1996, p. 225). Collaborative arguing can be seen in a number of ways, the fundamental principle being that the participants are reasoning together rather than holding different views.  For example, one member of the focus group may draw a conclusion from what others say, or a member may take up another participant's line of argument. Either way participants are contributing to a shared understanding and cumulative (ibid.).

For the purpose of this study, I found all three units of analysis appropriate. For example, group interaction enabled me to see how members express different emotions, such as crying, laughing, anger and how this impacted on other group members.  This was important in terms of identifying when it was appropriate to take a comfort break, for example, when one of the members became visibly upset and other participants comforted her.  It was clear in the silence following this, and the body language of one participant, who held her head down and was continually shaking her head, that it was a good time to take a break. Given that my methodological framework emphasises the importance of voice, group interaction would not be the only unit of analysis.  Therefore, I aimed to capture all three units for analysis. My decision to facilitate the focus groups alone, may have limited capturing some important elements of data.

## 3.6. Data Analysis

Bryman (2008) concludes that there are few well established widely accepted rules for the analysis of qualitative data.   Quantitative research gives an unambiguous set of rules about how to handle your data, however "qualitative research has not reached this set of codification of analytic procedures" (p.538). The process of analysing my data left me feeling very anxious due to data overload (Miles and Huberman 1994) and fuelled my concern about what process of data analysis I would undertake.  I considered several analytic approaches. Below I briefly outline why Thematic Analysis was chosen rather than Interpretive Phenomenological analysis (IPA), grounded theory and discourse analysis.  All were given consideration.

IPA was initially considered as a suitable method as it seeks to understand participants' lived experience of reality (Smith & Osborn, 2008). It is an approach that has been employed widely in the psychological and in cognate disciplines of qualitative research (Smith 2009),

IPA gives specific focus on the unique characteristics of individuals who in certain context make sense of a given phenomenon. As Smith and Osborn (2008) contend, "In IPA, therefore the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (p.41). The fact that IPA tends to be more concerned with specific questions of considerable importance to research participants, much of which is emotionally laden (Smith & Osborn 2015), meant that this method did not seem suitable for focus groups and appears best suited to structured and semi structured one to one interviews. Similar to IPA, grounded theory focuses on categorising and identifying meaning from the lived experience of participants. Whilst it can be used for exploratory research questions, its primary purpose is to produce new theories that are grounded within the empirical data. The drawback is that it does not seek to offer explanations, thus resulting in a descriptive analysis as opposed to an exploratory one (Willig, 2013). Therefore, I did not find this approach sufficiently appropriate.

Discourse analysis (DA) is a discursive approach which according to Willig (2013) prioritises language and tends to assume that description precedes experience, thus having less emphasis on naturally occurring conversation. It is considered as being the social constructionist approach to research (Bryman 2008). DA incorporates insights from philosophers such as Michael Foucault. Foucauldian discourse analysis focuses on how language shapes researchers understanding of power dynamics and takes the view that discourses "facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when" (Willig, 2013, p.130). Given that CRT as a theoretical framework pays specific attention to the importance of the voices of marginalised groups, it was important that the method prioritised experience over language. Furthermore, given the sensitive topic of research, I was concerned that by adopting discourse analysis there would be a risk of misconstruing the authenticity of participants accounts.

*Thematic Analysis*

Thematic analysis appears to be one of the most popular approaches to analysing large amounts of data. It has many advantages. It provides a flexible approach due to its theoretical freedom, making the approach one that is easy to grasp as it does not require extensive detailed theoretical and technical knowledge required by other qualitative approaches (Nowell et al 2017). As well as allowing for an exploratory process it enables researchers to

"summarise key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data" (Ibid. p 2). Despite claims that thematic analysis does not have a clear theoretical framework and therefore is not bound to a rigorous phenomenology epistemology (Smith et al 2009), Braun & Clark (2006) contend that a rigorous thematic analysis can produce credible and insightful findings.

The most effective approach to achieving this and to conducting a trustworthy thematic analysis, was guided by a practical and effective procedure which involved a six phased step by step process (Lincoln and Guba 1985):

## 1.Familiarising with the data.

I began by listening to the focus group recordings and transcribing them within a couple of days of each session whilst they were still fresh in my mind. On completion of transcribing all the sessions, I read and re-read the transcripts and began making key notes and quotes of interest contained within the data.

## 2.Generating initial codes

I began coding the data line by line and highlighting features of interest within the data which arose which held the essence of what the thesis was seeking to explore. This helped me to link the data to ideas that had been identified in the literature I had read. As the coding progressed some codes began to merge together and were collapsed under one banner.

## 3.Searching for themes

In order to identify themes, I initially sorted the codes into broad themes which emerged from similarities between the codes.

## 4.Reviewing themes

I documented the broad themes on A3 paper. This enabled me to see and articulate further

patterns by drawing lines linking similarities within the broad themes. This led to some themes being merged, enabling me to reduce the initial twelve broad themes to four main themes. Following this I reviewed the transcripts to ensure that the four main themes accurately represented the data.

## 5.Defining and naming the themes

This process involved reading some of the highlighted extracts and making notes about what the themes represented. This required renaming some of the themes to capture the authenticity of the mothers' voices. This ensured the findings were derived from the mothers' experiences as expressed in the series of the focus groups.

## 6.Producing the report

In order to highlight the relationship between the data and the analysis I have produced direct verbatim quotes from the mothers, identified by using their chosen pseudonyms linked to the focus group session the quote is from.

Whilst it is presented as a linear process, this is not how it was created. It was as Nowell et al (2017) state it would be, an iterative and reflective process continually developing over time and involving moving back and forth between different phases. Given the lapse of time between the focus group sessions and the final writing up stage I became distant with my data, and therefore had to immerse myself back into it by re-listening to the recordings, each time making further notes. This gave me the opportunity to see if I discovered anything new by comparing notes, codes and themes with ones I made previously. This review process stretched from the initial stage of starting the primary research in 2016 until returning from my second period of LOA in 2020.

Thematic analysis is best suited to research with an applied focus. It complements my methodology of focus groups, by allowing me to analyse both non-verbal and verbal aspects of communication. It also complements my theoretical framework by allowing me to place emphasis on the experiential knowledge of the participants, thereby valuing and privileging the mothers' individual and collective voices.

## 3.7. Conclusion

This chapter offered a discussion of the researcher's choice of methods and methodologies most appropriate to obtain and analyse data. I have provided the justification of research methods, design and analysis which best aligns with the theoretical framework of CRT, thus allowing the researcher to privilege and value the voices of mothers of Black Caribbean heritage, who are relatively silent/silenced in educational and social research (McKenley et al 2003, Reynolds 2005). The consideration of methods and methodologies has illuminated a design that not only enables a safe space for Black Caribbean women to contribute to educational debates, but one that is inclusive and reduces barriers to participation.

The researcher's ontological and epistemological position is considered, thus highlighting the advantages of the researcher's insider approach. Through a process of critical reflection, I illustrate the complexities and ethical dilemmas that arise through researching with friends. In this way I upheld my responsibility for ensuring that the voices of Black Caribbean mothers are presented sensitively, and appropriately, so as not to contribute to further stereotypes or misrepresentations. Careful and meticulous data analysis produced through thematic analysis has produced a counter-narrative to populist and dominant discourses that malign Black Caribbean mothers, whose parenting has been under scrutiny and framed as a foundational cause of the educational underachievement of Black youth.

**Chapter 4. Results and discussions.**

**4.1. Introduction**

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of schooling on Black boys and Black mothers' experiences of the education system through their efforts to support their sons. This chapter provides an account of the themes which emerged from three focus groups with five mothers all of whom describe themselves of Black Caribbean heritage and had sons between the ages of 8 and 18 years of age being educated in the English state school system, at the time of the focus groups.

By using thematic analysis, the codes are organised into superordinate themes with further sub-themes, across all the three focus groups. The sub-themes are direct quotes from the mothers, which will be subsequently explored in more detail. Direct quotes ensured that the mothers' voices are valued and represented throughout this chapter, and therefore are the main unit of analysis. The superordinate themes were:

- Theme 1. Discrimination and inequalities in the school system;
- Theme 2. Black boys deemed as aggressive;
- Theme 3. Teachers underestimating Black boys' academic ability.
- Theme 4. Special Educational Need (SEN).

Although group interaction and group processes were not the main focus of analysis, these aspects are important at times as they illustrate opinions in the focus groups being constructed collectively, which is sometimes referred to as the 'collective voice' (Smithson 2000). In some cases, this collective voice was an active product of the members' interaction. An example of this group process of collective voice occurred during a lively conversation that took place in the trial run focus group, whilst the replacement audio equipment was being tested. As explained in the methodology chapter, I took notes to capture some of the non-verbal responses and actions that would not be evident on the audio equipment, however, because the following discussion took place prior to formally starting the session, I was not taking notes at this point. Fortunately, as an insider researcher I had the advantage of being able to identify each individual voice and lively conversations through the women's "paralinguistic (i.e., all variations in volume, pitch and quality of voice)" (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009, p.10). In the following extract three out of the five respondents were talking at the same time, interrupting each other's conversations, at certain points their voices became raised and both

Cleo and Venus's pitch became louder with more speed. Tallulah and Olivia, however, were both laughing at the intensity of the other respondents' conversation, which I initially tried to interrupt and explain that I was still testing the equipment. The women, however, were so engrossed in the conversation that rather than continue to attempt to stop the conversation I waited until it came to a natural pause.

In the following discussion Amy raised the issue of isolation which is a form of exclusion as noted by Crozier (2005) as she argues that "exclusion does not necessarily mean exclusion from the school itself; in-school exclusions whereby children are placed in isolation can be equally damaging to the child's academic progress or psychological well-being" (p. 594). There is substantial evidence that shows it is used disproportionately against Black Caribbean boys, as I discussed in section 2.8. The relevance of raising the following dialogue between the mothers, is that it demonstrates that the members of the focus groups sometimes develop a jointly produced position and the overlaps illustrate sentence completion rather than conflicting interruptions:

| | |
|---|---|
| Amy | So, the end of the day when you are picking your kid up... |
| Venus | Yeah cos you can see can't you |
| Cleo | You know that they have been in isolation |
| Amy | All day... |
| Cleo | ...all day long, not being allowed to talk to you... |
| Venus | ...that scares me |
| Amy | ...the mother not being aware that they are in isolation |

The mothers are providing a joint account in a "socially organised way that produces a single 'collective voice'... showing some of the subtleties which emerge in focus group discussions" (Smithson 2000, p.109). This example shows that the women share common experiences of the schools' punitive systems experienced by their children, whilst illuminating the emotional labour in regard to the worry about their sons being alone. This is an important factor as it was a significant aspect of my chosen methodology and theoretical framework. Listening to each other's stories in a group setting is a process that can help to validate their experiences of racism. This is extremely important in societies that neutralise the effects of race based on notions of colour-blindness and the post racial fallacy (Warmington et al. 2017).

Given that the participants of this study are mothers discussing their perceptions of their sons' schooling experience, some of the discussions were sensitive, which was evident in the

emotional responses of the mothers. These were seen in various ways including verbal and non-verbal signs. For example, both the kinesics and proxemics responses were indicators of the mothers' emotions and attitudes which were seen in different actions. These included, throwing their arms in the air, rolling their eyes or others would give an excessive sigh or kiss their teeth (a Jamaican gesture to express emotions such as disdain, anger or annoyance). An example was seen when the mothers were reading the extract written by Tony Sewell as part of the stimulus material in the trial run session (see methodology chapter). After reading the article, Amy threw it back into the centre of the table and kissed her teeth and shook her head, which clearly indicated her annoyance at his claims. Whilst some of the group processes involved a collective dialogue, or one mother summarising for the group, leading to a consensus, other responses were seen in how the women responded to other respondents' stories. In many cases this included verbal responses and paralinguistic's, which clearly indicated their shock at what they were hearing, such as 'wow', 'no way' or 'you're joking'. These issues were significant for several reasons, including ethical issues and dilemmas. As mentioned, the topic at the centre of discussions is sensitive. Monitoring the mothers' non-verbal communications was useful in managing emotional situations, such as suggesting a break, or ending the focus group session. Another aspect of kinesics, proxemics and paralinguistic's was that they can help with the overall analysis, because an interpretative approach requires the researcher to make sense of the reports made by the mothers, and non-verbal communication, including pitch and tone add to the analysis.

The importance of CRT as a theoretical framework for this study became evident throughout the focus groups, as many of the tenets were crucial to understanding the data. For example, the intersections of race, class, gender and disability and the impact these had on the mothers' experience and perceptions was integral to their sons' relationship to schooling. The importance of the centrality of race was integral to the mothers' feeling comfortable with discussing issues of racism as a factor relevant from their own direct experience as well as their perceptions from their sons' reports. The importance of privileging Black mothers voice is crucial to providing a counter narrative to dominant stories. More importantly, placing value on the mothers' experiential stories, revealed the everyday instantiation of racism and its effects on their sons' educational experiences.

