

**ACADEMIC SUCCESS, RESILIENCE AND WAYS OF
BEING AMONG HIGH ACHIEVING AFRICAN-
CARIBBEAN PUPILS**

by

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ABSTRACT

This research is concerned with how African-Caribbean pupils develop and maintain identities as academically successful students. It examines the oral accounts of approaches which African-Caribbean pupils, parents, teachers and community activists employ to build resilience and viable 'ways of being' high achievers.

The research employs an interpretive methodology. The literature review section provides an historical context for writing on race and education, and patterns of inequality in education. Participants' oral accounts were produced in semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The data chapters explore students' understandings and definitions of 'educational success', ways of being high achievers and draws on Critical Race Theory to accentuate black homes and communities as places and spaces of cultural asset and wealth.

This thesis builds on existing research on African-Caribbean resilience, by exploring resilience as a dynamic process. It moves beyond the underachievement thesis and the cultural deficit model to exploring pupils' own accounts of their school experiences and considers the inter-subjective development of identity, resilience and 'success' within school systems that have tended to produced consistently successful outcomes for some black pupils. It provides a basis for considering, and developing, ways of promoting success among African Caribbean and other disadvantaged pupils.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Rosamond Bigford who was my role model. She was my spiritual and emotional anchor throughout my formative years. I also dedicate this thesis to the youths who participated in this study. May they reach the heights for which they are aspiring.

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The use of ‘.....’ denotes text that has been cut.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the research

This thesis explores the educational experiences and identities of high achieving African-Caribbean pupils. It examines pupils' understandings of features they regard as contributing to their academic success: including their own behaviour, identity formation, and support from significant others. The research is informed by an interest in how pupils from different ethnic backgrounds live out the dynamics and conflicts around education differently; in particular, how African-Caribbean pupils develop and maintain identities as academically successful students.

Over the past forty years many studies have been produced by UK academics and policy-makers framing African-Caribbean pupils' school experiences in terms of 'underachievement' and structural discrimination (Wright, 1987; Sewell, 1997; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Majors, 2001; Gillborn, 2002; Richardson, 2005). Current statistics on GCSE and A-Level pass rates among African-Caribbean girls and boys continue to give cause for concern among parents, communities and educators (Tomlinson, 1984; Richardson, 2005; Cork, 2005). Moreover, commentators such as Sewell (1997), Gillborn (2002) and Rhamie (2007) have suggested, sometimes contentiously, that a combination of disaffection, continued institutional racism and low expectations by teachers mean that African-Caribbean pupils must develop a particular resilience in order to negotiate schooling successfully and emerge sufficiently qualified to access higher education (HE). In this thesis, notions of resilience, identity, and black cultural and social capital are used as key concepts in the analysis of African-Caribbean

pupils' accounts of their academic success. In short, how do the pupils in this study develop 'ways of being' that enable them to maintain educational success, particularly at the A-Level stage that remains, in the UK, a key indicator of academic success?

The views, identities and educational experiences of high achieving African-Caribbean pupils have, I suggest, tended to be under-researched because of the dominance of concerns (and sometimes moral panic) about African-Caribbean under-achievement. Over thirty years ago, Troyna (1984) argued that the 'hopeless' picture of African-Caribbean underachievement, depicted in 'distorted' and grossly oversimplified quantitative studies, has distracted educationalists from addressing the real constraints on African-Caribbean pupils' educational achievement. We might well ask how far analyses of African-Caribbean pupils' achievement have altered in the interim? Each year the government continues to publish statistics showing African-Caribbean pupils performing poorly, compared to other ethnic groups. However, there is little recognition or celebration on a national level of high attaining African-Caribbean pupils and few studies undertaken to identify the factors which support their academic success. It is for this reason I took a counter approach to studying African-Caribbean pupils' experiences by investigating pupils' own accounts of the factors underpinning their 'success'. Through in-depth study of accounts given in interviews and focus groups, I shall develop a nuanced understanding of high achievement among African-Caribbean pupils, its relationship to black social and cultural capital and resilient identities. These insights into African-Caribbean educational success, in turn, may also offer pointers to addressing low academic achievement.

The key aim of this thesis, therefore, is to examine accounts of approaches which African-

Caribbean pupils, parents, teachers (in both compulsory and complementary schools) and community activists employ to build resilience and viable 'ways of being' high achievers.

My research questions are:

1. How do African-Caribbean pupils define educational success?
2. How do African-Caribbean pupils produce and describe 'successful' school identities?

Definitions

The term 'black' is used in this thesis refers to people of African descent. The terms 'black Caribbean' or 'African-Caribbean' in this thesis refer to people of African-Caribbean descent, whether born in the Caribbean or in Britain. Older, now outdated terms, such as West Indian, are occasionally used in the literature review chapter as they were used by authors writing in the 1960s and 70s.

1.2 Origins of the research.

Having been educated in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s and 80s, I became interested in African-Caribbean pupils' attainment and identities during my time as a trainee teacher in a Birmingham inner-city school. This school displayed the names of pupils and their GCSE examination results in order of achievement on a wall in the school corridor. I noticed that the names of pupils of Indian and Pakistani descent were often at the top of the list and those of African-Caribbean pupils at the bottom. A disproportionately low number of African-Caribbean pupils went on to the school's sixth-form and other sixth-forms across the city. This state of affairs perplexed me as the secondary school that I attended as a child in Trinidad and Tobago had little discrepancy in attainment between the different ethnic groups. In Trinidad and Tobago teaching groups were made up of children mainly of Indian and

African-Caribbean decent, with a small proportion of other ethnic groups. Teachers generally had equally high expectations of pupils academically, teaching groups were mainly mixed ability, and all pupils were entered for the same level of GCE (General Certificate of Education) and CXC (Caribbean Examination Council) examinations. Those who succeeded were considered to be either naturally bright or simply hard working. Schools tended to have a competitive academic ethos and high attaining pupils were held in high esteem by both their peers and school staff. This observation that I made of relative academic attainment in schools in Trinidad and Tobago is at the moment anecdotal. However, as an African-Caribbean teacher/researcher who attended school in the Caribbean, I found the paradigm of African-Caribbean underachievement unfamiliar, puzzling, and most disconcerting. In Trinidad and Tobago, it was commonplace to see academically, economically and politically successful people from a variety of ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds. This impelled me to do research on African-Caribbean academic achievement, particularly from the perspective of high attaining individuals.

Prior to beginning systematic doctoral research I spent some time considering the possible causes for this discrepancy in academic outcomes. I observed, for instance, that a disproportionate number of African-Caribbean pupils were in lower ability teaching groups and were entered for the lowest tier examinations in, for example Mathematics. This meant that the highest possible grade they could gain was a grade D at GCSE. However, my observations suggested that structural factors alone might not account for African-Caribbean pupils' poor academic outcomes. Amongst the low attaining pupils, many appeared to lack motivation, and often demonstrated an apparent dislike for school. How valid was my perception? Surprisingly, teachers seemed to have low expectations of African-Caribbean

pupils both academically and behaviourally, blaming home environment for pupils' lack of ability and attainment. One teacher made the remark, 'What do you expect of our kids considering where they come from?' This suggested pessimistic interrelationships between school structures, teachers' expectations and pupils' behaviours (of the kind depicted by Mac an Ghaill, 1988). My teaching experiences also provoked my interest in several related areas:

- The persistence of African-Caribbean under-achievement in UK schools and highly contested explanations (Sewell, 1997 and 2009; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Gillborn, 2002; Majors, 2001; Richardson, 2005; Archer and Francis, 2007).
- The work of Rhamie (2007) on African-Caribbean high achievers and the work of Archer and Francis (2007) on high attainment of British-Chinese pupils.
- The potential role of supplementary schools and parents in promoting resilience and high achievement in African-Caribbean children (Foley 1998; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Cork, 2005).
- Resilience strategies (Winfield, 1994; Gordon and Song, 1994; Carter, 2006; Sternberg and Subotnik, 2006).
- The work of Bourdieu (1986) on cultural capital and Yosso (2005) on forms of black cultural capital.
- Research and theory on identity (Hall, 1990; Holland, 1998) and the work of Cross (1971) on the stages of black identity formation.

1.3 Key concepts

The key concepts in this thesis are resilience, identity and social and cultural capital. These are used to develop an analytical framework for understanding the specific experiences and

behaviours of high-achieving African-Caribbean pupils. In educational settings, resilience has often been understood in terms of how at-risk or socially excluded students overcome adversity to achieve good educational outcomes (Masten and Coatsworth, 1998).