## 4.2. Discrimination and inequalities in the education system

*I'm not putting the racist flag up* (Olivia fg.1)

In this section I explore the issues of racism. The reason I do so is to highlight that despite advancements in race equality much of which is due to the movements and activism from within the Black Caribbean community (discussed in section 1.1), the mothers in this study detected racism, both through their inferences from the reports made by their sons as well as their own direct contact with school personnel. There is a wide range of views on whether racism is still significant in the UK, for individuals and institutions. Evidence has been presented in 2.2 of school underperformance by Black boys and overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System. In contrast to statistical evidence current political rhetoric promotes a colour-blind approach and deracialised social policies. This is so much so that the first Black female Member of Parliament (MP), Dianne Abbott, publicly argued that the fight against racism is getting harder and that it is "silencing minorities" (Abbott 2017 no pagination).

Although the mothers in this study were not directly silenced, it was clear that they felt uneasy raising the issue of racism. For instance, in the trial run session the mothers were responding to the quotes I provided as part of a stimulus for discussion, by two educational scholars, Tony Sewell and David Gillborn (see section 3.5 for the full quotes). Olivia made a direct response, stating:

> According to Tony Sewell, erm, he says that Blacks may not be failing in schools due to racism, but I totally disagree with that (Olivia fg.1).

Olivia seems comfortable and forthright stating that she 'totally disagrees' with Sewell's argument. However, in her following statement, Olivia appears to feel less comfortable raising the issue of race and racism, by asking a rhetorical question, which she follows up with her own assertion that racism is a factor in teachers' actions.

> I think also teachers judge your child because of their colour, I'm not putting the racist flag, up, am I? but it is there (Olivia fg.1).

Interestingly, by opening up the narrative on racism, Olivia appears to be paving the way for others to feel able to also raise the issue of racial discrimination within schools. This highlights the importance of counter-stories, which is one of the insights of CRT, as Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argue that they not only redeem the voices of Black people, but in a community setting they can validate the experiences of those who have been targets of racial discrimination, as was the case in this particular scenario, as highlighted by Amy's comments:

Well I was going to say that it was racism but didn't want to say it…My situation is not jumping on no band wagon with the racism, but like I said before I think it was that (Amy fg.1).

The references to the 'not raising the racist flag' and to 'not jumping on the bandwagon' require and merit exploration and interpretation. What is going on here? Why are the mothers, at the point where they are describing events in schools that appear to indicate discrimination against their sons, saying what they are _not doing?_ Firstly, the conversation illustrates that the focus groups are a safe space for the mothers to explore these issues. It also illustrates their unease about raising their concerns with teachers in school. They don't know how the teacher will respond. Their priority is to support their son, to tackle a problem that is limiting his educational progress. A defensive response of denial from the teacher could be counterproductive.

One interpretation of their concern of 'Not raising the racist flag' is that they fear they will be experienced as, even accused of, doing just that. So they are countering the assertion to themselves and to each other. What do the 'racist flag' and the 'bandwagon' symbolise? They are accusations that certain White people make in defence of their position that has been challenged. They perhaps indicate a form of White fragility (Diangelo 2018). The 'racist flag' suggests a primarily political agenda, the 'bandwagon' not having one's own specific agenda. To the mothers this would be both insulting (playing politics with their son's situation) and counterproductive (unlikely to achieve the desired result of a better outcome for their son). These comments therefore perhaps illustrate the challenges faced by mothers as they negotiate in the school system, and their awareness and skill in doing so.

They also reveal something about the political changes in educational and social policy and the de-prioritising of race in schools. This is reinforced through a neo-liberal agenda which promotes a colour-blind ideology, making them more difficult to expose, which Warmington (2020) argues relates to the normalcy of racism.

"In racialised societies racism - except in its extreme forms - is ordinary, so business as usual, that its very existence is routinely denied. This denial entails strategic colour-blindness: a deliberate misrecognition of racialised relationships and practices" (p.24). Warmington et al. (2017) point out that "there is a sense in which...race is (seen as) something that only the bitter and twisted talk about, only the disillusioned, only those who want a special handout, only those who want special favours" (p.12). Furthermore, challenging racism occurs at the

policy level, which for many parents, they do not have such rank, and raising it on a personal level in individual institutions, can create a defensiveness in institutional agents, because there is a blindness to the biases of the system from which they are operating, as noted by Warmington (2020) "Schools, universities, welfare systems and police forces deny their institutional racism by depicting their own cultures and practices as *race- neutral* (sic) and meritocratic" (p.24).

Olivia's and Amy's apprehension about sighting racism made it important to indicate to the participants that the theoretical lens to this research is from a Black perspective. It was important that the mothers in the focus group sessions were made aware that their experiential knowledge is valued and crucial to this research which is seeking to address racial inequalities. Kendi (2019) contends that the claim of race neutrality and colour-blindness which permeates social and educational policy and discourse, is a mask for racism. He therefore argues that "the only way to undo racism is to "consistently identify and describe it and then dismantle it ...but by turning the word racist into an almost unusable slur, is a course designed to do the opposite, to freeze us into inaction" (p.9).

In spite of the mothers' reluctance to name racism as a factor behind their sons' experiences it was clear from their discussions that they were aware that racial discrimination was pervasive in their sons' schooling experience. This was demonstrated in the mothers' reports, not only those that were inferred from their sons' reports but those which involved their own direct interactions with schools and its institutional actors. Much of what they observed was continually challenging issues that were a result of various forms of racism, from blatant crude acts to the subtle insidious behaviours, that had detrimental effects not only on their son's academic progress but their longer-term success. Similarly to the parents in Crozier's (2005) study, in which they suggested there is a war against Black boys, the mothers in this study had similar concerns. This was evident in the final focus group session (17.7.2016), in which the mothers were discussing the impact of school on the longer-term prospects of Black males and how they felt that schools limited success because of racism. The mothers reflections highlight the challenges facing Black Caribbean boys:

Olivia: it is like they are fighting against them, it's a battle

Cleo:  it's like a form of oppression

Olivia: yes, it is, it's a battle and I have 3 boys going through the education system and have been through it and it has been a battle and it is unfair.

Venus: life can be hard without that, do you know what I mean, they shouldn't be having those extra struggles.

Although the mothers were aware of the impact on Black boys education and longer-term life success, they were also concerned about the impact that racism was having on their son's self-esteem and confidence.

## 4.3. Black boys deemed aggressive

*Losing who they are.* (Amy fg.3)

Some educational scholars have considered how teachers position Black boys through notions of aggressiveness, whereby Black males are viewed and pathologised through the intersections of race and gender (Sewell 1997, Wright et al. 1998, Wright et al. 2016). These authors affirm that the collective practices of schools and their institutional actors draw upon the discursive practices and contribute to the dominant ideology of Black male identities by positioning them as intimidating. I have shown in the literature review how racist stereotypes of young Black Caribbean males lead to toxic associations resulting in the perception that Black males are dangerous. Mainstream media reporting and public speeches by leading and influential politicians further serve to proliferate negative stereotypes of young Black males as dangerous, which have damaging consequences for young Black Caribbean boys.

As already discussed in section 2.7 the demonization of Black males through notions of criminality is seen in the moral panics about Black Caribbean youth. Hall (1978) argues that the imagery of Black Caribbean youth as dangerous criminals was instilled into the minds of the Mass British consciousness from the 1960's during the Enoch Powell era. Powell, a politician who was anti-immigration and was calling for restrictions in the flow and control of migrants from the former commonwealth, made public claims that "youthful Black criminals are stalking the derelict inner-city streets where law abiding citizens are afraid to walk after sunset" (Ibid. p.48). Such claims were crucial to making the threat of dangerous Black youth appear real, as Hall (1978) asserts, any ideology must give "concrete purchase on the lives of citizens, on their daily comings and goings, on their conditions of existence", in order to make them believe that the threat to society is palpable and real (p. 30). From the position of CRT, the insight of White supremacy and White privilege is important here as it illustrates

the intersections of race and class analysis. Basically, in order to maintain White supremacy, those in positions of power seek to garner the support from non-elite Whites, to support the cause, which is crucial to the maintenance of the subordination of Black people (Gillborn 2014).

The 1970's and 80's the creation of the mugging ideology was projected onto young Black Caribbean males, particularly second generation populations, who adopted the Rastafarian themes during the 1970's and 80's, the yardies in the 1990's, followed by the label of terrorist or gang members that continues to current day, all of which have become part of a common-sense discourse captured in the notion of culture. This common-sense discourse is exacerbated through the media, which Long (2018) argues has been a key source of constructing public perceptions, through racist tropes linking Black youth to being aggressive and dangerous. This has been evidenced in early childhood play which despite notions of race neutrality, the way Black boys play is socially constructed as dangerous and aggressive in schools (Rosen 2017). The issue of negative teacher perceptions of Black boys is not a new phenomenon, for instance Tizard et al. (1988) cited in Phoenix & Husain's (2007) study found that "many Black boys between nursery school and the end of infant school were viewed by teachers as boisterous or on the verge of behavioural problems at school. However, their parents did not view them in this way" (p.33)

Racialised stereotypes attributed to Black boys are perceived to impact significantly upon their schooling experiences. Some educational scholars have considered how teachers position Black boys through notions of Black masculinity, whereby Black males are viewed and pathologised through the intersections of race and gender (Sewell 1997, Wright et al. 1998, Wright et al. 2016). These authors affirm that the collective practices of schools and their institutional actors draw upon the discursive practices and contribute to the dominant ideology of Black male identities by positioning them as culturally deficient, anti-learning and intimidating. The issue of Black boys being perceived as aggressive was an omnipresent theme in the focus group sessions. Four out of the five mothers in this study were concerned about teachers' perceptions about their sons' being aggressive from a young age, in some cases from as early as in reception (initial year at school in the UK). Crozier's (2005) study with African Caribbean parents highlights their worries about how cultural and racialised stereotypes by school personnel impact on their son's psychological wellbeing. They were fearful that it could result in 'breaking their spirit'. This was certainly a concern of the mothers in this study. The majority raised concerns that in-school practices and teachers'

actions were having a negative impact on their son's overall confidence and self-esteem. Olivia who had three sons' all of which attended English schools, felt that the racialised stereotypes of aggression impacted on them psychologically:

> My children they are quite tall and from a very young age, reception class "oh he's big he's a bit aggressive. When he is playing they interpret it, when he may have brushed past somebody, not push past but when interpreted as he has pushed, they would rather say that cos he is big he pushes them over, before they even check it out, and they say it in front of the child as well, so I don't think they understand, black children the perception is always aggression and not rough play, rough and tumble, I find it so frustrating, and they say it in front of the child as well, so they can have that perception of themselves you know, "oh I'm too big, I hate being big" (Olivia fg.1).

The mothers' concerns regarding the detrimental effects that schools can have on their son's overall confidence, resulting from racialised stereotypes was a recurring theme. From the position of CRT, scholars acknowledge that the various social identities that Black people bring into societal spaces can make a significant difference to their experiences, such as class, gender, sexual orientation. Race and racism complicate their lived realities (Crenshaw 2002, Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995, Yosso 2006). Writing in the U.S, Bryan (2020) asserts that whilst this is relevant for all people of colour, it is especially so for "Black boys, who are not part of a monolithic group" (p.677). Bryan further argues that Black boys experiences differs from girls, in that they are 'hyper- surveilled' in schools and the playground unlike that of their female peers. Talking from her own direct experience at school, one mother illustrates how the intersections of race and gender differ:

> They always seem to make an issue of his height, I was very tall at school but it wasn't thrown in my face like my colour, but it seems to be with (son's name), to the point where he got a complex of his height through school and it dented his confidence (Olivia fg.2).

Olivia's report above illuminates the difference in how the intersections of race and gender play out in the experiences of pupils in the school environment. There are also considerable differences of Black Caribbean boys being perceived as aggressive from a young age compared to their White male peers. Research finds that young Black males are perceived as larger and more threatening than young White males (Wilson et all. 2017). As noted, it was evident in Olivia's aforementioned report. Black boys childhood play leads to constructions of them as aggressive and harmful, whereas research into White boys childhood play considers their behaviours as an innocent phenomenon (Ladson-Billings 2011, Rosen 2017).

From the perspective of CRT, as Bryan (2020) shows, White boys living in societies structured by White supremacy are "far from innocent as they engage in racist acts" (p.3). Amy's report illuminates the extent that teachers internalise the dominant stereotypes of Black males as aggressive and White boys behaviours as innocent. Amy explains that she placed her son in a predominantly White school. She later discovered that he had been subject to physical racial abuse by an older White pupil. Rather than the perpetrator being held to account, the onus was placed on her son, which she perceived was due to the school's negative bias towards Black children.

> I had a phone call one day saying that I have got to go and pick Trevor up as they were worried about his safety within the school. So, I turned up and all Trevor neck was scratched and bruised where they had pinned him up and strangled him... Trevor was Black, and he had a little swag going on, the way he used to speak and the music he listened to. I felt like the school weren't really opening up and getting to know him...the judgement they had of Trevor, because he wasn't moulding into, you don't fit in, you know, just look at your attitude blah blah blah well they just saw him as having an attitude. When the Police came to visit us at our house they apologised, to me, his dad and my son. They apologised because they said this family is notorious for racism, and I just thought if the school knows this, I should have had more support. (Amy fg.2)

Amy's example highlights several issues relating to teachers perceptions of Black boys. Firstly, is the issue of cultural deficits, Amy infers that the school's judgement of her son is because of his cultural traits that differed from the norms of White culture. These set him as different and appear to make the school less sympathetic to his abuse. Secondly, given that Amy's son was not willing to assimilate to what is considered as White British cultural styles, and maintained his individual identity he seemed to be blamed for his abuse. Thirdly, Amy's example shows how her son's experience raised the uncomfortable issue of race and racism, and in a society dominated by White supremacy and privilege, a system that serves the investment of White people, there is a motivation to deny issues of racism. Then to become defensive when these dynamics were named (Diangelo 2018), which in this case was to re-victimise Amy's son. This denial was also evident in the lack of action by the police. Despite the UK having some of the strongest anti-racist legislation internationally (Gillborn 2014) the police made the decision to take no further action, despite Trevor being a minor and having physical marks as evidence of the attack. Their apology about the individual behaviour of the perpetrator allowed the police and the school to exempt themselves from

action to challenge racism. This reveals, as CRT asserts, that it is not the individual overt acts of bad people (although this still occurs) but rather a complex and interconnected system that people are socialised into, one that is "deeply separate and unequal by race" (Diangelo 2018, p.1). Lastly, Amy's report provides an understanding of how systems, agencies and their institutional actors and policies fail to protect Black children and rather serve the interests of the dominant group.

The impact of this scenario on Amy's son had a detrimental effect on his psychological wellbeing. When asked the question:

> Venus fg.2. How do you feel it impacted on him after?
>
> Amy Fg.2. He's got no confidence at all, he's got no patience, he's got no confidence at all now.

The kinesics, paralinguistic's and proxemics were important factors in the analysis of this study. This was particularly so at the point that Amy was answering Venus's question. I noticed that her body language began to change. She lowered her head, and her voice started to break, it was clear that the other mothers also were aware of the change in Amy's body language, and the room fell silent. Amy became visibly upset, Tallulah touched Amy's arm, in a comforting way. At this point I turned the recording off and suggested we take a comfort break. Whilst raising the issue of Amy's emotions is relevant to the analysis of this study as is monitoring ethical concerns, I believe that it is especially important to highlighting a counter-narrative to the dominant discourses relating to deficit within Black Caribbean children and their families.

Research has shown that parents are judged on the behaviour of their child. Crozier (1996) found that teachers correlated the nature of the child's behaviour with the parent. Where teachers labelled a child as bad, parents are also labelled as bad (Crozier 2005). Black children's educational and behavioural outcomes have led to scrutiny around Black parenting (Phoenix & Husain 2007), which is consistent with the deficit model. Similarly to Black boys being perceived as aggressive this has also been the case for Black mothers, who are perceived by schools as aggressive and threatening (Rollock et al. 2015). There is, however, little regard for parents' feelings, especially when they not only hear, their children's experiences but also witness the psychological damage caused by school personnel and the impact that racism has on their children. The pain was evident in Amy's emotional response

when giving an account of just one example of her son's experience. There were several others that she recounted during the focus group sessions. Significantly her son showed awareness of the worry and wanted to spare his mother the anxiety that his schooling experience had on her, as Amy stated:

> ...half the things that went on in that school he didn't even tell me about (Amy fg.2).

The deficit family narrative relating to Black Caribbean pupils underperformance and behaviour in schools extends beyond viewing Black mothers as aggressive. For example, in Demie & McLean's (2017) study, they highlight issues of class. For example, one of the mothers in their study reported that she was approached by her child's head teacher, who automatically assumed that her son was a lot 'rougher' because he was raised in a lone mother household on a council estate, to which the mother highlighted to the head teacher that her assumptions were "extremely racist" (p.28). The majority of the mothers in this study had perceived that schools and teachers had commonly held assumptions and stereotypes about them and their children:

> I think they judge you as well, cos they see you as a single Black parent, and they think there is no order there, but when they actually speak to you and see that you are intelligent and work within schools or work as a professional, they are not dealing with somebody who is uneducated...(Olivia fg.1).

Olivia's experience evidences two commonly held assumptions, firstly the pathologising view of Black Caribbean family structures, seen in the stereotypical discourse of the single Black mother, and the homogenising of Black Caribbean people as being 'uneducated', belonging to the working or underclass. The majority of Caribbean migrants coming to the U.K during the post-war era were forced into low paid, low status employment positions which did not reflect their educational or professional qualification and experience (Channer 1995, Rollock et al. 2012). These histories appear to remain core to much of teachers racist perceptions and assumptions regarding the lives of Black Caribbean families today. Writing in the U.S., Reynolds (2010a) explains that when dealing with school personnel on behalf of their children, in order not to substantiate dominant stereotypes that those of the majority often subscribe to minority groups, "they made conscious attempts to appear credible to school officials such as dressing in suits when they had to visit schools" (p.154). This is a form of double consciousness, which Reynolds (2010a) explains is a process where people look at

"oneself through the eyes of others and perform self-checks" (p.154). It is something that occurred in the actions of the mothers in this study:

> Uhhh I wear my lanyard, when I'm going in there (Cleo fg.1)

Cleo's comment highlights that she seemed to recognise the importance of forming positive impressions to show her credibility to the school. Wearing her lanyard, which shows her professional position when interfacing with school professionals, was a way of pushing back against dominant stereotypes and common-sense discourses about Black Caribbean mothers. Despite the fact that there is a growing number of Black Caribbean families in high socio-economic positions, there is little published research exploring this particular group in the U.K, with the exception of the work of Gillborn (2015) and Rollock et al. (2012, 2015). More research is required that investigates these assumptions. Mainstream literature and scholarly research have a tendency to reinforce pathological and stereotypical assumptions of the Black Caribbean family, especially mothers (Brown 2020, Reynolds 2005).

The discussions between the mothers in this study also highlighted that the media is influential in reinforcing and fuelling negative stereotypes. As previously discussed in section 2.7, individuals and institutions are influenced by media communications on matters of which they have little knowledge or direct experience especially on issues of diversity (Sviensson 2008). Although it was recognised that mass media platforms influence teachers' perceptions of Black Caribbean families, other issues affecting misrecognition in an everyday sense were raised. For instance, the employment position of Black people within the school and how this further influence teachers' perceptions about Black families social class position:

> You just have to look within the school as well, in a lot of schools, in terms of the primary school that my youngest son goes to when you look at position that Black people get into. So, the only Black member of staff working at his primary school is the dinner lady, stroke cleaner there. (Cleo fg.3).

Therefore, rather than explicit attitudes, several factors, including the lower social and economic position that Black Caribbean peoples were assigned from the Windrush era, onwards, plus media coverage, and the fact that over 80 percent of classroom teachers are White females (GOV.UK 2019), institutionally guided by a colour-blind approach and race

neutral policies, are all significant factors contributing to the embedded complicit attitudes about race which are embedded in the sub-consciousness of Western societies.  The result is unwitting acts, which King (1991) defines as dysconscious racism, as outlined in section 2.8. The value of applying the CRT framework to this study is that it allows these taken for granted assumptions and beliefs about race to be exposed, through placing value on the counter-stories provided by the mothers in this study.

To give an insight into how racism is deeply embedded in the sub-consciousness, and in turn has a negative impact on Black boys, I refer to a blind experiment conducted at Yale University in the U.S. in 2016.  The overall aim of this study (Gilliam et al. 2016) was to discover whether the innocence that is attributed to White boys, (as discussed earlier) is equally attributed to Black boys. Gilliam et al. (2016) recruited 135 pre-school teachers who believed they were attending a school conference.  The researchers showed the teachers a video with a group of children (Black and White, boy and girl) during which they asked them to look for challenging behaviour in the children (none of the children in the video presented with challenging behaviour).  The pre-school teachers were unaware that eye tracking technology was being used, which showed that the eye of all the pre-school teachers (Black and White) eyes went straight to the Black boy.  After the data had been collected the researchers informed the participants about the nature and purpose of the study (Gilliam et al. 2016).

Given the covert nature of the study, the researchers gave the teachers the option to withdraw their data from the study.  All, except one teacher, wanted their information to remain in the study, as they were ashamed and shocked at the results.  They believed that the information should be made available.  My reason for sharing this study at this point, is not to convince the reader that racism is embedded into the sub-consciousness of Western societies, but to counter criticism of CRT, especially that its critiques of a racist society is an attack on all White people per se.  This study highlighted the sub-consciousness of both Black and White teachers, and therefore illuminates the impact of wider institutional racism in Western societies.  This is evident in the lack of importance that Initial Teacher Education Programmes put on teaching diversity (Landers 2011).  Recommendations for teacher training courses and ongoing professional development on issues of race and ethnicity were proposed in the Swann Report (1985) which gave specific attention to the impact that institutional racism was having on the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils. This did

not come to fruition because the Conservative government introduced a market model of education, which de-prioritised issues of race and ethnicity by introducing a colour-blind approach to educational policy (Gillborn 2008, Tomlinson 2008). Teachers feeling unprepared for teaching in a multi-ethnic society, including teaching issues of diversity (as proposed in the Cantle Report 2001 as part of the community cohesion agenda) remains an issue in the 21st century (Pearce 2005).

Recognising the importance of diversity in schools, Cleo chose a school for her eldest son based on the fact that it had Black teachers, and seemed to have some awareness of diversity issues:

> I saw that the deputy head was mixed race and I seen that they had Black history… there was another Black teacher in woodwork, so whilst it wasn't his feeder school that sort of helped me in choosing the school. They seemed to have some kind of acknowledgement and seemed to want to address it because they had got this group that they had set up that was called the Black pupils achievement group. (Cleo fg.1)

Although the school had Black teachers and what appeared to be a good awareness and inclusive attitude towards Black pupils, it was clear from other reports made by Cleo (to be discussed shortly) relating to what she perceived was teachers underestimating her sons academic abilities, that institutional barriers beyond the contribution of individual teachers negatively impacted Black boys. Black educators are not in a position to look critically at how white power and racism affects the treatment of Black boys, as their identities as teachers is located within the institutionally racist structures of white supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic 2012). This is further compounded by the fact that they are likely to have been educated within the hegemonic western framework reinforced through an ethnocentric curriculum which denigrates Caribbean culture, whilst reinforcing imperialist views and glorifying whiteness as the norm (Watley & Sinclair 2013).

By the simple fact that Black teachers are required to deliver the national curriculum automatically places them in a position whereby they not only continue to reinforce disadvantage through its delivery they contribute to inequity and exploitation through King's (1991) concept of dysconscious racism, "whereby they accept the existing order of things as a given" (p.135). The issues raised in this study by the mothers, are factors that have been

shown to contribute to teachers' and school officials' behaviours and actions. They have the potential to limit the academic progress and achievement of Black Caribbean boys.

### 4.4. Low teachers expectations.

*He is doing exceptionally well...but... (*Cleo fg.1)

The dominant stereotypical narrative of Black males, as outlined in the previous section, has been argued to have led to wider perceptions of Black Caribbean boys being considered as failures (Wright et al. 2010). The notion of Black Caribbean boys as failures is evident in education, especially in the underachievement and underperformance. Underperformance has been linked to Black Caribbean pupils being disproportionately placed in lower curriculum sets. This section explores placement in lower attainment groups that restrict curriculum choices and determine entry to lower status examinations. The majority of the mothers' reports support the literature that has found that teachers underestimate Black boys academic abilities. Cleo initiated the discussion relating to settings in schools, explaining that her son was being held back in maths and science. Her knowledge of the educational system was clear as she described her concern about the longer-term academic disadvantage this could have in terms of what GCSE paper he would be able to take. His setting placement did not come to the attention via the school but rather as she explains, it came from her son. Cleo stated that her son was feeling that he was being treated unfairly because the teacher was giving him more work than other pupils in maths. Through questioning her son Cleo realised that he was being given additional work because he was completing his work before the rest of the class, at which point she approached the school:

> I had to be on them, asking why is he still in that class? But the response was, he can be a bit of a yoyo, and yes, he is doing exceptionally well, right now. I said well you need to keep updating me in terms of how well he is doing, as I wanted to know how he was doing, and he got moved up (Cleo fg1).