Identity is often defined as having a sense of self knowledge which understands the history of 'self' as it relates to today; what I know about myself provides the answers to key existential questions such as, 'who am I', 'what have I become', and 'where do I belong'. It sees 'self' as a cognitive structure that mediates and organises everyday experiences, regulates affect and channels motivation (Markus and Wurf, 1987).

The concepts of social and cultural capital are derived from Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1986) and have been widely used to theorise student experiences of education, social class and inequality (Reay, 1998; Ball *et al.*, 2002). According to Bourdieu (1986), school as an institution is able to convert resources from a specific 'habitus', or social disposition into 'capital' that has exchange-value. Cultural capital accrues or can be converted into educational, social and material benefits. It is linked with shared, classed dispositions, knowledge, educational qualifications and also cultural goods (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is generated through social processes between the family and wider society and is made up of social networks. Social and cultural capitals are, of course, inter-convertible. Belonging to particular social networks gives access to particular knowledge and behaviour; cultural capital embodied in erudition or academic qualifications may, in turn, give one access to particular social networks. Social and cultural capital may both convert into economic capital. These key concepts will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter and in Chapter 2.

1.3.1 Educational underachievement.

Since the 1960s when the children of post-war migrants entered British schools in large numbers (Phillips and Phillips, 1998), policy makers, academics and commentators have made some concerted efforts to understand and address African-Caribbean pupils' educational underachievement. A number of putative factors have been explored by successive generations of researchers. These have included socio-economic disadvantage, structural racism within schools, policy failures, curriculum, resistive subcultures and educational aspirations.

Links between socio-economic background and levels of attainment is one that is widely accepted by educationalists and is often used to analyse pupils' academic progress and set their targets for each key stage (Wright, 1987; Tomlinson, 2005; DCSF, 2007). For example, the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) considers contextual factors, such as social deprivation in order to predict the amount of academic progress a child is likely to make in the near and distant future (DfES, 2006a). However, commentators such as Gillborn (2008) and Archer and Francis (2007) have argued that social class does not appear to be an equally significant predictor of academic performance for all groups and; that white British attainment is more closely associated with standard (radicalised) notions of social class difference than is the case for other ethnic groups. Thus, current research suggests that explanation of ethnic inequalities reducible to social disadvantage, while important, does not sufficiently account for the attainment rates of some ethnic groups, such as African-Caribbean pupils (DfES, 2006a; Archer and Francis, 2007; Gillborn, 2008).

It is for this very reason that Archer and Francis (2007) argued that policy approaches to

'under-achievement' employed by the DfES and other quantitative researchers are often ineffective because they tend to adopt a narrow, individualised approach to understanding the factors producing educational 'success' and 'underachievement'. While such research often claims to reject cultural deficit models, underachievement of African-Caribbean pupils often ends up being assumed to be a product of personal attitudes derived from family/cultural practices and values (DfESa, 2007; Wright *et al.*, 2010). This approach tends to assume that the under-achieving ethnic groups are more culturally and socially deficient than the high-achieving groups. In response, my research is predicated upon the notion that research on African-Caribbean pupils must move away from narrow socio-economic categories and crude underachievement paradigms. This research explores other possible and often contentious explanations of African-Caribbean pupils' rates of underachievement which ranges from the effects of institutional racism and structures (Pilkington, 1999; Gillborn, 2008) to home environment and pupil subculture (Sewell, 1997; DfES, 2007a).

1.3.2 Institutional racism

Researchers such as Wright (1987), Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Gillborn (2008), highlights how institutional racism within the school system might have contributed to the negative experiences and poor outcomes of African-Caribbean students. This concept first appeared in Carmichael and Hamilton (1968) who identified institutional racism as being based on an anti-black attitude of inferiority even if the white people themselves did not discriminate against individual black people. It was considered to be covert, far more subtle, and less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts, however, it was deemed to be no less destructive of human life.

Institutional racism was defined in the 1999 Macpherson Inquiry into the police's handling of the investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder as:

‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin, It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people’.

(Macpherson, 1999: 6.34)

It is important, however, to make the distinction between institutional racism and individual racism. Individual racism can include acts by individuals that can cause injury, death, destruction to property and denial of services or opportunity. Institutional racism refers to the policies, practises and procedures of institutions that have a disproportionately negative effect on racial minorities’ access to and quality of goods, services and opportunities.

Some academics have remained sceptical of Macpherson’s definition because of its conflation of individual and institutional racism (Rattansi, 2005; Phillips, 2011). According to Phillips (2011), it recognises overt and unwitting practices of individuals but not the interacting causal structural factors. Phillips (2011) argues that, despite having some conceptual ambiguities, institutional racism can be retained to assist our understanding of persistent ethnic inequalities but needs to be situated within a conceptual context that acknowledge the role of *racialisation* in experience and identity. The term ‘racialisation’ (rather than racism) has been advocated by Rattansi (2005). Rattansi (2005) employs racialisation as a dynamic, multi-layered, non-essentialist concept: one that recognises both explicit and implicit forms of racism, and

recognises that race intersects with other dimensions of identity, including class and gender. The advantage of the concept of racialisation is that it enables us to understand race and racism as contingent, rather than essential; racial identities and inequalities are reproduced and sustained in a cumulative fashion by practices and interactions across different institutional sites. So, in the context of schooling, it is not simply the case that 'racial blocs' experience differential treatment and outcomes; at a more fundamental level, racial identities and positions are *produced by* the structures and practices of schooling. An example of this is the way that in certain school contexts African-Caribbean boys are positioned as threatening, hyper-masculine and anti-intellectual (Gillborn, 1990; Sewell, 1997).

In the British secondary school context, institutional racism manifests itself in diverse ways. One of the ways in which institutional racism seems apparent is through racist stereotyping. The racist stereotyping of African-Caribbean pupils as aggressive and anti-school is considered to be one of the reasons given for their apparently being subjected to more stringent discipline by teachers (Sewell, 1997; Richardson & Wood, 1999). They may also be stereotyped as low attaining which may lead to African-Caribbean pupils being grouped in 'low ability' sets, which can contribute to pupil underachievement (Mac an Ghail, 1988; Wright, 1987). It is in this sense that African-Caribbean pupils arguably live out tensions and antagonisms in schooling differently from some of the other ethnic groups, who also face institutional racism. Archer and Francis (2007) argued that British Chinese and Indian pupils who face different forms of racism in school develop different coping strategies that result in high levels of academic achievement.

1.3.3 Pupil subcultures

Sewell (1997) has challenged the notion that institutional and teacher racism was the only factor that caused African- Caribbean pupils to underachieve in school (Sewell, 1997). In his view, teachers see African-Caribbean boys, in particular, as challenging their authority by embracing ‘anti-school’ black pupil subcultures; this institutional dynamic feeds the stereotype that African-Caribbean boys are more aggressive than their white peers. Sewell suggests that the prevalence of such stereotypes means that some teachers perceive black students, in particular boys, as challenges to their authority while Indian students are perceived as diligent and compliant. This may cause a disproportionate amount of criticisms and conflict compared to other ethnic groups. The nature of the conflicts between the black subculture and teachers often revolves around displays of culture-specific behaviour and expressions such as hairstyle, adaptation of school uniform (Sewell, 1997), different ways of walking (Gillborn, 1990) and speaking patois (Major and Billson, 1992). It has been suggested that this black resistive subcultures which draw on wider ‘street culture’ might be impeding black academic success, both because of teachers’ prejudices and, he suggests, because aspects of these subcultures might indeed encourage anti-intellectualism (Benskin, 1994; Reddock, 2004). According to Sewell:

‘On political, moral and cultural grounds, the subculture of African Caribbean children is harmful to their social and academic progress. In addition there are teachers who believe they have identified characteristics of these boys’ culture and perceive it as a threat to the authority of the school’.

(Sewell, 1997: 37)

An example of black pupil subculture that is often perceived as a threat by teachers is students' use of 'patios'. Teachers often react especially negatively to its usage, perceiving it to be linguistically deficient and defiant, and as a result, black pupils are often moved down academic sets to groups of more difficult students (Benskin, 1994). Bennett *et al.* (1993) suggested that teachers' perceptions of students' behaviour was a significant component of their academic judgments.

Furthermore, Sewell (1997) argued, to deal with black underachievement one needs look beyond institutional racism and black resistive subculture, and challenge the youth culture which believes that to do well in school is to 'act white' (Sewell, 1997). He suggests that, 'negative peer pressure' is another factor that causes many African-Caribbean students to perform well below other ethnic groups (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).