Cleo's report shows how certain perceptions of Black boys, some of which are portrayed through Black masculinities, lead to assumptions of failure. Even though Cleo's son had demonstrated that he is capable of working to an exceptional standard, the school's decision

to keep him in a lower set, was based on what appears to be the teachers' concern around his lack of consistency. Although much of the literature exploring Black Caribbean pupils focuses on underperformance, studies have evidenced that Black Caribbean pupils are, of course, capable of educational success (Channer 1997, Rhamie 2007). Wright et al. (2010) however, reports that as a group Black Caribbean pupils academic achievement is lower than any other racialised group. These authors argue that persistent underachievement as a group in the school system leads to schools' and teachers' beliefs that they are not worth bothering about. Furthermore, what fails to be taken into account is a matter that Ladson-Billings (2011) contends, that from the moment Black boys enter schools their intellect is predetermined by perceived lack of educational ability. Ladson-Billing found that despite Black boys showing superior intellect, rather than teachers encouraging and nurturing this, they too often dismiss it, which causes Black boys to become de-motivated. The teachers underestimation of Cleo's sons ability which resulted in him being placed in sets which Cleo believed to be below his academic ability, seemed to have been impacting on his motivation:

> There were kids that were seen as trouble kids yeah and they were messing about, and he was getting drawn up with them. (Cleo fg.1)

Cleo's concerns regarding her son's placement in lower sets extended beyond negative association and peer influence. It crucially impacted his chances of educational success as a result of teachers' decisions as a consequence of preconceived ideas of her son's ability:

> ….With science as well….when I was wanting to buy science books, they were saying, well, I don't know if you are going to be put in for GCSE science, you may be put in for the BTEC, so again I had to get in there and challenge (Cleo fg.1).

Cleo's reports evidence the entrenched views of teachers about her son's ability. Cleo states that he achieved, what is considered to be a high pass grade A*-C in his final exam. This instance is evidence that Black boys are capable of high achievement. Cleo's reports also provide a counter-narrative to the majoritarian stories of Black Caribbean parents' lack of involvement and interest in their son's education. Cleo clearly demonstrates that she is very involved in her son's education. Moreover, the fact that she was buying additional material to supplement her son's learning, not only highlights her interest in his education, but shows that she was encouraging home learning, which her son had to also be responsible and committed

to. Cleo's son achieved because of her involvement, as it is likely that without this he probably would have not achieved. Cleo's counter-narrative is evidence that a Black mother does intervene and did get results. It is clear from Cleo's report that if Black Caribbean parents want their son's to succeed in school they probably do need to intervene, because of schools' and teachers' racist biased perceptions. Taken together these points deconstruct the schools' view that the lack of Black parents involvement is the problem. The problem is that their sons will succeed only if they get involved.

Although there is significant literature and studies that have found that the issue of underachievement and exclusion from learning is as a result of teachers' attitudes and flawed institutional practices that disadvantage Black Caribbean boys, alternative perspectives, continue to hold dominance in the race and education debate. For example, Sewell claims that Black boys are anti-establishment and fail to take responsibility for their learning (2009, 2010). From the perspective of CRT, counter-stories place value on the subjugated knowledge of people of colour, by necessitating that Black people's experiences are central to the research. Counter-stories are useful and relevant in challenging, exposing and displacing majoritarian stories or master narratives (Delgado & Stefancic 2001, Rollock & Gillborn. 2011, Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, Yosso, 2006)

I remind the reader of this as I highlight further counter-stories which the mothers report that displace some of these dominant narratives. Olivia explains that her son expressed his anguish about being placed in a lower teaching set in maths and the impact that this was having on his learning. Her actions led to a positive outcome

> My son was put in to Y7 and he was put in the very bottom group for maths and he
> came home and said, mum I am in the bottom group and I can't concentrate cos they are all
> messing about...I feel if I did not make that phone call he would have still been there, well he
> has gone into the middle group now. (Olivia fg.1)

The example of Cleo and Olivia illustrate that these mothers are critical in supporting their sons through schools, thus seeking to ensure they receive the best possible educational outcomes. The mothers are also demonstrating that their sons are taking responsibility for their education. Moreover, as noted in Amy's scenario in section 4.3, her son was conscious of his mother's anxieties and at a young age took responsibility for this by not informing her

of many of the challenges and difficulties he had within the school environment. These examples highlight that Black boys have considerable responsibility placed on them at a young age. In the following scenario I consider a detailed account provided by Venus. She explains a situation whereby her son was made to feel inadequate. She infers from her son's account that she (the teacher) believed he was not capable of completing work which was part of his GCSE art exam:

> …the way she was portraying her behaviour on him made him feel inadequate, like he wasn't capable of doing the work, and he had not asked her for help, but also, she did it in a vocal way in front of everybody, and how she was leaning over. She took the pen out of his hand, to show him how it should be done, that is the point that he asked for it back and more or less said, excuse me I don't need your help, and she felt challenged and when she implied that he did, he said I find you quite condescending and patronising cos I am quite capable of doing it for myself. (Venus fg.1)

What is interesting about the above comment is that the teacher appears to have little regard for the way that her behaviour is impacting on Venus's son. Wright & Weakes (2003) argue that "within the school environment, relationships between pupils and teachers are structured on their basis of power and powerlessness" (p.12). In this case the fact that she leant over him and took the pen out of his hand without his permission to 'show him how it should be done', indicates an abuse of her power. Venus's son appears to push back against what he may have perceived as an abuse of power. Research has shown that in spaces where Whiteness dominates such as the school environment, where Black boys are often treated unfairly because of teachers' racist practices, this can lead to Black boys employing various forms of resistance to such inequalities (Sewell 1997, Wright et al. 1998, Wright & Weakes 2003, Wright et al. 2016, Youdell 2003). In this scenario, Venus's son is applying resistance by responding that he did not require her help. The issue is that the teacher may have recognised that Venus's son was not doing the work correctly. However, the way in which she has presented herself results in the interventions being experienced as 'domination' rather than 'feedback'. According to Venus's report the teacher felt challenged by Venus's son's reaction. As previously noted, research has shown that teachers feel intimidated by and afraid of Black boys (Ross & Jackson 1991, Wright 2010), especially White female teacher (Ladson-Billings 2011). It is difficult to fully determine whether the action of the teacher was influenced by intrinsic racism or whether the demeanour of Venus's son was threatening. The two factors

probably interact. Foster (1990, 1991), argues that the validity of scholars' claims that Black boys are reacting to teacher racism is difficult to determine, due to empirical limitations, thus making it difficult to prove. It is important to acknowledge that disentangling complex factors is made more difficult by the fact that the report by Venus is being analysed third hand, and neither myself as the researcher nor Venus were present when the situation occurred. The interpretation is from Venus's report.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that race and ethnicity impact on the everyday practices of parents, "not least because parents try to protect their children from racism" (Phoenix & Husain 2007, p.32). These and other authors contend, that Black parents are aware of racism in schools (Brown 2020; Crozier 2005; Reynolds 2005, 2010), which can lead to their distrust of what teachers' report. Phoenix and Husain (2007) argue that this mistrust is exacerbated because of "the gulf between teachers' and Black parents' constructions concerning the role of schools" (Phoenix & Husain 2007, p.33). Differences in teachers' and parents' perceptions about Black boys behaviours follow from this, as discussed in section 4.3. Although it could be argued that Venus's report is not fully reliable, for the reasons outlined, what occurred next seems to add evidence to Venus's inference about teachers' negative actions and perceptions and actions about Black boys:

> ...what happened then was the teacher felt challenged as he had made a point for standing up for self. She then contacted deputy head who came into the classroom. She created another situation and the deputy head challenged him about his behaviour in front of everybody, didn't take him to one side, didn't get his point of view, just presumed that he had created the situation and therefore needed to be dealt with. He told my child to leave the classroom, so my child set off to leave the classroom and the teacher said to him, yeah just push up against me, which was implying he was trying to push past the teacher to leave the room. They turned into total negative, but testimony to my child, and being of the age group he was and realising consequences of actions which he has been taught, he took himself out of that situation which he shouldn't have been in, in the first place. He left the classroom via another door. Cos of things that have happened in the past, I safeguarded my child, he had always got an adult in the school building he could go and speak to within the school. (Venus fg.1)

In the above report there are number of issues that arise, firstly the fact that the teacher felt challenged and therefore called for her superior, the deputy head, who is in a higher authority figure. The deputy head immediately aligned with the classroom teacher without exploring

the situation with Venus' son, and immediately exerted his authority. Diangelo (2018) recognises this as a form of White fragility and argues that when White people are presented with any challenge to their authority, this can create an outward display of emotions, such as anger or fear. In this situation the classroom teacher's display of emotion is apparent in that she felt challenged she escalated the situation to a teacher of an higher professional rank. Research shows that perceived challenging behaviours of Black boys are escalated quickly, even in the case of minor misdemeanours (Ladson-Billings 2011).

The actions of both teachers indicate White fragility, as explained by Diangelo (2018) "teachers can show white solidarity by validating shared perspectives-invalidating students of colour" (p.109). The classroom teacher's action by calling the deputy head, shows that she "tapped into the classic story that Black (men in particular) are dangerous and violent" (Ibid) and was confident that he would align with her, without question. This is a similar issue to the Amy Cooper incident, which stirred widespread conversations about racism. Amy Cooper was a White woman walking her dog in Central Park, Manhattan. Christian Cooper was birdwatching in the park, and asked Amy to leash her dog. Amy told Christian Cooper that she would call the police and tell them that an African American man was threatening her life. Fortunately, Christian Cooper captured her claim on video, which went viral on social media and was widely reported in various other media communications (Bellafante 2020). Amy Cooper's actions indicate her confidence that her false allegations would have been accepted without question. Christian Cooper needed to use his social skills to deescalate the situation. His video revealed vividly how White fragility played out. Venus's report indicates that the White female classroom teacher also had this confidence when she escalated the situation. Diangelo (2018) assert that when White people feel challenged by Black people, (especially males who are deemed aggressive and dangerous) they respond in ways that they are aware will have a detrimental impact on the person of colour.

The teacher's actions in escalating the situation highlights an instance in which "White people fall short of standards of emotion regulation to which all people ought to be held to and which people of colour are typically held" (Liebow & Glazer 2019, p.4). The teacher may not be aware that Venus's son experienced her behaviours as patronising. It appears that her focus was on his behaviour and not on whether she had done anything to contribute to it. The son's decision to disengage, given his subordinate position was to deescalate the situation (as Christian Cooper had done). Whilst this may have been viewed as disrespectful behaviour, it

appears that he made the decision to possibly defuse the situation and avoid further escalation, whilst maintaining his dignity. Venus's son received no reprimands resulting from this incident and completed his art exam and his formal schooling went without error.

It is clear from Venus's report that this was not the first incident that her son had experienced within the school setting, as he had certain safety provisions in place. The fact that Venus felt it necessary to set up safeguards for her son, speaks volumes. Schools should be a safe space for all children, however, Venus's and other reports previously discussed, indicates that this is not the case. Venus is highlighting that mothering and childrearing Black children is far more complex in racialised societies and extends beyond the care and protection that White middle class mothers are expected to provide, and against which Black mothers are measured (Reynolds 2005). Rather Black mothering requires transmitting survival strategies to their children to help them "negotiate the negative aspects of White educational spaces" (Wright et al. 2010, p.315). Whilst it is important to ensure Black children are equipped with these skills, by Black Caribbean mothers covertly taking on this responsibility it allows schools and their institutional actors to continue to believe that the deficit lies within the family, community or the child themselves. It leaves the shape, scale and scope of the education system untouched (Gillborn 2006).

## 4.5. Special Educational Need (SEN)

*...it's easy to label them.* (Amy fg.1)

In this section I turn my attention to exploring SEN and the interactions of prejudice that it engages, an emergent theme in the focus groups. There is a troubled history of Black Caribbean pupils' placement in SEN. The terminology has changed since the polemic work of Coard (1971), which was pivotal in reporting how over-placement in what were then called 'educationally subnormal' groups was negatively affecting the educational outcome of Black Caribbean children. However, the continuation of over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils in SEN remains problematic (Lindsay 2006, Strand and Lindorff, 2009, 2012, 2018). It was clear in some of the mothers' discussions that SEN was compounded by the intersections of race and gender, creating a cumulative matrix of oppression.

Intersectionality is well positioned to understand complexities facing Black Caribbean boys

and their schooling experiences (for further discussions on intersectionality see section 2.3). An analysis undertaken by the Office of the Children's Commission (2012) found that in 2009 and 2010 Black Caribbean boys who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) and assessed with special educational needs were 168 times more likely to be excluded from school on a permanent basis than a White girl from a middle-class background without special needs. In the tradition of CRT it is important to observe these cumulative intersections and how they feature in the experience of the mothers and their children. Four of the five mothers mentioned issues relating to SEN in each of the focus groups. Patterns emerged that illuminated the complexity of how multiple layers of subordination and disadvantage impacted on their sons' educational experience.

There are possible positive educational outcomes for those identified with SEN, especially if the necessary specialist resources and additional supports are put in place (Rollock et al. 2015). A major aspect of this support, to achieve the best possible outcome, includes parents and schools working in collaboration (emphasised in DCSF, 2009). It has, however, been highlighted in the literature concerning Black pupils and SEN that, regardless of what knowledge (or cultural or social capital) parents may have, this has little impact on the formal procedures and processes followed by the school. For example, CLEO's collaborative working proved extra difficult. The primary school which both her sons attended failed to inform her that they had any concerns relating to her eldest son's SEN.

> ...what they never told me when they called me in to assess him, sorry they called me in to assess him but what they said to me is that they had been keeping him in constantly at play time. Nobody had told me that they wanted to get him assessed so we are keeping him at playtime because we are concerned of the level of work that he has not been doing, even when we are keeping him in at playtime I am still concerned that he is not doing the level of work he is supposed to be doing, nobody said that. So I was not happy about it, and I said hang on a minute, he has had 3 different school teachers this year, they have left one after the other, there is no consistency. (Cleo fg.1)

The lack of consistency appears to impact negatively according to the mothers' reports. There was a lack of consistency of teaching staff in Cleo's eldest son's class. She believed the school had not given any consideration as to how this may have impacted on him academically. Whereas, in a report made by Tallulah in the first focus group session, she

explains that despite her son achieving high grades during year 7 and 8, he was not allowed to take triple science as a curriculum option. Tallulah states that when she challenged this decision, pointing out that he was achieving A's and B's in his science work, she was informed that it was because he had a consistent class teacher. Whereas other classes in his year group were not in such a position due to the schools staffing difficulties. Taking these two stories into consideration it could be argued that regardless of the staffing structures in schools, either way Black Caribbean boys may suffer as result. The inference can be made that absence of teaching consistency is not recognised as a factor leading to lower performance, whereas presence of teaching consistency is stated as the main factor explaining his high performance.

Cleo went on to explain that the same primary school that had not informed her of any concerns about her eldest son's academic performance, had started to assess her youngest child, without informing her or obtaining her consent, therefore not following the official SEN guidance.

> Not only that, there is 8 years between my sons, and my youngest son came home and started telling me a lot of different questions that he had been asked that day and I said has someone been in different to talk to you, and he said yes. I phoned up the school and said have you assessed my child, and I found out that they had brought somebody in to assess him, and then she blamed it on the other teacher, she said we are half way through the assessment can you come in and sign the paperwork. (Cleo fg.1)

Olivia's response to Cleo's account aligns with previous research about teachers' perceptions about Black Caribbean parents lack of interest in their child's education:

> That sounds like they have thought, well is mum going to be interested (Olivia fg.1)

As noted in the literature review, with the necessary modifications children can reach their full academic potential. Therefore, parents may be happy for their children to be identified and receive the necessary and appropriate intervention and support. But research has also identified that Black parents are aware of the dangers relating to Black children being negatively labelled. Following Cleo's interventions, she progressed to working with the school, thus getting the best outcome for her eldest son by ensuring some basic adjustments

(he received additional time to complete his work). The stark reality of how teachers' racialised perceptions can lead to negative labelling became clear to Cleo, when she eventually received his report detailing the proposed interventions as an outcome of her assessment:

> I was reading the report and the way they were saying ESOL, I thought what has that got to do with it, he is Black British born here, he has not got English as a second language, is that what you are trying to imply, but it's perceptions really. (Cleo fg.1)

The mothers in this study are aware of teacher's negative perceptions relating to Black Caribbean boys, noted from Cleo's experience above, and Olivia's comment immediately after, "It seems to come back to that again doesn't it, perceptions". The issue of school officials perceptions was a matter that Olivia raised in relation to how teachers and school personnel may view Black Caribbean parents:

> Do you think that, you know how they like to label them with ADHD and SEN, is something to do with funding, and our children are easy targets, cos they think we won't challenge them? (Olivia fg.1)

The National Funding Formula allocates additional funds to schools who have pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Olivia's comment above, highlights that the school may be assessing him as in need of EAL (ESOL) to attract additional funding. Suggesting that teachers and schools perceptions of Black Caribbean parents lack of interest in their child's education, Black Caribbean children 'easy targets'. Having this awareness is demonstrated in the mothers challenging teachers and resisting their child being assessed for learning difficulties, as was the case with four out of the five mothers in this study. Despite the teachers claiming that their child required an assessment, in some cases the mothers believed that the teachers assessments were inaccurate. As I have documented in section 2.10 of the literature review, teacher attitudes are inextricably linked to Black Caribbean boys over representation in the category of BESD. Wright (2010) suggests the fact that educational professionals, whose positions are located within hegemonic Whiteness making clinical judgements on children, is problematic because they have a tendency to view the behaviours of Black boys as more challenging, thus resulting in being inappropriately labelled.

Olivia was confident that her son did not require any specialist assessments for any additional learning needs or behaviour issues. She did, however, acknowledge that her son required discipline in the classroom, but this was not as a result of a particular learning need. Both Cleo and Olivia's quotes reinforce research reporting that the identification for Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) are socially constructed (Lindsay et al. 2006). They are interpreted on the basis of expected patterns of norms and behaviours of teachers who are positioned within institutionally racist structures of White supremacy that privileges White norms and values (Wright 2010). What both the following quotes reveal is that the range of behaviours displayed by Black Caribbean boys can lead to teachers assessing the need for SEN. Cleo explains that her youngest son being very quiet in class was linked to his shyness, in contrast to Olivia's son who was playing up because of what she perceived to be a lack of discipline in the classroom:

> He is not dyslexic, but with him it's confidence, very shy and so on. (Cleo fg.1)

> The teacher once said to me that my middle child needed an ed psych, I said I think he needs discipline. I said he has got 2 teachers that job share, and both are female, I said he needs a male. The next year when he moved up he settled in fine. I still see that teacher now cos my younger son goes to that school, but she really challenged me, saying he needs an ed psych, and I said no he doesn't. He needed some order and consistency and as soon as he got a male teacher he settled in fine, and I thought please don't prove me wrong, and he didn't (Olivia fg.1)

Olivia expressed a number of different emotions whilst recollecting, which were evident in both her verbal and non-verbal responses. There were changes of pitch and tone of her voice, as well as her body language. It was obvious when she was relaxed, as she sat with her back against the chair, in a slouching position, but when she began discussing this situation, she sat upright without the support of the chair against her back, she lowered her tone and had a more hostile facial expression (knitted eyebrows, narrowed eyes, pursed lips, with frown lines in her forehead), and was directly glaring into Amy's face, who was sat directly across from her. The whole dynamic of the group at this point was interesting, as Amy was sinking down in her chair, as if she was trying to avoid Olivia's hostile glance. It was interesting to see how Olivia returned to a relaxed position as soon as she said the words, *"and he didn't"*.

Moreover, Olivia's report illuminates issues of intersectionality. Olivia stated that her son needed a male teacher rather than intervention from an educational psychologist. The majority of teaching staff are White and overwhelmingly female, which research studies have suggested that White female teachers are often intimidated by Black boys in from early childhood (Kholi & Jackson 2016). Furthermore, Wright (2019) shows that White female teachers tend to assess young Black boys social and emotional development below average. Olivia's contention that her son required a male, rather than two female teachers indicates that she possibly feels that a male teacher may have a better understanding of the energy that boys bring with them and respond with a more disciplined approach, opposed to assessing him as having some form of additional learning need. This shows that she has some possible awareness of the biased perceptions of teachers, especially White female teachers, and the impact of this regarding their assessments of young Black boys.

On a final note relating to inappropriate teacher assessments and the danger of potentially labelling young Black boys with SEN, I want to share a lengthy report made by Venus – its length is necessary to capture the issues important and relevant for the analysis:

> School called me in one day saying they were very concerned that my child was not interacting with other children...He was about 13 years old. He had been in school for a couple of years, so I asked my child about friendships and schools concern. So when he explained it to me I took him to school to talk to teacher the way he had told me. I thought coming straight from him, it may have a better impact and the teacher would get a better understanding that was creating the situation that he was concerned about. I'm really glad that he did in the end. ...He went to school and he highlighted that he had quite a lot of friends at school and in his words, this is what he said, he said that there were music kids that spent time in the library planning what they were gonna do at the next gig. There were kids that spent a lot of time learning, what are deemed as nerds, boffins, again might be in the library, researching doing their work. There were the kids that would be on playing fields all about dating. There were the sports kids that like football, cricket and then there were the ones that are slightly unruly, maybe smoking experimenting with weed. Because of something that I said when he was younger, I thought it was a good idea to have a diverse set of friends and the fact by having a diverse group of friends he would learn a lot more. It was a past conversation that he brought to present. Where he was growing up there was a postcode gang issue and so all these children no matter what group they came from had links with different areas...he pointed it out to the teacher, that it was safer not to get too involved with any

particular group and that way he couldn't be linked with...any particular postcode group. He said I have friends in all different areas, some in this postcode and some that live in that postcode...I noticed was that he would get the school bus from a different bus stop from other kids. He made this decision from things that had come about for the media, how he portrayed situations. So he explained to the teacher how easy it was to get involved in certain situations and circumstances. The teacher said yes but at school you don't have to deal with this, but he said yes but when you are outside on playing fields there are different groups of people. I don't think that they are as educated as they think they are about it. Teacher thanked him as he had brought certain things to the teacher's attention. His awareness was fact that he lived in an area where there is a postcode gang and discussion me and him had as mother and son, media and things that he was aware about in everyday life, he had become of an age that he could understand it a lot better, so needed to avoid certain situations. (Venus fg.1)

Initially teachers contacted Venus, because of concerns regarding her son's social skills. The outcome, however, demonstrates that not only are teachers' assessments of issues that are linked to BESD far from the reality of the situation but also, they lack an awareness of the strategies that young Black boys use to negotiate and manage their lived realities. Venus's report also reveals the emotional and intellectual labour of a Black Caribbean mother to develop her son's awareness and provide him with appropriate mechanisms to manage his life in a racialised society. She illustrates how parents and children work as a team to ensure survival strategies, not only inside of school but also in wider society. Venus's strategy is demonstrated by the fact that she took her son to school to educate those who are in a professional and authoritative position, on some of the wider community and societal issues that some young people have to manage both in and out of the school gates. Venus's decision was to encourage her son to explain to the teacher that his (the teacher's) perception of his (the son's) lack of social skills was in fact a demonstration of his social skills built on the lived reality of life as a teenager. Venus's son clearly did have friends, friends in different social circles, and he helped the teacher understand why this was the case. It gave the teacher an alternative view that addressed his initial concern. That Venus's son was not socialising with one particular group, especially other Black males, and given that research has shown Black boys are subject to hyper-surveillance in schools. Wright (2010) found that a form of surveillance was due teachers perceptions as Black boys 'gregarious behaviours':

I have noticed that we have West Indian groups of lads, grouping together as black kids and running around, I say running because they are ever so gregarious . . . that's a social thing as well, of course you get white kids but they don't seem to be [as] . . . they [black kids] are always singing and dancing and are much more physically expressive. Now that in itself makes them get noticed more (p.312)

It is such factors that may have led the teacher to believe that there must be something wrong with his social development.   The fact that Venus stated that she was really glad that her son explained the situation, rather than her trying to convince the teacher that he does have friends and there are no issues with his social skills, indicates that the teacher was able to witness her son's articulation and awareness of wider issues in local communities and wider society.   Writing in the U.S., Tran & Young (2005 cited in Maylor 2008), found that White teachers do not have the same worldviews as their students.   This was evident by the fact that the teacher thanked Venus's son for providing him with such insights.

## 4.6. Conclusion

In section 4.2 I have demonstrated through an analysis of the mothers' voices and the counter stories that they provided to dominant majoritarian narratives, the importance of focus groups as a safe space for the mothers to raise the issue of racism and the impact that this is having on the educational experiences of their sons.   This section reviews important issues about the challenge that Black mothers face when they are supporting their sons to attain the best educational outcome that education policies claim is in the interest of all children.   The mothers use of metaphoric references such as 'Not raising the racist flag' indicate their lack of comfort in addressing racist in-school practices and teachers' actions.   They have awareness that, not only will they be perceived as wanting special provisions, but also it will be counter-productive due to the colour-blind discourse that is reinforced by de-racialised educational policies.

The mothers' voices align with previous research and literature that has found that schools and their institutional agents view Black boys through a deficit model, evidenced in teachers' perceptions and behaviours that they consider Black Caribbean boys as dangerous and threatening, reinforced by negative stereotypes proliferated through the media.   This is demonstrated in the analysis throughout section 4.3.   Institutional racism, evident in the lack

of priority that is given to diversity awareness in ITE, results in failure to provide teachers with the basic insights into their own biases and limits their ability to prepare their students for life in racially and ethnically diverse societies.  These factors all contribute to the emotional wellbeing of Black boys, so much so that the mothers recognised that the teachers' actions were impacting on their sons identities and sense of self-worth, thus having the potential of their son's 'Losing who they are'.  Ferguson (2000) argues that cultural images of Black boys are routinely depicted as aggressive and violent, even though this does not represent the vast majority of Black males.  The dominant stereotypes impact on how young Black males come to view themselves and make sense of their identities.

Section 4.4 illuminates how teachers' perceptions of Black Caribbean males can lead to inappropriate labelling with SEN.  It is apparent that teachers' perceptions are influenced by dominant negative stereotypes of Black Caribbean boys, their families and community.  These influences seem to dominate SEN assessments of Black Caribbean boys rather than a real knowledge and understanding based on their interactions with their pupils.  This chapter has also illuminated the day to day challenges that Black Caribbean mothers have in supporting their sons' through school.  By valuing and privileging the voices of the mothers, this chapter has demonstrated that they are committed and dedicated to supporting their sons' schooling career and demonstrate considerable skill in challenging inherent racist perceptions and actions of teachers.