In contrast to Sewell's (1997) version of 'acting white', Carter's (2006) and Cross and Strauss (1998) found that black high achievers coped with being accused of 'acting white' by balancing two socialisation forces and privileging a particular one in various situations. They learn to 'switch codes' by becoming competent in both the mainstream and their own culture's way of communicating in order to navigate both school and community cultures. This theory was challenged by Gonzalez (1999) who found little connection between high attainment and the notion of 'acting white' among Puerto Rican high achievers in an urban high school in the US.

1.3.4 Ethnic minority coping strategies

In the UK, Archer and Francis (2007) have argued that different ethnic minority groups have developed their own strategies to cope with inequalities and conflicts within the school environment. They suggested that Chinese pupils in British schools experience considerable racism, albeit in subtle forms, but have developed unique coping strategies to achieve academic success (Archer and Francis, 2007; Billig *et al.*, 1988). For example, Archer and Francis (2007) claim that British Chinese pupils feel a considerable amount of tension as a result of pressure to conform to the stereotypes of being a ‘model minority’ of malleable, high achievers. The pupils in their study claimed that this popular stereotype exposed them to increased racism and bullying. Chinese girls resisted the gender stereotype by strategies such as disassociating with individuals and the situation (moving elsewhere) and assimilation (staying safe). Chinese boys on the other hand befriended their abusers and borrowed styles from ‘black masculinity’ synonymous with the ‘cool pose’ (Major and Bilson, 1992) and Hong Kong gangster style. African-Caribbean high attaining students have also devised their own strategies to cope with the inequalities and conflicts they face within the school environment (Rhamie, 2007). However, the nature of their conflicts and strategies used are somewhat different to those found among Chinese pupils. These will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4 to 6 of this thesis.

1.3.5 Schooling, race and resilience

Resilience is a key concept in this research and is concerned with how students overcome adversity to achieve good educational outcomes (Masten and Coatsworth, 1998). A core feature of resilience is that it emerges out of personal interaction between children and adults as well as between children and their peers.

Research on resilient young people has expanded and accelerated in the last 25 years (O'Dougherty *et al.*, 2013) with the aim of not only understanding risk factors and protective factors but also to determine whether this information can affect the development of a model for relevant intervention (Rutter, 2006; Schoon, 2006; Cefai, 2008). Risk refers to any factor or combination of factors that increases the chance of an undesirable outcome affecting a person, while protective factors are the circumstances that moderate the effects of risk (Newman, 2004). Rutter (1999) suggested that exposure to protective factors may help individual to adapt positively to 'at risk' environments; in other words, protective factors can increase resilience. Protective factors may include managed exposure to risk, opportunities to exert agency and develop a sense of mastery, strong relationships with supportive parents or external mentors and other social networks, a positive school experiences and extra-curricular activities (Schoon, 2006).

According to Newman (2004), promoting resilience in children may facilitate better long-term outcomes in education, health and well-being because it, at least, encourages young people to negotiate actual difficulties, even if there is no immediate prospect of those conditions being transformed. However, Rutter (1993) is among those who have criticised resilience-based approaches as methods of merely managing existing poverty, rather than promoting social change. Rutter (1993) argues that the vast majority of resilience-based intervention work focuses predominantly on fixing deficits rather than on recognising and developing strengths and assets.

Rhamie (2007) suggests that the risk factors for African- Caribbean children include negative school experiences, low parental academic achievement, low parental occupation, and difficulties at home. Protective factors were positive interaction and support from parents, high expectations, constructive interactions with peers and adults and involvement in positive activities in their communities. Resilient children are able to 'bounce back' from disappointments and adversities to set clear realistic goals, solve problems and relate confidently with others (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013).

African-Caribbean parents have fostered resilience in their children by strengthening the protective processes at early and critical moments in their lives (Rhamie, 2007). They have developed resilience in their children by providing them with the capacity to defy the failures predicted by society by deliberately nurturing their behaviour and 'dispositions'. One of the ways in which African-Caribbean parents tried to counter the educational inequalities faced by their children in British schools was by providing supplementary education for their children. From the 1960's when children of West Indian immigrants began to enter British schools in significant numbers, African-Caribbean parents have fought against educational inequalities and sought ways to develop alternative and/or supplementary institutions and pedagogy. They mobilised community resources and took control of their children's education in an effort to improve their academic self-image, self-determination and instil an African-centred orientation to knowledge. Many African-Caribbean parents felt that racism within the education system and structural processes conspired to provide an environment that was hostile to their children's learning and was ultimately responsible for their under-achievement and disaffection. Supplementary schools and their practices demonstrate one of the ways in

which African-Caribbean parents and communities support their children educationally. Their children's resilience was enhanced, and this enabled them to cope with and challenge the negative experiences in school and society. According to Gordon *et al.* (2005), supplementary education is an intervention which transforms and enhances children's personal and academic development. It involves parents, siblings, peers and other community members in the development of personal and collective dispositions and practices. They commented that supplementary education:

‘enhances resiliency in various social institutions (e.g., academic institutions and the work place), family, peer-group, community life and helps with socioeconomic and political enfranchisement..... in proactive terms, supplementary education aims to prepare more people to join students, families and community members who already are pursuing the unexpected with regards to high academic and personal development and community interdependence and solidarity’.

(Gordon *et al.*, 2005:143)

One of the arguments of this thesis is that black supplementary schools and other community institutions, such as black churches, are sites in which black cultural and social capital are produced. The black churches and supplementary schools have both played an important role in supporting black communities and enhancing the resilience of African-Caribbean children (Rhamie, 2007).

Of course, it is not only in supplementary schools and churches that resilience-building is promoted. Winfield (1994) believed that mainstream schools can enhance students' resilience by providing a protective mechanism through, high teacher expectation, a curriculum that

builds on student knowledge and diversity, a school climate that promotes active participation and a sense of small learning community and peer learning programmes, mentoring and extra curriculum activities. Children are able to develop educational resilience which gives them the ability to achieve academic and social success in the classroom despite early and on-going personal vulnerabilities and adversities (Wang *et al.*, 1997). Hence strategies for change can be directed towards practices, policies and attitudes among educators to foster the development process (resilience).

1.3.6 Identity

The notion of identity is another key concept in this research. What do we mean by identity? Burkitt's (1999) focuses on concepts of identity as shifting and historically-specific. He suggests that the most useful way to grasp the concept is by thinking of identity in terms of the 'social self' or 'social individuality' (Somers, 1994). In other words, identity is not a fixed essence but something that is produced and negotiated through inter-subjective relationships with other individuals and wider society. He explains this social-historical starting point as thus:

‘to become an individual self with its own unique identity, we must first participate in a world of others that is formed by history and culture. What I want to investigate is the idea of *social individuality*. This does not mean that each one of us is not an individual self, we clearly are: rather, I want to ask questions about how this self is formed in social relations with others and how it is through them, and through the relation to our own selves, that we answer the question ‘who am I?’

(Burkitt, 2008:1)

Theorisation of race and social identity in the western world has a long, complex history (Omi and Winant, 1986; Back and Solomos, 2000), dating back to the work of WEB Dubois (1903), and including the pivotal mid-20th Century social psychology of Franz Fanon (1963), writing on black consciousness by, for instance, Carmichael and Hamilton (1968), the feminist writing of bell hooks (1990) and the ‘post-racial’ reflections of Kwame Anthony Appiah (2014). Theorisation of race and identity encompasses a vast range of models and positions, ranging from essentialist notions of blackness, to social constructionism and to post-modern theories of fluid, contingent identity. However, central to work on race and identity is the understanding that for racially minoritised groups, social relations are racialised and race itself is a social relation. In other words, the question of ‘Who am I?’ might be rephrased as ‘Who am I, given that I exist in a world that positions me through social constructions of race, as other and subordinate?’

In the UK perhaps the most influential theorist on race and identity has been Stuart Hall, who drew upon post-structural ideas of contingent (though not endlessly fluid) identity (Hall, 1990). Hall drew attention to the problematic concept of identity:

‘Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation’.

(Hall, 1990: 222)

Building on this idea, much of Hall's subsequent work focused on the idea of *identification*, rather than identity *per se*. That is, Hall suggested that rather than being the owners, as it were, of fixed, essential identities, we are engaged in a constant process of negotiating, renegotiating and reassembling our sense of selves, drawing upon the symbolic resources available to us in particular contexts. This is an idea that is particularly relevant to the current study, in which young black people searched for ways to define themselves in the context of schooling, success, aspiration and community.

As Wright *et al.* (2010) contended some African-Caribbean students are capable of navigating to an identity that they feel is appropriate or of most beneficial to them in particular situations and time. They often take on identities which gives them an element of control within the symbolic and academic constraints available in traditional and racialised identity construction. As Rhamie (2007) discussed, African-Caribbean children often take on identities and utilise resources in their homes and communities in order to counter social disadvantage and develop pathways to success. That is, they work to (re)imagine their 'blackness' as a source of pride, advantage, stability and social/cultural capital. Their narratives of black identity are saturated with notions of culture, individual agency, familial/community responsibility, subjectivity and becoming (Wright, 2013).

A number of those working with young black people have addressed ways in which young people can work on building resilient identities by drawing upon black social and cultural capital. Cross (1971) and DAISE (Blackburn, 2001) have developed models of black identity which they believed can be used as a tool for community and youth practice and/or professional development, to assist individuals and groups to make sense of their lives and

experience. Cross's (1971) and Blackburn's (2001) models depict ways in which young black people move through stages of identity development. The students in this study seem to be located in the 'awakening stage' of Cross's model. At this stage a person explores the majority culture and their own culture, rejecting and accepting differences and similarities. They may question commonly held views and beliefs about themselves. This leads to two processes of 'internalisation' in which firstly they develop a more pluralistic, non-racist perspective, for example, they are no longer anti- white, and secondly, they demonstrate a long-term interest and a general sense of devotion and commitment to black affairs which may translate into a plan of action. At this stage, having developed a black identity, their energy may now turn to the service of the community at large.

These models of identity development suggest that, young people can be nurtured and supported at critical junctures of their lives to develop self-awareness and a positive black identity. Such nurturing and support can be provided through involvement in, for instance, supplementary education, black arts, cultural events and activities, family and the community.

In this current study, the development of positive black educational identities intersect with resilience. The participants in the study were engaged in resisting dominant discourses that viewed them as un-ambitious, un-academic and unworthy of occupying academic spaces reserved for 'high achieving' pupils. The concept of identity and its development among black pupils will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

1.3.7 Black cultural and social capital: home and community

Several studies have established that home and the community are crucial to the development of resilience and successful school identities (Gordon and Song, 1994; Carter, 2006; Rhamie, 2007). The accounts offered by pupils, teachers and parents in this study, describes how places such as African-Caribbean homes, black supplementary schools and churches have provided African-Caribbean pupils with specific forms of black social and cultural capital that is an important dimension of their resilience and successful school identities. Black cultural capital encompasses multiple codes, styles, preferences, and tastes that assist black people in gaining entry into cultural spaces of high status and affinity (Baldrige, 2013). With regards to the process of schooling, black cultural capital is essential to the social and academic experiences of black youth in navigating racially and culturally complex school contexts. Social capital refers to the social networks and the associate norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putman, 2007: 137). Black social capital are networks among the black youths, families and communities which can be beneficial to those involved in the networks by helping to mollifying the effects of social disadvantage, thus enhancing educational success and economic development.

Black forms of capital are often underestimated by teachers and administrators in schools who have a tendency to favour dominant forms of social and cultural capital possessed by the white middle-class (Carter, 2006). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), schools help to reproduce a stratified class system by bolstering the cultural capital of the dominant social group. The multiple ways in which non-dominant groups convert cultural resources into capital have been largely ignored. Yosso (2005) challenged the traditional interpretation of Bourdieu's views which positioned black pupils merely as 'disadvantaged' and culturally

deficient. She drew upon Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson- Billings, 2000; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn, 2008) to provide an alternative lens through which to view and position socially marginalized groups. Yosso (2005) suggests that the cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and network of contacts of socially marginalized groups often go unrecognized and unacknowledged within educational spaces. She identifies specific forms of black cultural capital found in the black home and community which black people often use to challenge dominant forms of knowledge and ideologies as well as achieve educational success and social mobility.

There are some aspects of black forms of social and cultural capital that may be different to those generated by and associated with other ethnic groups since the experiences and past history of African-Caribbean people in Britain are distinctive. It has been argued that African-Caribbean people in the UK have experienced a set of circumstances that have in turn had an effect on how they view themselves and how they respond to racism from the white majority population. According to James (1993:260), although African-Caribbean and Asian people in the UK both experienced racism, 'the ways in which both groups experience racism are not always identical'. For James, Asians (an admittedly generic term, used here to encompass diverse communities from the India subcontinent) tended to be subjected to 'fascist terror' whilst African-Caribbean people, especially youths, tended to be subjected to a greater degree of state harassment, police brutality, and the 'Sus Laws'. There were also marked differences in patterns of employment, housing, public profile, inter-marriage and, importantly, schooling. James (1993:260) believes that the different experiences among the Asian and African-Caribbean communities have, not surprisingly, generated different responses to racism in Britain and have produced different priorities among the two groups.

According to Reynolds and Zontini (2006), young African-Caribbean people who feel excluded and marginalised from school and wider society often respond by using cross-ethnic networks, relationships and community resources. They argue that African- Caribbean families have strong social capital and demonstrate this through having a number of racial-ethnic specific community events. She added that African-Caribbean families are more likely to participate in areas such as Saturday schools, black church groups and African-Caribbean community-based organisations. In doing so, they feel a sense of belonging and collective membership, improved self-confidence and academic self-concept as well as being able to reaffirm and develop a sense of African- Caribbean cultural identity (Reynolds and Zontini, 2006: 1093).

The experiences of African-Caribbean communities in the UK and the sources and forms of cultural and social capital those experiences have generated may well resemble, in certain aspects, those of other migrant communities. Some commentators have emphasised this overlap (Winder, 2004). However, other commentators have emphasised the distinctive experiences of migration and settlement that have shaped African-Caribbean communities in the UK (Phillips and Phillips, 1988; Gilroy, 2007). In this thesis, focusing as it does on youth and schooling, my tendency is to view African-Caribbean experiences, identities and social and cultural capital as, if not wholly unique, then distinctive. The reason for this is the continued educational disadvantage experienced in African-Caribbean communities (Richardson, 2005; Gillborn, 2008; Warmington, 2014). In the sphere of education, insofar as black social and cultural capital are drawn upon to counter educational experiences and outcomes specific to African-Caribbean communities, that capital has distinctive ‘black’ qualities (since resources only become capital when they are used to some advantage). Black

social and cultural capital will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

1.4 Argument of the thesis

As this thesis is concerned with how African-Caribbean pupils negotiate successful school identities, I started by investigating pupils' definition of educational success. This provided an understanding of how students' successful identities influenced their perceptions, motives and actions about educational success. I also interviewed some teachers and parents as their views of educational success might also have some bearing on the construct of African-Caribbean pupils as being educationally successful.

1.4.1 Success and instrumentalism

Most of the students interviewed identified themselves as being educationally successful. They defined educational success in instrumental terms which involved achieving academic (Level 7/8, Grade B/A) qualifications in order to get a good or desired job, thus promoting the exchange value of academic qualifications (Brown, 1990). This notion of instrumentalism was explored in detail by Brown (1990), who made distinction between two types of instrumentalism. Firstly, 'normative instrumentalism' which values the pursuing of academic qualifications to attain economic wellbeing as well as intrinsically valuing schooling, institutional values and high achievement. For Brown (1990), it is the acceptance (or internalisation) of the justice and the rationale of what might be termed the neo-liberal educational discourse. Students regard education as a self-evident good, both for its intrinsic 'academic' value and its function as a means to an economic labour market end. Brown observed this type among middle-class students, who accepted and benefit from the game. Secondly, 'alienated instrumentalism' is a lack of identification with formal school culture,

what teachers stand for and what is happening in school but still participating in education because of its exchange-value, that it will yield labour market opportunities. He observed alienated instrumentalism amongst many working class and ethnic minority students.

In this thesis students' instrumentalism arguably implied a confluence of 'traditional' Caribbean 1950's and 1960's values of social mobility through education and dominant discourses of contemporary educational instrumentation in Britain. Philips and Philips (1998) have discussed how the West Indians who came to England in the sixties and thereafter placed an immense value on education. They came from communities in the West Indies where working class people received a middle-class education and had middle-class ambitions. There was often an ethos and culture of learning and high aspiration under the British colonial system and pupils either sat Oxford or Cambridge examinations. They believed that coming to the mother country would have provided opportunities for themselves and their children as they believed that a good education would have provided them and their children with social status and mobility. The views and behaviours of both pupils and parents in the current study suggests that remnants of this high value often placed on education and high ambition might have been transferred to second generation African-Caribbean children as they entered British schools. This may have in turn been passed on to subsequent generations of African-Caribbean children in British schools (Philips and Philips, 1998; Rollock *et. al.*, 2015).