**Chapter 5. Conclusion**

**5.1. Introduction**

The research undertook a qualitative study, within Critical Race theoretical framework, drawing on data from three focus groups with 5 mothers of Black Caribbean heritage. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the information provided by the mothers in this study. This chapter summarises and brings together themes and issues that have arisen and are developed throughout the study. At the beginning of chapter one I outlined that the aim is to explore the experience of Black Caribbean boys in English state schools from the perspective of their mothers. The research set out to do this through addressing the following questions.

1. How do the Black Caribbean mothers involved in the study perceive their sons' experience and relationship to schooling?
2. What is the perception of these mothers regarding the role of racial discrimination in their sons' experience and performance at school?
3. What can be learned from the mothers' actions and strategies when interfacing with school professionals on behalf of their sons?

In chapter one I noted that, despite clear evidence that structural and institutional racism are significant factors in the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils as a social group, dominant majoritarian discourses contend that inter alia deficits and dysfunctional family structures are the cause. Such narratives are influential in reinforcing the view that the academic underperformance of Black Caribbean pupils (especially boys) is located within the individual child, their family or the wider Black Caribbean community. Chapter four provides the results arising from the mothers' discussions across the three focus group sessions, which illuminates the importance of providing counter-narratives to the majoritarian stories that portray Black Caribbean mothers as lacking the educational value necessary to support the educational success of their children. Their shared stories not only highlight the daily struggles that their sons experience in schools, resulting from school professionals' racial biases, but also demonstrate the dedication, strategies, skills and actions that Black Caribbean mothers employ in an attempt to ensure their son's educational success, all of which usually goes unrecognised.

The structure of the data was set out into four superordinate themes which included discrimination and inequalities in the education system, Black boys deemed as aggressive, teachers' low expectations, and Special Educational need (SEN). In sections 2.7 and 2.8 I argued that negative stereotypes portraying Black Caribbean boys as dangerous in wider societal discourse reinforce the deficit narrative and influence teachers' and schools' perceptions and actions which continues to place this social group at an educational disadvantage.

The findings from the mothers' reports support previous findings relating to Black Caribbean boys educational disadvantage as a social group, in which it is argued that such disadvantage is located within structural and institutional racism, which is significantly hampered by White privilege underpinned by the culture and practices of White supremacy. This became evident in the detailed accounts the mothers gave during the focus group sessions. In summarising my data findings in the next section of this concluding chapter, I shall use the main research questions guiding this thesis which formed the structuring of the data in chapter four. These main research questions emerged from my review of the literature and the key issues that the mothers in my research spoke about during the focus group sessions.

## 5.2. Black Caribbean boys' relationship with and experience of schooling

Through a critical review of educational and sociological literature this thesis has argued that negative stereotypes have reinforced constructions of Black Caribbean males as low achievers and anti-schooling. Such constructions are powerful in shaping the schooling experience of Black boys, especially in terms of teachers' inappropriate and inaccurate academic and SEN assessments (Gillborn 2006, 2008, 2010, Tickly et al 2016, Lindsay et al 2006, Strand & Lindsay 2009, 2012, Strand & Lindorff 2018)) and their disproportionate use of punitive exclusionary measures (CRE 1984; Gillborn 1995, Gillborn and Youdell 2000, Wright et al 2005, Wright et al 2016, GOV.UK 2018). Through the accounts of the mothers involved in this study, teachers and school officials actions resulting from such negative stereotypes have been significant in underpinning their sons' relationship and with experience of schooling.

As will be seen further in this chapter, a major skill that the mothers demonstrated throughout this study was to maintain their sons' motivation, despite their negative experiences resulting from teachers' racial bias. Both Cleo and Olivia explain how their sons were placed in sets below their academic ability, which had the potential to lead to demotivation. As Cleo

explains during the first focus group session, "There were kids that were seen as trouble kids and they were messing about, and he was getting drawn up with them". Similarly, Tallulah reports that her son was prohibited from taking triple science in year 9, despite achieving A and B grades in all his assessments, which impacted on his motivation as he was aware that this could severely impact on his longer-term academic ambitions. The risk of losing motivation was also evident in Amy's report, whose son experienced racial discrimination throughout his secondary education, both physically and verbally. This resulted in Amy removing her son from the school, despite moving to a new house to enhance his opportunity in securing a place at the school as it had a good reputation in providing SEN support. Maintaining motivation was pivotal to Amy's son completion of his compulsory education in a mainstream school.

This differential treatment and challenging experiences fostered a school environment that contributed to difficult teacher pupil relationships and difficult relationships with White pupils. It is clear from the mothers' discussions that their sons used various strategies to resist and contest teachers assumptions and assessments. These included working in collaboration with their mothers by directly informing them of their situation, which prompted the mothers to act on behalf of their sons. Wright et al (2021) highlight that once Black boys have been allocated to lower academic sets they tend to be stuck and therefore find it more difficult to achieve their academic potential. This research, however, illuminates both the resilient strategies of the boys and the skilful actions and dedication of the mothers as both Olivia and Cleo challenged the schools and teachers, which yielded positive results. Olivia's son was moved into a higher maths set and Cleo's son was eventually allowed to sit the higher science exam paper (see section 4.4).

This research also identifies other forms of resistance and strategies deployed by Black Caribbean boys as a way of pushing back against stereotypes and teachers' negative perceptions and assumptions. For example, in section 4.4 Venus reports that when her son challenged the teacher, due to what he perceived to be condescending behaviour, the situation was escalated to the deputy head-teacher. However, due to previous experiences, relating to difficult experiences in the school environment, her son had safeguards in place, an adult that he trusted and had a good rapport with, whom he immediately sought out after being instructed by the deputy head-teacher to leave the classroom. An unexpected finding from this research was how Black boys not only deploy resistive actions to negotiate and navigate White educational spaces, but also how Black boys carry the burden of their negative

schooling experiences in an attempt to spare their mothers additional worry, as reported by Amy in section 4.3.

The voices of the mothers clearly highlight that stereotypical assumptions leading to racial bias have a significant effect on their sons' relationship with and experience of schooling, which require both them and their sons to deploy and develop various strategies to resist the deficit and pathological assumptions and constructions and associated problems their sons experience in the school environment.

## 5.3. The role of racial discrimination in Black Caribbean boys' experience and performance at school

This research reveals that racial discrimination is a significant feature in Black Caribbean boys experience and performance at school. This is evident in the mothers' reports throughout the three focus group sessions during which they highlight significant challenges facing their sons in school, ranging from overt acts of racism to more implicit behaviours and actions of teachers. The mothers noted several factors that they perceived to be related to racial discrimination.  A specific effect of racism highlighted by the mothers relates to societal issues that portrayed Black males as aggressive.  The mothers' reports illuminate the intersections of race and gender, showing that teachers' views of Black boys differ from that of girls.  Stereotypical views of Black males as aggressive have been commonplace in Britain since the 1960's (Hall et al. 1982; Long 2018).  Media portrayals proliferated the 'mugging crisis' which created the image of the 'Black folk devil' (Ibid.).  Such media representations continue to project the notion of the dangerous Black youth, evident in gang and extremism discourses.

Notions of culture have had further implications for young Black boys as such stereotypes, proliferated through various media, state or imply that the values of Black cultures are opposite to values and norms of 'British culture', whereby entire communities are held responsible for the actions of a few (Sviensson 2008).  These views are powerful in shaping public consciousness.  Such discourses and stereotypical views lead to the hyper-surveillance of Black boys in wider society, which infiltrates into schools and the actions of teachers, as was found by Gilliam et al. (2016) outlined in section 4.3.  Although the mothers in this study were probably not aware of the findings of the Gilliam et al. study, because it was published at the same time that the focus group session took place, they showed that they were aware that their sons were viewed and judged in these negative ways.  This led to the mothers being

proactive, for example, putting safeguards in place, or making their own inquiries and investigations of accusations made against their sons. Furthermore, these mothers demonstrated important leadership skills, by teaching their sons strategies necessary to negotiate and navigate predominantly White spaces in preparation for the likelihood that their sons would be subject to hyper-surveillance and labelling.

As outlined in section 4.4, wider negative stereotypes of Black pupils has led to schools' and teachers' expectations of their failure, as is evident in teachers underestimating their academic abilities (Wright et al. 2021), thus placing them in lower curriculum sets and entering them for lower exam papers. The mothers recognised a result of teachers' implicit racial biases was an underestimation of their sons' academic abilities and potential. This was evident in the mothers reporting that their sons were placed in lower teaching sets, exam entries and inappropriate assessments of SEN.  Teachers' covert and implicit racism had been identified over 30 years ago in the Swann Report (1985), which highlighted "that teacher's attitude towards, and expectations of, West Indian pupils may be subconsciously influenced by stereotyped, negative or patronising views of their abilities and potential, which may prove a self-fulfilling prophecy, and can be seen as a form of 'unintentional racism'" (p.xix). The Swann report made recommendations that had the potential to create a multicultural anti-racist society, achieved through education.  However, the inauguration of a colour-blind approach in mainstream politics paved the way for the de-prioritising of race from educational policy.

Although the issue of race and racism was placed back on the political agenda in the late 1990's following the murder of Stephen Lawrence, in which the in-depth inquiry by Lord Macpherson identified institutional racism in most of Britain's institutions, inter/national and community conflicts were used to justify the de-prioritisation of race in educational policy and discourse in the 21st century (Tomlinson 2008, Warmington et al. 2017). The deracialisation of educational policy which has replaced culture for the language of race has served to entrench racism into the structures of education. A major issue is the failure to embed diversity programmes into ITE programmes.  This has led to a failure to educate teachers about new understandings of racism, such as the need to transform the dynamics of White privilege. Unlike explicit forms of racism, which are less rare now, new forms of racism can prove difficult for many people raised in Western societies to achieve without relevant training because perceptions are shaped and reinforced by a culture built on White supremacy (Kendi 2019).  My study evidences that the negative stereotypes leading to racial

biases and systemic disadvantages are present today, reinforcing the pervasiveness and persistence of racism affecting Black boys in the English schooling system.

This research finds that racial discrimination and prejudice, not only has the potential to limit Black boys' educational success but reveals that anti-black racism impacts on Black boys' emotional and psychological wellbeing. The mothers' report evidence that schools' and teachers' actions, or in some cases lack of action, has had a detrimental impact on their sons' emotional wellbeing, motivation, personalities, self-esteem and confidence. As one mother observed, "their sons were at risk of losing who they are" (Amy fg.3). Related concerns have been expressed in other research. Crozier (2005) highlights that most of the Black parents in her study identified the emotionally challenging and negative experience their children had in English schools as a result of inherent biases, which without the parents' intervention, their sons were at risk of losing their moral values and becoming involved in non-legal avenues for success. The mothers in this study expressed such concerns. For example, Olivia stated:

> It stems from education...There just seems to be challenges all the time. So as they grow up they think that society is against them (fg3).

These concerns are not new. They were expressed by the first-generation Black Caribbean parents in the UK (Channer 1995, Coard 1977). First generation Caribbean parents were concerned about the impact that English schools were having on their children's academic potential, much of which was identified to be as a result of institutional racism (Coard 1971, Swann 1985). The majority of first-generation parents were educated in the Caribbean and had not been subject to first-hand daily experiences of the racial biases in schools. The mothers in this study however, as second-generation Black Caribbean's born and raised in England had attended English schools. Some had also attended further education and are now working in professions that privilege Whiteness. These experiences have provided them with insights enabling them to see racism in its insidious forms. Arguably, they are in a stronger position than first generation Caribbean parents to resist the culture of White supremacy that positions their sons in a deficit framework. The next section will consider question 3 guiding this thesis, exploring what can be learned from the mothers experience as they support their sons as they journey through the English schooling system.

**5.4. What can be learned from the mothers' action and strategies?**

Critical analysis of my data reveals that the mothers' understanding and actions are in response to negative stereotypes and schools' inherent racial biases, resulting from the dominance of Whiteness and White privilege. The mothers have developed the skills necessary to negotiate ways of combating, at least partially, the effects of racism on their sons. This has required the development of individually crafted strategies for directly dealing with school personnel. They have the knowledge, experiences and awareness necessary to intervene in a systemically racist school system to tackle the type of racism that appears so normal and so is difficult to expose and is often denied (Gillborn 2005, Warmington 2020). Although the mothers are aware that racism is having a significant negative impact on their sons' schooling experience, they also recognise that directly accusing teachers' assessments of being racist would be counterproductive. This was a matter which Olivia highlighted by not 'raising the racist flag' (fg.1) in an environment which would more than likely reject their observations, and respond in ways that have been termed White fragility (Diangelo 2018). Rather these mothers use their leadership and negotiation skills to enter a partnership with teachers.

Whilst the mothers' actions may not be a direct intentional political act, my research highlights the activism that Black Caribbean mothers employ in seeking the best outcomes for their children. The mothers skilfully challenge teachers' biased attitudes, by holding all parties to account, teachers, their sons and themselves. In the majority of the cases that the mothers drew attention to, the teachers' underestimated their sons' abilities. With the support of their mothers, the boys demonstrated they were capable of achieving what are considered good grades. Similarly, when teachers' inappropriate and inaccurate SEN assessments were challenged by the mothers, and alternative suggestions were made, the mothers' assessments proved to be accurate, and the alternative arrangements more appropriate.