Despite the prevalence of instrumentalism among students, some students viewed educational success in terms of having 'self- knowledge'. Their self-knowledge seemed to comprise a critical ambivalent participation in education. It did not quite equate with either of Brown's definitions of instrumentalism because of its radicalized outlook. These students were likely

to profess a belief in the exchange-value of education (its power to enable desired career outcomes) but also, in most cases, held on to a residual Caribbean belief in the intrinsic value of education. In this sense they could not quite be described as alienated; however, their racialization within the school system meant that they were critical of perceived differential treatment and labeling by teachers and they were also critical of those black pupils whom they regarded as too conformist, not 'black enough'.

1.4.2 Avoiding the disciplinary system

As well as defining educational success in terms of 'self-knowledge' some students defined educational success as having self-discipline. By exercising self-discipline they were able to break away from the stigma attached to them and the destructive patterns seen amongst many African-Caribbean pupils. They developed pathways to success by making choices that required exercising self-discipline, such as avoiding the school's disciplinary system.

Although they felt that they were often unfairly treated due to racism by teachers, they were able to respond in ways that minimised serious reprimands. Their actions involved not being overwhelmingly vocal and argumentative and not being drawn into anti-school subcultures. This would cause confrontations with teachers and reprimands which would adversely affect their education.

1.4.3 Economy of friendship

Students' self-discipline involved exercising an economy of friendship by only associating with students in their sixth form who shared similar goals and aspirations. In the secondary school setting, groups regularly studied together and competed with each other. The boys visited each other's homes, socialised and played sport together. African-Caribbean boys

generally disassociated with boys who were not committed to education but occasionally met with them at social events and encouraged them to reengage in meaningful pastimes. They did not want to be ostracised from the African-Caribbean youths circle. The girls on the other hand tended to totally sever association with past friends because of their promiscuity, associating mainly with other high achieving girls and boys and family members

The concept of sub-group formation amongst young people was explored by Bourdieu (1986) who discussed the notion of 'habitus'. According to his view, marginalised young people develop a system of common perceptions, dispositions and behaviours in response to the objective circumstances within their social situations. According to Bourdieu, students as a group often develop similar responses when combating their disadvantaged position. In doing so they create a platform in which to recover their self-worth and draw on the collective resources of the group. Although the students in this study had a group 'habitus' they did not fully equate to Bourdieu's definition in the sense that their interpretations and responses to their objective positions were heterogeneous. They often presented various versions of success and ways of being educationally successful.

1.4.4 Parental 'pushing'

Having discussed definitions of success, students were asked about factors which they felt had the greatest impact on their educational success. Most of them said that parental support and encouragement contributed most towards their educational success. These students fell into two main categories: those who were 'pushed' by their parents and those who were 'not pushed' by their parents.

The pupils who were ‘pushed’ by their parents came from families in which few members had been to university. They felt under pressure to perform academically, had very high aspirations to attend elite universities, such as Oxford University and parents’ approach to education was similar to the white middle-class. The second type of students came from families where high academic attainment was the norm. Children in these families were not ‘pushed’ but were expected to achieve high grades and go on to a good (Russell Group) university. They were given autonomy for their own learning and were allowed to balance their study time with recreational time. Parents had professional jobs and a ‘hot knowledge’ of the education system. I identified this group as being black middle-class which has received some recognition in recent studies (Rollock, 2007a; Archer, 2010; Rollock *et al.*, 2012). They are equally resourced with ‘hot knowledge’ and have an approach to their children’s education which is synonymous with the white middle-class.

Categorizing students’ social class backgrounds is always a difficult and contentious area of methodology. However, in this instance, my place as an insider-researcher played an important part in my analysis. I had access to information about respondents’ backgrounds through my own knowledge of them and from their school records. I also gained information from the participants during individual interviews. Based on this, I cautiously made socio-economic distinctions between the two groups.

1.4.5 Relationship with teachers and mentors

Although some of these high achieving students came from different socio-economic backgrounds, they believed that they could perform better academically if they had better relationships with and received more individual help from their teachers. Moreover, they

rarely attributed their academic success to teachers. They felt that teachers should show more personal interest in them. Despite wanting this level of support and personal interest, the students seemed reluctant to reciprocate. This apparent lack of trust and dislike for some teachers could be linked to the presumed unfair treatment and racist stereotyping they received from teachers. Students' desire for a closer relationship with teachers could have been due to being drawn into a deficit model based and multi-cultural curricula.

It is also possible that the void of wanting a relationship and support from teachers was filled by mentors and non-teaching staff. Students commented on the positive impact that non-teaching staff and pastoral heads had on their education. African-Caribbean teachers stressed students benefited more when taught and mentored by black teachers who understood their culture. Teachers also felt that African-Caribbean children preferred a more informal approach to teaching in smaller groups, which was rarely possible in a mainstream school setting. Some supplementary school teachers stressed that supplementary schools were effective because they provided a homely environment and smaller class sizes, which allowed for individual support and a culturally enriching experience.

1.4.6 Supplementary schools/extra-curricular activities/church

Students spoke about supplementary schools helping to improve their self-confidence as well as their Mathematics and Science. They commented that participating in cultural workshops and activities enhanced their self-awareness, self-confidence and self-efficacy. The manager of the supplementary school claimed that the key to their effectiveness was identifying the

children's preferred learning styles and devising individual education plans for each child.

As well as attending supplementary school students felt that taking part in extra-curricular activities, community activities and Sunday school were important factors in helping them to achieve academic success as it improved their self-confidence and drive to succeed. It gave them a chance to participate in meaningful activities and meet with role models. Going to Sunday school (church) was a source of inspiration as they received help and guidance and it provided a platform for social networking and sharing cultural capital. Students believed that the successes they experienced while engaging in community activities translated into school success as they knew how to succeed in a different context.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the aims and origins of the research. It outlines the key concepts such as, resilience, school identity and social/cultural capital and presents the main argument of this thesis. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. It gives a brief history of Caribbean settlement in Britain and discusses the emergence of writing on race and education in the UK, critiques the underachievement thesis and discusses the key concepts in this thesis. Chapter 3 is the methods and methodology section which discusses the rationale behind using an interpretive methodology with a conceptual framework based on an oral history approach. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are the data chapters. Data was captured and analysed in three secondary school sites and a supplementary school. Chapter 4 explores visions, understandings and definitions of 'educational success', from the perspectives of high achieving African-Caribbean students and explains the 'balancing act'. Chapter 5 explores students' ways of being high achievers and discusses how students display resilience by

orchestrating complex 'balancing acts'. Chapter 6 discusses specific forms of black cultural and social capital which exist in African-Caribbean communities and draws on CRT. Chapter 7 outlines conclusions drawn, limitations of the research, and discusses how this thesis adds to the field of research on race and education. It also makes recommendations for further research and gives suggestions for tackling underachievement amongst African-Caribbean and other pupils. It also gives a reflection of my research journey and future challenges ahead.

CHAPTER 2

BLACK PUPILS, RACE AND INEQUALITY IN SCHOOLING: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a historical and conceptual review of existing research literature on African-Caribbean pupils' educational experiences. It highlights the socio-economic disadvantages which early West Indian immigrants faced on arrival to the UK (Coard, 1971; Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; John 1999). The chapter gives a brief history of the milestones of Caribbean settlement in Britain and provides an historical context for the emergence of writing on race and education, particularly in relation to African-Caribbean children. This chapter critiques the underachievement thesis, inspects literature on the achievement gap and patterns of inequality in education (Archer and Francis, 2007; Gillborn, 2008). It discusses literature on resilience (Winfield, 1994; Carter, 2006; Gordon and Song, 1994; Rhamie, 2007). It discusses Rhamie's (2007) work on African- Caribbean resilience and Yosso's (2005) criticism of Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of cultural capital, using critical race theory (CRT). This chapter concludes by exploring spaces which foster black social and cultural capital.

2.2 A brief history of milestones of Caribbean settlement in Britain

The late 1940's represented a significant time in the history of West Indians entering Britain. The Empire Windrush was a ship which arrived on British's shore in 1948 bringing the grandparents of the vast majority of African-Caribbean children currently attending British schools. West Indians were invited to Britain to fill gaps in Britain's labour force (Lawrence

1974). However, on arrival they experienced poor living conditions and were given low paid jobs (Phillips and Phillips, 1998). The socio-economic disadvantages which they experienced as well as the racial hostility they faced are well documented (Smith 1977, Phillips and Phillips, 1998). Despite their early experiences, historians and sociologists have argued that Caribbean migrants held an optimistic view of the British education system and had high hopes for their children's education in Britain. Many arrivals had received a high standard of education in the West Indies, under a 'British type' school curriculum, and expected an equally high standard of education once in Britain (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; John 1999; Phillips and Phillips, 1998). However, their initial optimism soon turned to despair as many of their children began to experience educational disadvantages in schools. Cork (2005) provided us with Gus John's description of the way in which the educational culture that West Indians were used to in the West Indies compared with the new educational culture they were encountering in Britain:

'The educational aspirations for children were matched by an educational culture which induced high esteem and in which high levels of educational achievement were seen as the norm. In that educational culture your potential was not judged by your gender, your race or your class..... We came here from such an educational culture and were treated as if our grey matter had been forcibly removed on the way and hurled into the Atlantic'.

(Cork, 2005: 6).

During this time issues surrounding 'race' and ethnicity in education was largely neglected by policy (Ball *et al.*, 2000). There was a widely held view that the problem that black children were encountering in schools was with the black youths, who were suffering from 'cultural

deficit' and not with a discriminatory education system (Majors, 2001).

During the 50's and 60's more and more West Indian children started attending British schools; continuing to do poorly educationally. This period experienced the Nottingham and Notting Hill riots in 1958 with violent attacks against minority groups by fascist groups. Despite the aggressors being white the issue was defined as 'a colour problem' (Ramdin, 1987). These social encounters influenced a government policy response which assumed the goal of assimilation; the attempt was to reduce or minimize symptoms of racial and cultural differences. Dispersal policies were implemented and the education response was to limit the numbers of ethnic minority students in each school. According to a statement made by the 'Commonwealth Immigrant Advisory Council' in 1964:

'A national system cannot be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups'.

(Tomlinson, 1977: 3)

During this period parents and community activist showed an increased determination and impetus to set up self-help organisations in response to the lack of educational support their children were receiving in schools (Tomlinson, 1985; Reay and Mirza, 1997). One major group set up was the 'Black Parents Movement' founded by John La Rose who was the chairman of the Institute of Race Relations in 1972 (Johnson, 2006). The Black Parents Movement fought against 'banding' and the wrongful placing of West Indian children in schools for children with learning difficulties. This movement founded the 'George Padmore Supplementary School', which was the first of its kind and the National Association of

Supplementary Schools. Alongside the 'Black Parents Movement', was the Institute of Race Relations (IRR). The IRR was set up in 1952 to focus on research and publishing on race relations. It was the first race relations library in Europe to house materials relating to the black community of Caribbean, African and Asian descent in Britain and continental Europe (Johnson, 2006). In the Autumn of 1958 following black/white riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill, there was an increased realisation throughout the country that race relation was a major domestic concern for Britain and the IRR published its first study of race relations in Britain known as 'Colour and Citizenship'. Later on the IRR focused on research projects, aimed at influencing government policy and studies that concentrated on aspects of racism that were of greatest concern in the community and trying to prevent or minimise them (Richardson, 2005).

In the early 1970's, the publication of Coard's (1971) book 'How the West Indian Child is made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System' was instrumental in highlighting the anger of African-Caribbean parents and community members over the disproportionate amount of West Indian children being branded as educationally subnormal. His work along with the legacy of African-Caribbean activism created an impact, and broadened the general concerns that African-Caribbean parents and communities had of the education system. During this time educational policy still viewed minorities as a problem needing to adapt to a largely unchanged system (Majors, 2001). The emphasis moved from assimilation to integrating the minority with the majority. It was now up to the minority to change and adapt, with little or no pressure on the majority of society to modify any existing practices or attitudes. According to Roy Jenkins, the home secretary in 1966:

‘.... Not a flattering process of assimilation but equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance...’.

(Mullard, 1982: 125)

Following over 30 years of struggles, protests and campaigns for social justice and educational equality, the 1980's was a pivotal decade of policy. Tomlinson (1997) commented that the 1980s was a significant period in black education. During this decade both the Rampton Report (1981) and the Swann Report (1985) were commissioned by the government in response to the growing need to address issues pertaining to the education of the black community. The reports focused on the underachievement of ethnic minority groups and the presence of institutional racism in schools. The Rampton Report highlighted African-Caribbean parents' mistrust and lack of faith in schools to make improvements. This loss of faith was fuelled by the unjust police treatment handed out to black males in particular, described in the Scarmann Report (1981). The mid-1980s was a period of emergent anti-racist and multiculturalist policy – what has sometimes been referred to as state or municipal multiculturalism (Warmington, 2014).

The shift in emphasis toward a form of ‘inclusive multiculturalism,’ was signaled by the Swann Report's slogan, ‘Education for All’. Multicultural education was seen as enabling all ethnic groups, both minority and majority to participate fully in shaping society whilst necessarily allowing and assisting the ethnic minority communities to maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within a framework of commonly accepted values (DES, 1985: 5). Multicultural education involved schools delivering culturally diverse curriculums which encouraged the cultural practices of its diverse student population. That said, multicultural

education was sometimes criticised for taking a superficial diversity-for-diversity's sake approach: often derided as three 'S's': saris, samosas, and steelbands (Troyna and Carrington, 1990: 20). Mullard (1984), for example, argued that the more superficial models of multicultural education treated the notion of culture exotically: attempting to celebrate diversity but, in fact, reinforcing common stereotypes.

The more superficial approach to multicultural education had a fixed understanding of cultures, lacked attention to the hierarchies of power within different cultural groups, and failed to develop effective structural analyses of the role of power, class and institutions in reproducing racial inequality. From a crude multiculturalist perspective, racism was perceived psychologically in terms of prejudiced attitudes that could be changed by knowledge and the learning of tolerance (Dhondy, 2001; Tomlinson, 2008).

If the 1980s model of race relations was exemplified by the Rampton and Swann Reports, and by initiatives in multicultural education, issues of race in Britain 1990s-2000s were arguably symbolised by the Stephen Lawrence case and the resultant Macpherson Inquiry, which attempted to refocus attention on institutional racism. The Lawrence campaign was led by two African-Caribbean parents, Doreen and Neville Lawrence, over police lack of action and discriminatory dealing of the case following the racially motivated killing of their son Stephen in 1993. While their campaign did not lead to convictions until 2012, it received intense media coverage, exemplifying a collective struggle and immense dedication.

The Lawrence families' campaign for proper investigation of the handling of their son's murder led to the Macpherson Report (1999), which deemed the police institutionally racist as

a result of its negligent approach to the investigation of this crime. This report influenced the amendment of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) (RRA) which placed a statutory duty on all public services, which includes the police, educational authorities, schools and hospitals, to operate strictly in a manner that did not discriminate against any group and, moreover, placed duties upon public bodies to monitor and improve the ways in which they served and gave access to all communities. State schools were required, for instance, to produce race equality policies for inspection by Ofsted (although subsequently the status of these race equality policies has declined and race equality has in recent years become a minor concern for Ofsted inspectors (Geoffrey, 2010; Parsons *et al.* 2004)).

2.3 The emergence of writing on race and education

During the post-war period, social class was the primary category within the sociology of education. By the 1970s 'race' and ethnicity had become prominent concerns in educational research in the UK. A landmark in the study of African-Caribbean children's experiences was Bernard Coard's (1971) 'How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Sub-Normal in the British School System'. Coard's (1971) analysis was significant because it inverted the 'cultural deficit' thesis that had often informed 'explanations' of African-Caribbean children's school failure prior to the 1970's (Troyna 1984). Prior to the 1970's the prevailing belief by educationist and politicians was that African-Caribbean students were of 'low intelligence' and 'culturally deprived' due to 'cultural deficit' in their home environment. In short, Coard (1971) identified what would later be termed 'institutional racism' as a structural force shaping educational outcomes among African-Caribbean pupils. He argued that British schools disadvantaged black pupils by culturally biased curricula and tests, open prejudice and low expectations of the child's abilities. Coard (1971) commented on the purpose of his

publication:

‘It is also written with West Indian teachers, educational psychologist, social workers and community leaders in mind; for through their awareness of the scandalous situation which befalls our children, they can help to galvanise the community for whatever actions are needed to radically alter the situation’.

(Richardson, 2005: 50)

Following on from the work of Coard (1971), academics in the area of race and education have been preoccupied with exploring further the issues around the treatment of African-Caribbean children in the British education system, for example, low teacher expectation and differential treatment leading to poor academic outcomes and a disproportional number of them being excluded from school (Mac an Ghail, 1988; DfES, 2003b; Gillborn, 2008).