This research found that Black Caribbean parents' recognition of continued racism and the impact it has on their son's causes frustrations and emotional pain. For example, changes in Olivia's verbal and non-verbal communication when she discussed scenarios relating to her and her sons' experience (outlined in section 4.5). Also, as Amy relived her sons' experience of racism that he endured in a new school (she had moved to a new house to increase his chances of securing a place, a strategy that is associated with White middle-class parents), she became visibly distressed. Despite his negative experience, which resulted in her taking

him out of the school, she was able to maintain her son's motivation and encouraged him to enrol in another school to ensure that he completed his compulsory education. This shows the dedication, commitment and interest that these mothers have in their son's schooling. It shows the commitment of their sons also.

Frustration is not a new phenomenon. Over 20 years ago the Crozier (1996) study with Black mothers found that parents were frustrated about teacher's resistance to engage with them in a dialogue about their children's needs. The government places significant emphasis on parent school partnership. However, research has shown that when Black Caribbean parents attempt to intervene on behalf of their child's education, they are often marginalised, dismissed and feel that they are not being heard (Crozier 1996, Gillborn & Youdell 2000, Wright et al. 2000). For them the parent-school partnership is a process of teacher domination, based on the teachers' agendas. As Crozier (1998) has argued, "for those parents who share that agenda this may be acceptable; for others they are either left without a voice, or tensions are created in the relationships" (p. 126). This highlights that parents have very little leverage and rank in changing the racial inequities of the educational system. As Kendi (2019) contends it is policies that determine the success of groups. Despite the lack of legal protection directly relating to race - previously contained in Race relations equality acts, as the mothers in this study demonstrate, their individual actions helped shape the educational success of their sons. Despite their limited leverage, these mothers used their skills and strategies well to get positive results.

The mothers show remarkable commitment to supporting their sons as they journey through the English school system. They defy the negative stereotypes and misrepresentations assigned to Black Caribbean mothers. Clearly, they are not raising violent Black boys, rather they are providing leadership, love, dedication and commitment to ensuring their sons have the best possible chances in life. All of the mothers have knowledge, experiences and awareness necessary to intervene in a systemically racist school system to increase the likelihood that their sons will get the best possible education. As parents they are involved and extremely interested in their son's education, including supporting them at home by buying additional curriculum material or paying for supplementary education. Some of the mothers in the study made informed choices and decisions to send their children to schools based on an institution's particular specialism or initiatives that the mothers believed would benefit their sons. This included them applying for schools outside of their catchment area, or even moving house to give them a greater chance of being offered a place.

Furthermore, the mothers are successful in engaging the support of the teachers to bring about changes to suit their child's needs and were successful in achieving their demands from teachers and schools. My research highlights that despite additional barriers and challenges arising from racism, these mothers employ strategies and skills similar to those that tend to be associated with White middle-class mothers. This is interesting to reflect upon alongside the perspective from government and educationists who state that school and parent partnership is a significant factor that determines the educational success and outcomes of pupils (Crozier 1998, Demie & McLean 2017, Reay 2007). The so-called discontinuity between Black parents and schools has been cited as the cause of underachievement and low attainment of Black Caribbean pupils as a group (Swann 1985; Rhamie 2012, Rollock et al. 2015). There have been long standing negative perceptions regarding Black Caribbean parents' involvement and support of their children in English schools. Following the Windrush era when Black Caribbean pupils were entering English state schools in increasing numbers, teachers and schools perceived that Black Caribbean parents had unrealistic educational expectations of their children (Channer 1997, Crozier 2005, Tomlinson 1983, Wright 1992). Contemporary research indicates that schools and teachers have a tendency to assume Black Caribbean parents have a lack of interest and involvement in their child/ren's education (Crozier 2005, Rollock et al. 2015). It seems that schools judge parental involvement based on taking up particular types of role, such as involvement in PTA meetings and representation on governing bodies or activities. These judgements are school centric and, Lawson (2003) argues, designed to fulfil the perceived mission of the school, based on White middle-class beliefs and values. Whilst the mothers in this study are not directly involved with school centric activities, their involvement in their child/ren's education is a desperate fight for their son's future, which transcends the expressed needs of schools and teachers.

In western societies teachers have long regarded White middle-class parents as supportive of their children's education (Manning 2019). Other parents are then measured against their behaviours and values. The deracialisation of educational policies and the inauguration of a colour-blind approach (see Chapter 2) contends that all pupils are treated the same. This also applies to the way parents are regarded (Crozier 2001). Hill-Collins (1994) argues that child rearing practices for Black mothers require additional concerns and worries beyond those of White middle-class mothers. Black mothers in Western societies have to negotiate complicated and complex choices which mothers of White children do not have to negotiate or consider.

The women in this study reveal something different and present a paradox. These mothers show how they have to prepare their sons to fit into a system that is flawed with racial inequalities. They are aware that they are sending their sons into an environment in which schools are fighting against Black boys, as described by Olivia (fg.3), "they are fighting against them, it's a battle". They are also aware however, that being in school is of more benefit than being on the streets, and the risk of being influenced into anti-social non legal avenues for success. These mothers are required to do something extraordinary - to proactively apply skills beyond those required of White middle-class parents. The mothers in this study have persisted in parenting their sons to combat racism or, at the very least, attempt to neutralise the potential effects it has on their personhood and education.

Rollock et al. (2011) highlight that the necessity for providing children with racial awareness and how to manage their racial identity in predominantly White spaces are common skills that Black Caribbean parents employ. Furthermore, rather than becoming overly anxious and paranoid about racism and its consequences for their sons, this research shows that the mothers in this study show leadership by coaching their child/ren how to survive and thrive in a biased system. These mothers are demonstrating leadership, but not in the way that schools value. This research highlights that these mothers are coaching their sons to establish safeguards in anticipation of difficulties occurring. For instance, Venus had arranged for her son to have an authority figure in the school in the event of a situation occurring to provide him with an additional layer of protection.

Manning (2019) refers to 'concerted cultivation' a term that has been adopted to describe what is considered as 'proper parenting', which is associated with White middle-class parents. Concerted cultivation involves parents imparting skills to their child that help them in their transition from childhood to adulthood, which involves "intensive, sustained, strategic and adult directed requirements" (Ibid. p, 1). Such support, particularly appropriate to White middle-class parents and their children, encourages social and cognitive skills that enable them to interact with authority figures as equals. As found in this study, the mothers demonstrate comparable skills. This was illuminated in another scenario provided by Venus, which shows that her son has learned from his mother's coaching and applied intelligent strategic interventions, put into action following the teacher's concern about her son's social skills (reported in section 4.5). She encouraged her son to explain directly to his teacher his reasons for his lack of association with any one particular group, that was a result of his worldview which he had gleaned from his socialisation of living in a locality that had an issue

with inter-community conflicts. His insights developed from regular coaching in the form of discussions with his mother. Venus was not only confident that her son was capable of communicating with authority figures, but aware that he would provide the teacher with insights and awareness of the lived realities of some pupils, both inside and outside the school gates.

At a grassroots level these mothers are challenging teacher racism and the implicit biases they hold, consciously or unconsciously. The strategies are evident in the way that the mothers enter into the dialogue with teachers regarding their son's education. They are aware of the negative perceptions that teachers have of Black Caribbean mothers, in terms of perceived class position and types of homes Black Caribbean children are raised in. They experienced considerable frustration and anger when dealing with school personnel on behalf of their sons. This was demonstrated in phrases such as "I was so angry" (Olivia fg.2), "I could feel myself fuming" *(*Cleo fg.1), "I went berserk" (Amy fg.2). However, these mothers also exhibited what might be described as a form of double consciousness, whereby they see themselves through the eyes of others. Rather than presenting themselves in a way that substantiates negative stereotypes, they prepared themselves carefully, both factually and emotionally. This avoided what Reynolds (2010a), writing about the U.S., highlights that teachers expect Black mothers to present as "loud talking, finger shaking, neck rolling Black women dressed in sweats" (p. 154).

Rather the mothers used significant skills to highlight teachers' biases. For example, Cleo entered a dialogue with her son's teachers that highlighted possible biases as they placed him in sets below his ability. Her forthright and insistent approach to the school was successful in achieving her demands to suit the needs of her son. By asking the teacher to keep her informed of her son's progress, she orchestrated a partnership with the teacher, based on her terms. Similarly, Olivia, demonstrated such skills to ensure that her son was not inappropriately labelled with BESD.

The powerful and pervasive effects of racism were recognised during the first focus group session. One mother acknowledged that Black people's experience of racism in schools can have a debilitating impact and can affect the actions of Black parents in different ways and hamper the support they can give to their children. Cleo's following report illuminates that despite the mothers in this study likely having their own traumatic personal experiences of

racial discrimination, they show considerable resilience necessary to support their own child/ren as they journey through school, Cleo observed:

> ...our kids, in a sense are fortunate, because we are challenging, but for a lot of Black boys it is not the case.  A lot of parents, they feel, cos of their own experience, feel a lack of confidence...Stepping back in and reinforcing for them when they were at school...they don't feel in a position to do anything, and so for those poor boys they are being failed by the school (fg1).

As these findings suggest, the mothers' actions and strategies can significantly support future work and progress in relation to Black Caribbean pupils positive schooling experiences. Their leadership skills and understandings of racism can have a dual approach.  They can support and empower other parents and carers who find it difficult interacting with school officials when seeking best possible outcomes for their children.  In addition the mothers skills and strategies can be employed to work with schools to educate and transform the dynamics of White privilege which is underpinned by the culture and practices of White supremacy.

## 5.5. My research and its contribution to existing literature

The Black Caribbean family has been subject to long-standing scrutiny in Western sociological thinking. The dominant societal narrative that has been peddled in the media is of female dominant dysfunctional households (Brown 2014, 2020, Reynolds 2005, 2010). Based on pathological assumptions, scrutiny of the Black Caribbean family in contemporary discourse has intensified due to the ongoing educational underachievement of Black Caribbean boys and the rise in urban gun and knife crime in the UK.  This has led to the perceived crisis of the Black Caribbean family - lone mothers apparently raising uneducated and violent sons. These dominant myths have become normalised in contemporary Western society. Brown (2020) argues that Black Caribbean mothers only tend to be at the centre of debate when troublesome issues are being examined which results in incomplete narratives about the lived realities of Black Caribbean mothers. By privileging and valuing the voices of Black Caribbean mothers' this study provides a counter-narrative which dispels the myths and misrepresentations.

My research contributes to a body of existing research and studies that contend that Black Caribbean boys' relative underachievement results from structural and institutional racism

inherent within the English schooling system, studies that have "tended to view education as a site of struggle which reproduces inequity" (Wright et al 2021, p.2). Critical analysis of the data resulting from five mothers of Black Caribbean heritage illuminates both the persistence and pervasiveness of racism in schools and provides an understanding of the dynamics of White privilege and the culture and practices that are underpinned by White supremacy. Critical analysis of the data reveals that Black Caribbean mothers do value their child/ren's education and unlike mainstream discourses, this study dispels a narrative that pathologizes and places Black Caribbean in a deficit model. Moreover, it highlights that despite the additional challenges that Black Caribbean boys face in a system that stigmatises and homogenises class and gendered Black identities, similarly to their mothers they demonstrate significant agency, self-efficacy and resilience as they journey through a school system that is flawed with interlocking systems of oppression, such as race, gender, class and ableism.

## 5.6. The implications for Policy

Despite England having some of the strongest equality legislation internationally (Gillborn 2014) the accounts of the mothers support the argument that it has failed to address issues of racism. This is not to say that legislation is ineffective in achieving its aims, but its effects require close inspection and monitoring. In the first section of chapter 2, I argued that policy and initiatives to address racism have been short lived. Two major inquiries, the Swann Report and the Macpherson Report, had the potential to create a fairer Britain. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry led to further enactment of equality legislation. The RRA (2000) extended the remit of the Race Relation Act 1976 and banned discrimination in all areas of private and public services.

Addressing discrimination in the latter years of the 20th century appeared to be a positive step towards inclusion, especially in schools. Initiatives such as the Excellence in Cities Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EIC/EMAG) were imposed to raise the achievement of Black and other groups from ethnic minority backgrounds. They appeared to be yielding positive results. However, an investigation into the street disturbances in three Northern cities in England concluded that groups from racially minoritised backgrounds were living parallel lives which were detrimental to community cohesion (Cantle 2001). The inquiry concluded that Multiculturalism as a policy was the problem, which led to the withdrawal of national and local government funding supporting single identity groups. In addition, the

notion that Black pupils were achieving higher grades academically than White working-class boys was a factor leading to the death of multiculturalism in education and the de-prioritising of race from the political agenda.

The impact of this reinforced the view that race was no longer a barrier to success. The lack of political will to address racial disadvantage is evident in the enactment of the Equality Act 2010, which has had the effect of diluting the action to challenge systemic racism, and the Conservative government's decision to cease equality impact assessments in relation to new policies. A direct example of the short shelf life of positive policy initiatives that serve to ensure equality of all in schools was witnessed in previous OFSTED guidance (2010) which was revoked two years later.