Another area that has preoccupied more recent writers and researchers on ‘race’ and ethnicity is the relative attainment of children in different ethnic groups; much of the discussions centred around African-Caribbean pupils since they tended to achieve less well, on average, than their white peers at key stage 3 and GCSE. In addition, government data and other research studies reveal that African-Caribbean children in particular, enter school better prepared than their peers but unfortunately, their relative attainment dramatically falls away as they move through the school system (DFES, 2006b; Gillborn, 2008). This suggests that school adds less value for African-Caribbean pupils (Richardson and Wood, 2000).

2.4 Educational achievement: patterns of inequality

Despite years of activism, research, government action and reports, patterns of inequality still persist. According to the title of Mirza's chapter in Richardson (2005), over the years little seems to have changed. She commented:

‘While racist treatment of black children may not be as blatant as 35 years ago we are still plagued by the problem of racial differentiation in educational treatment and outcome for black Caribbean young people’.

(Richardson, 2005: 111)

Government statistics on educational achievement by ethnicity at GCSE level show African-Caribbean pupils consistently achieving less well than white British pupils and far behind the highest achieving groups (Indian and Chinese pupils). For example, in 2008/9, only 39% of African-Caribbean pupils gained five or more A* to C grades including English and Maths compared with 50% of white British pupils, while 72% of Chinese pupils and 67% of Indian pupils achieved these grades. In 2012/13, 52% of African-Caribbean pupils gained five or more A* to C grades including English and Maths, compared with 60% of white British pupils 78% of Chinese pupils and 75% of Indian pupils (DFE, 2014). In 2009, five or more A*-C grades including English and Maths became the benchmark of success at the end of compulsory education and the prerequisite for entry into a ‘reputable’ sixth-form and university. Data presented by the DfE (2010) shows that under this bench mark, despite improvements in their GCSE results, African-Caribbean pupils continue to perform poorly in comparison to the other ethnic groups and that the achievement gap between 2008/9 and 2012/13 remained consistent (10% points behind white British pupils).

The maintenance of the attainment gap has occurred because the general attainment of other ethnic groups has also improved over the years (Gillborn, 2008). For example, from 2008/9 to 2012/13, the percentage of African-Caribbean pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades including English and Maths increased by 13% points, for the white British it increased by 10% points, for Pakistani pupils it increased by 8% points and for Indian pupils it increased by 6% points (DFE, 2014). Another significant gap is in relation to gender. Girls consistently outperform boys in virtually all ethnic groups with the gap widening by 2.8 % points since 2008/09 to 10.1 % points, with 65.7 per cent of girls achieving this indicator in 2012/13 compared to 55.6 % of boys. The gender gap in 2012/2013 is even greater between African-Caribbean girls and boys, being 12.5% points compared to the national gender gap of 10.1 % points.

There have been disputes over the ways in which statistics on relative attainment of the various ethnic groups are presented and interpreted. Gorard (2000) claimed that the use of percentage points was a political error, arguing that it was more accurate to use the proportional model (percentage of the starting figure). Gillborn (2008) explained why a greater proportional increase does not automatically equate to a narrowing of the 'gap'. When the starting point is significantly lower than the finishing point, a relatively small change in performance will look impressive according to Gorard's proportional model giving a different picture from that produced by critical research.

The analysis in this section has shown that the achievement gaps between African-Caribbean pupils and white pupils as well as pupils from other ethnic groups in the UK remains resistant to change despite numerous research studies and recommendations as well as government

policies and initiatives stemming a period of about forty years (DfES, 1997; Major, 1997). Over this period of time there have been numerous attempts to explain the possible causal factors for the attainment gap.

One of the main reasons given for the persistence of the achievement gap was that African-Caribbean students were systematically under-represented in entry to the higher tier examinations relative to their white British peers (Gillborn & Gipps, 1996; Strand, 2010). The national tests are structured in different tiers, each consisting of different papers that allow the award of a limited range of National Curriculum (NC) levels/grades, and teacher judgment is used to assign students to the different test tiers. Importantly the higher levels can only be achieved if the teacher has entered the student for the higher tier examination. This process is presumed to be more efficient, and to offer a more positive experience to students, since they are only tested on a range of items that are matched to their current level of performance, as judged by their teachers.

However the element of teacher judgment introduces a social dimension to the process. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) found that African-Caribbean students were less likely to be entered by their teachers for the higher test tiers, and so were not able to achieve the highest test outcomes. Inequalities and thus, the achievement gap have become more pronounced following the coalition government's introduction of the English Baccalaureate as a measure of attainment at key stage 4. The English Baccalaureate required 5 A* - C grades in GCSE Mathematics; English; two science subjects; a foreign language; and either history or geography. The 2010/11 data shows that for the EBac the attainment gap has regressed to former comparisons under previous GCSE measures. This data shows that inequalities and the

achievement gap are more pronounced under the EBac. The 2010/11 data showed that 34.6% of Chinese students and 25.8% of Indian students achieved the EBac while 15.4% of white students and 7.6% of black Caribbean pupils achieved the measurement (DfE, 2012). A wide range of other potential causal factors are discussed later in this chapter. They are very complex, as different ethnic groups arguably live out the impacts of these factors in diverse ways.

2.5 Critique of the underachievement thesis

Some of the currently emerging UK literature on African-Caribbean school experiences and performance increasingly queries the very basis of the ‘underachievement’ thesis, insofar as notions of underachievement rely on over-simplistic inter-group comparisons and readings of class that may be more specific to white British pupils than other ethnic groups (Tomlinson, 2008). Archer and Francis (2007) and Gillborn (2008) suggest that explanations of the ethnic gaps that rely on class categories, while necessary, are not sufficient to account for the attainment gaps of some ethnic groups, particularly African-Caribbean pupils.

In the UK, for instance, both regional and national data refer to socio-economic status as indicated by whether someone is on free school meals (FSM) or not, as a predictor of academic achievement. For the majority of British white children, FSM was the clearest predictor of gaps in academic attainment. In 2004, the achievement gap between those on FSM and non- FSM was as much as 25% points. However, this was not the case for other ethnic groups. Among African-Caribbean pupils the achievement gap between FSM and non-FSM was only 13% points, and in some cases those on FSM outperform those not on FSM. (African-Caribbean girls on FSM often outperformed African-Caribbean boys not on FSM).

Hence FSM as an indicator of social deprivation was a less salient predictor of African Caribbean pupils' achievement (Archer and Francis, 2007). The results are also compounded with the intersection of gender as girls in all the ethnic groups constantly outperform the boys.

Consequently, analysis of these data reveal that the categorisation of 'poverty', by the uptake of free school meals as utilised by the DfES, poses problems when analysing issues pertaining to the academic outcome of different ethnic groups. In addition, Hobbes and Vignoles (2009) have noted other problems in using FSM as a proxy for socio-economic status; they point out that FSM status does not appear to help identify all low income children, and that it may, for instance be an imperfect proxy when estimating differences in Key Stage 2 attainment by family income. Crawford *et al.* (2011) have argued that a more robust measure of the socio-economic gap in pupil attainment can be obtained by gathering data on parental education in addition to FSM. This could provide a longer term indicator of socio-economic advantage/ disadvantage and enable differing levels of disadvantage to be identified, rather than just acute disadvantage.

Much inter-group research is, of course, predicated upon analysis of rates of educational attainment with in the UK particularly focuses on key stage outcomes and GCSE attainment. A fundamental question concerns the degree to which inter-ethnic group comparisons are actually a valid mode of understanding educational experiences and outcomes. Troyna (1984) challenged the legitimacy of inter-group comparisons, which tend to assume that these comparisons are being made between groups of children whose experiences of life and schooling are the same. Gillborn (1990) argues that a research approach which relies heavily on making comparisons between ethnic groups tends to be counter-productive as it tends to

pathologies the under-performing children, implying that the problem is within the individual and ignores the possible influence of the education system (Gillborn, 1990). Although authors have gone to great length to refute this kind of deficit perspective (Troyna, 1984; Crozier, 2005), it continues to re-emerge periodically and remains part of current race/education discourse (Billig *et al.*, 1988; González, 2005).

In addition, Archer and Francis (2007) argue that a quantitative approach is often ineffective as it tends to adopt a superficial approach to understanding the factors underlying and driving 'success' and 'under-achievement'. It is in this context that there has been increasing interest in developing interpretative approaches to researching the way in which African-Caribbean children negotiate the school system, drawing upon biographical and ethnographic research, discourse analysis and cultural studies based on critical race theory (Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Ball *et al.*, 2002; Reay and Mirza, 1997; Rhamie, 2007).