> assessing how well schools promote equality of opportunity, and how effectively they tackle discrimination is a key feature of inspection. Where a school is judged to be inadequate in relation to the extent to which it promotes equality and tackles discrimination, inspectors treat this as a 'limiting' judgement; the school's overall effectiveness is also likely to be judged inadequate (p.4).

This guidance sought to ensure schools demonstrated equality of opportunity. Without such evidence schools would not receive a good inspection grade. Guidance implemented in 2012 maintains that schools should consider the outcomes for different groups. However, it does not directly affect schools' inspection grades.

My research illuminates that ongoing racism is having an effect in schools. Racism has become normalised due to the underlying systemic processes and behaviours resulting from White supremacy which structurally maintains the subordination of marginalised groups with continuing impact on Black pupils' schooling experiences. In 2016, The Youth Select Committee argued that attitudes towards racial discrimination have become normalised; in learning environments, which has been intensified by the Brexit campaign and the UK's decision to leave the European Union (British Youth Council 2016). The report highlighted that young people are reluctant to report incidents of racism because schools are diluting the issues, in attempts to protect their OFSTED ratings. The report also identified that pupils failure to report incidents is because their concerns will not be taken seriously by school officials, in part due to lack of staff training and leadership, a concern that was also highlighted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016).

Further sections will consider the limitations of this study, followed by a section on original contribution to knowledge, and a recommendation for future work. The final section will give a brief overview of my learning journey throughout the process of this thesis.

## 5.7. Strengths and Limitations of this study

The strengths of this study are that it contributes to existing research that specifically focuses on Black Caribbean mothers, which is relevant as it provides another dimension to the evidence concerning the disadvantages facing Black Caribbean boys in schools. It also makes an original contribution to knowledge as it is a critical study that documents the perspective and views of five Black Caribbean mothers on issues of racism in schools, which inform the field of education and CRT. This is discussed further shortly.

The main limitation is that it is a small-scale study in post-industrial city in the north of England, a matter I acknowledge and have therefore been careful not to generalise my findings as a sufficient to argument for the entire Black Caribbean community in England. Another limitation is that it does not capture the voices of Black Caribbean fathers, which again I have been mindful to be sensitive to debates about the role of Black men in the lives of their children which often stereotype them as absent. I have noted the methodological strengths and limitations throughout chapter 3, due to word count limitations I do not repeat them here.

## 5.8. Original contribution to knowledge

I have documented Black Caribbean boys experience of schooling through the perceptions and perspectives of their mothers, whose voices are seldom heard in the 21st century. My research offers an alternative perspective to Black Caribbean boys' experiences in school and provides an important contribution to knowledge and understanding of how systemic racism impacts on third generation Black Caribbean boys in mainstream education. The research study's chosen method is to involve Black Caribbean mothers, applying a counter-narrative based on their contributions. As previously recognised, these contributions have several functions:

> They can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice... they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transfer the beliefs systems... They can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by

sharing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position...they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story of the reality alone (Solórzano & Yosso 2002, p 36).

I have shown how Black Caribbean mothers are committed to and involved in their son's education. Their activism on behalf of their sons yields positive results, despite the odds being stacked against them. This study illuminates the importance of networking and teamwork, which was evident in the relationship between the mothers and their sons and the ways that together they fought racism in schools. It makes visible the considerable emotional labour expended by Black Caribbean mothers in providing this support which although it should not be a necessity currently continues to be one.

By creating a safe space for their voices and experiences to be heard, the methodology enabled the mothers to explore together educational inequalities that have a detrimental impact on Black Caribbean boys through a culture that is structured by Whiteness. It also enabled the mothers to identify, explore their skilled and effective strategies for intervening on behalf of their sons. My research supports an emerging understanding of racism and demonstrates that current education policy neglects issues of race equality, to the detriment of Black boys.

## 5.9. Recommendation

This study has illuminated the persistent inequalities of Black Caribbean heritage boys in mainstream English schools, it also found that Black Caribbean parents are a critical source of support in increasing their sons' chances of educational success. The importance of parental involvement in children's education is considered to be a crucial aspect to pupils schooling experience and achieving positive educational outcomes. Given the fact that parental involvement policy has been deracialised, it masks the complexities and challenges facing Black Caribbean parents trying to intervene in their child/ren's education (Crozier 2001). The mothers in this study demonstrate the positive action that can be achieved at an individual level. Moreover, the focus groups proved effective in the mothers sharing their experiences in a safe environment, which in many instances validated each other's experience, without them feeling a need to justify and explain the impact of racism on their children's schooling.

The majority of the mothers had some awareness of the education system and processes, but what happens to those children whose mothers, parents, carers without the confidence and skills to address issues of inequity benefit from an education system is that is supposedly 'for all', a matter that Cleo raised in the first focus group:

> ...in our circle, our kids, in a sense are fortunate, because we are challenging, but for a lot of Black boys it is not the case. A lot of parents are, they feel, cos of their own experience, feel a lack of confidence... stepping back in and reinforcing for them when they were at school... they don't feel in a position to do anything, and so for those poor boys they are being failed by the school.

It is my hope that this small-scale study can make changes to the inequalities facing Black Caribbean pupils, arising from activism that is rooted in communities, the type that is fundamental for sustainable change as recognised by Ledwith (2008),

> Community development begins in the daily lives of local people. This is the initial context for sustainable change. It is founded on a process of empowerment and participation. Empowerment involves a form of critical education that encourages people to question their reality: this is the basis of collective action and is built on the principles of participatory democracy. In a process of action and reflection, community development grows through a diversity of local projects that address issues faced by people in community. Through campaigns, networks and alliances, this action develops a local:global reach that aims to transform the structures of oppression that diminish local lives (p.1).

## 5.10. My learning journey – an overview

The main reflection that I have from this overall journey is my own position as mother of Black Caribbean heritage, raising and supporting my children through schools is how desensitised I had become about the skills and strategies of preparing and supporting Black children to grow in a racialised society. It was not until I began analysing the accounts of my friends stories in the context of wider relevant literature that I truly recognised the emotional and intellectual labour necessary to try to ensure that Black Caribbean children thrive, not only in schools, but in wider society. I can honestly state that I was initial quite blasé about what was required of Black mothers supporting their sons' through schools, because I, my family and friends have just got on with it, so to speak.

As someone that does not have a background in formal education I have however, learnt so much about the deeper processes that have an impact on Black Caribbean pupils, such as the

changes to educational policies especially those introducing a market model. The use of CRT's applications, especially placing race at the centre of analysis, has further helped me to understand how the establishment has de-prioritised Black children's underachievement from the political agenda, thus making it even more difficult to achieve educational equity for all.

I do however, have the hope that Martin Luther King Jr. once dreamed of:

"I have a dream that my fur little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character"

(Martin Luther King Jr-28 August 1963)

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# Appendix 1

Adele Ward

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School of Education

Programme: EdD

Dear Adele

**PROJECT TITLE:** What is the relationship between education and Black youth who may be vulnerable to intergroup/community conflict and other forms of violence **APPLICATION:** Reference Number 003231

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 20/05/2016 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 003231 (form submission date: 16/05/2016); (expected project end date: 30/12/2016).

- Participant information sheet 006305 version 2 (16/05/2016).
- Participant consent form 006301 version 1 (10/03/2015).

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Your responsibilities in delivering this research project are set out at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely


David Hyatt

Ethics Administrator School of

Education

Please note the following responsibilities of the researcher in delivering the research project:

- The project must abide by the University's Research Ethics Policy:

- https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure The
  project must abide by the University's Good Research & Innovation Practices Policy:

- https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.671066!/file/GRIPPolicy.pdf
- The researcher must inform their supervisor (in the case of a student) or Ethics Administrator (in the case of a member of staff) of any significant changes to the project or the approved documentation.

The researcher must comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data.

The researcher is responsible for effectively managing the data collected both during and after the end of the project in line with best practice, and any relevant legislative, regulatory or contractual requirements.

**Appendix 2**

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**Information sheet**

**Title of project –** 'They are fighting against them, it's a battle':

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A critical study examining the schooling experience of Black Caribbean boys in English states schools, from the perspectives of their mother.

1.  **Invitation Paragraph**

    You are being invited to take part in a research project. It is important that you are aware of the reasons why the research is being done and what it will involve. Therefore I ask that you read the information sheet, discuss it with others, if you wish and more importantly ask me if there anything is not clear and you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

2.  **What is the projects purpose?**

    I am currently studying at University of Sheffield on EdD, Doctor of Education. I have both a personal and professional interest in the issue of young African Caribbean males involvement in the Criminal Justice System particularly in relation to inter community/group conflict. My professional interest is related to my employment, whereby I witness the over representation of young Black males in the Criminal Justice System and would like to explore it further. The personal element is due to my previous voluntary work in the community, where I set up a community group as a result of young people in my local area inflicting physical and psychological harm to each other. What I noticed about many of the young people involved in the conflicts was that they had been excluded from school and not in any training, education or employment. When I am working with the young males as part of my paid employment as a Probation Officer, many young Black males seem to have been disaffected by school and have little or no educational qualifications.

    **Why have I been chosen?**

    I intend to conduct focus groups with Mothers with son's either in or just completed compulsory education, all of Black Caribbean background

3.  **Do I have to take part?**

    Taking part in the research project is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will be fully respected. If you decide that you wish to discontinue before the deadline date of the 1st June 2016, again your wishes will be fully respected, and you do not have to give any reason for refusal of participation.

4.  **What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you choose to participate it will involve being part of a group of 5-6 women, and discussing issues relating to your sons education and your experience with the educational system in relation to your child's statutory education. The focus group sessions will be facilitated by me and will be recorded by audio equipment. You will attend a venue where the focus groups will be taking place, and they will last approximately 2 hours. The information will be confidential but given that it is a focus group other woman will be privy to what you say and therefore I would suggest only speaking about what you feel comfortable to disclose.

5. **What do I have to do?**

Attend three focus group sessions and engage in group discussions which will be prompted by questions or other stimulus material relating to Black boys and education.

6. **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

The focus groups may be time consuming; they take approximately 2 hours and this can have an impact on individuals day to day busy schedules. Given the subject area and the fact that this may involve discussing issues relating to your own child/ren it may be emotive and create some feelings of emotional discomfort. I will monitor the groups and each individual and if I do recognise any signs of discomfort or distress, I will suggest a break and check how people are feeling.

7. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for individuals participating, it is hoped that this work will gain some insight into education system and the effects it has on some pupils in schools and share and receive support from other group members. I would aim to make the focus group sessions empowering, with the hope that you will obtain some benefits from attendance. There may be information that arises out of group discussions that may help you to support other Mothers/or be of benefit to yourself, family and friends, in relation to supporting their child/rens education.

8. **What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?**

If the research stops earlier than expected, reasons for this will be fully explained to all participants.

9. **What if something goes wrong?**

If the participant feels that the researcher has been unprofessional or caused them any distress, they have the right to make a complaint. The principle investigator is Dr Anita Franklin at University of Sheffield. If they still feel that the complaint has not been handled accordingly or to their satisfaction, they can contact the University of Sheffield's 'Registrar and Secretary'.

10. **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Anonymity and Pseudonyms will be used throughout the project, however, given that it is a group setting there will be others involved in the group and will be aware of the information/contributions you share in the group. The importance and reasons for anonymity will be stressed to all group members before focus group sessions begin

11. **What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

The aim of the project is to establish what relationship with education and Black youth who may be vulnerable to inter group conflict and other forms of violence

12. **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The research project will be completed no later than October 2018, and copies can be obtained from the researcher, or from the University of Sheffield. Where tape recordings of the interview have taken place, all recordings will be destroyed on completion of the project and can be done so in the presence of the participants.

13. **Who has ethically reviewed the research project?**

This project has been ethically approved by University of Sheffield ethics review procedure.

14. **Contact for further information**

Dr Anita Franklin.

University of Sheffield,

388 Glossop Road,

Sheffield S10

01142227115.

The participate will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed copy of the consent form

**I would like to thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.**

**Adele Ward**

**Appendix 3**

Title of Research Project: 'They are fighting against them, it's a battle':

A critical study examining the schooling experience of Black Caribbean boys in English states schools, from the perspectives of their mother.

Name of Researcher: Adele Ward

Participant Identification Number for this project:                    Please initial box

1.  I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/letter
    (delete as applicable) dated *[insert date]* explaining the above research project
    and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2.  I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw
    at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative
    consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular
    question or questions, I am free to decline. *Insert contact number here of
    lead researcher/member of research team (as appropriate).*

3.  I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential (only if true).
    I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my
    anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with
    the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the
    report or reports that result from the research.

4.   I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research

5.  I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____        _____        _____

Name of Participant                     Date                            Signature

(*or legal representative*)

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_____       _____      _____

Name of person taking consent          Date                     Signature

(*if different from lead researcher*)

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*


_____       _____      _____

 Lead Researcher                       Date                     Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*