2.5.1 Efforts to 'explain' racial inequality in UK education

In order to understand the literature on African-Caribbean pupils' resilience, school identities, and the varied modes of behaviour they employ to negotiate schooling, it is necessary to examine some of the common (or 'common sense') explanations of black pupils' educational outcomes that have been offered.

In work on the rates of exclusions of black pupils in the UK, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit (EMAU) from the DfES (2006b) suggested that research purporting to account for African-Caribbean 'underachievement' has tended to adhere to well-worn 'explanatory' factors :

- Between/within school factors (institutional racism and schools' approaches to exclusion, setting, and resourcing).
- Systemic school factors (national educational policies and practices).
- Non-school factors (family background, poverty and home environment).

To this might be added a fourth category

- 'Behavioural' or 'inter-relational' factors (pupil subculture, coping strategies and ethnic group peer pressure-fear of 'acting white').

The latter category is my addition, made because the notion of 'non-school factors' is an oversimplification. In DfES (2006b) study it is often used to encompass 'societal' and 'peer-pressure' attitudes. However, since some of these attitudes and behaviours are developed in relation to/in response to school structures, they cannot be properly referred to as 'non-school factors'.

2.5.2 Between/ within school factors

The EMAU refers to between/within school factors as 'decisions made by schools and staff which have the cumulative effect of producing a racist outcome'. The EMAU priority reviewers discussed the notion of institutional racism in the British school system which has been suggested as being one of the major causes of African-Caribbean pupils psychologically withdrawing from and devaluing school, placing these pupils at a high risk of low attainment and disaffection (DfES, 2006b).

Several studies have identified examples of institutional racism in UK schools (Eggleston, *et*

al., 1986; Wright, 1987; Gillborn, 1990; Macpherson, 1999). The stereotyping of African-Caribbean pupils is considered to be one of the reasons given for the differential levels of discipline they face and the under-estimation of their ability by teachers (Sewell, 1997; Richardson & Wood, 1999).

Recent research has provided more sophisticated interpretations and understandings of teacher labelling and stereotyping of African-Caribbean pupils. Youdell (2006:33) has considered ways in which school processes define certain groups of pupils as 'impossible learners'. As Archer (2008) discussed, the ways in which different groups of pupils are perceived in school serves to label them as either attractive or desirable learners. She refers to the 'ideal pupil' who is almost always white and middle-class. Chinese and Indians are seen as hard working and well behaved (the model minority) (Gillborn, 2008) whereas African-Caribbean pupils are seen as lazy and as low achievers. According to Youdell (2006:33), the negative construction of black subcultural identities often informs and reinforces stereotypes which view black pupils as undesirable learners.

Rollock's (2007b) work explores the way in which teachers' low expectations of African-Caribbean pupils and their view of them within the 'success' paradigm can affect pupil-teacher interactions which can lead to school failure. In Rollock's study most of the pupils interviewed tended to have an instrumental view of educational success and attribute doing well at school to hard work. They rejected inferences that their success was related to individual or group characteristics such as gender and/or black street culture. Her study highlights the discrepancy in views between the way many black pupils viewed the link between appearance and academic performance compared to school staff who tended to

associate 'black street cultures' (dress, walking style, hip hop) with being disobedient and non-academic. This could cause various levels of conflict with school staff which can lead to black pupils being placed in exclusive lower groups and the acceptance of 'good enough' qualifications (D grades). According to Rollock (2007c:275), such actions by teachers often serve to 'legitimise black academic failure'.

2.5.3 Systemic factors: national education policy

According to the EMAU, systemic factors, refers to how government policies and reforms across the sector may be contributing to African-Caribbean pupils' underachievement. Evaluations of government effort to address African-Caribbean pupils' underachievement through the implementation of numerous strategies and policies have shown limited effect (DfES, 2006a; Gillborn, 2005/2008).

One of the more traditional educational features developed and advocated through policy by the government, was the setting by ability into hierarchical teaching groups mentioned in the previous section. In 1997 the Labour Party claimed that setting by ability benefitted both high and low achieving groups (Labour Party, 1997). This was in direct contradiction to research evidence. Hallam (2002) found that setting and other forms of selective pupil grouping inhibit opportunities for certain pupils, particularly black and working-class pupils. As discussed earlier, tier entry means that instead of all pupils sitting the same level paper, entrants sit examination papers of different levels depending on their teacher's assessment of their 'ability'. Pupils entered for the higher tier can receive grades A*-D and the foundation tier grades C –G. Pupils in the lower (foundation) sets enter the examination room aware that

they cannot get the higher grades. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) found that a disproportional number of African-Caribbean students tended to be placed in lower sets and bands based on teachers' assessment of their ability. Setting by ability continues to be used in UK schools.

Another systemic factor that has been linked with African-Caribbean underachievement is the narrowness of the curriculum. Coard (1971) noted the absence of black literature, history and music in the British curriculum, as well as positive image of black people in school books. He felt that this and the many negative associations of the word 'black' in English literature were likely to cause low self-confidence (Dove, 1995). It also gave them the feeling that school subjects were not relevant to their lives. Long before Coard's work, Woodson (1933) claimed that black children who are educated away from their traditions and culture tended to have their self-worth eroded through the transmission of an ethnocentric curriculum. Although Woodson was writing about the US in the 1920s-30s, his views bear relation to Coard's concerning forms of social and cultural reproduction in education. The lingering impact of Coard's work can be seen in the collection of anti-racist writing on education edited by Richardson (2005), which revisits Coard's pioneering work. In the collection Heidi Safia Mirza (2005) sums up the continued relevance of Coard's critique of structural racism in schools in her claim that, new educational fads and terminology notwithstanding, the school system today disadvantages black children with much the same force as it ever did.

2.5.4 Inadequacies in 'anti-racist' and 'multi-cultural' education policy

The anti-racist approach to schooling pioneered by Coard opened debates about the racism of individual teachers and made the connection between institutionalised racism and inequalities

within the system. However, Makeda (1999) commented that this was a kind of reactive response which is concerned with schools protecting their integrity and there was no evidence of its effectiveness in improving minority ethnic achievement in schools. The government's multi-cultural approach to education, however, served, in part, to attenuate growing concerns of parents and the black community by broadening the national curriculum (Troyna and Carrington, 1990). It focused on all children learning about and respecting the cultures of minority ethnic groups and appreciating the important contributions they have made to society. This involved the introduction of steel drums, black history month, encouraging the teaching of world religions, and the inclusion of black and Asian writers. Makeda (1999) contested that in the UK both the government's anti-racist and multi-cultural policies have failed to address the fundamental nature of a Eurocentric knowledge base that take centre stage as the superior structure of knowledge whilst claiming that it is impartial and universal. Makeda (1999) suggested that when black children are grounded within an African value system they are able to express self-determination and develop institutional practices that nurture and support culturally specific socialisation and education.

2.5.5 Post-racial society

In more recent times successive UK governments have distanced themselves from multiculturalism and have arguably perpetuated the idea; that we live in a period and society in which racial prejudice and discrimination have diminished (Warmington, 2014). This enforces a move away from a multicultural school curriculum to a new national curriculum which requires teachers to deliver a culturally relevant and diverse curriculum. Teachers are required to be socio-culturally conscious, knowing and understanding the diverse backgrounds of their students. It is argued that having this awareness will enable teachers to

deliver lessons that build on what their students already know and encourages young people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to value and respect diversity, challenge racism and stereotypical attitudes (Maylor *et al.*, 2007). However it is argued that while this approach may broaden or diversify the perspectives that are included in the curriculum, it may not change the way particular groups are viewed or their representation of part of the 'homogeneous' national 'we' (Olneck, 2001:343). Therefore, it is imperative that schools think carefully about how diverse groups are represented in the curriculum and how notions of diversity is seen as an 'an asset' rather than a threat.

2.5.6 Non- school factors: family background and home environment

Non-school factors such as home environment and poverty have also been posited as a possible explanation for different achievement patterns. Family structures were considered by the Swann Report to be a factor which contributed to African-Caribbean underachievement. A higher number of single mothers than some of the other ethnic groups were common amongst African-Caribbean families. Sewell (2009) argues that there seems to be an obvious link between the absence of a permanent father and the disproportionate number of African-Caribbean boys being excluded from schools. An absent father means that there is an absence of a male adult authority and role model. However, he contends that despite this, African-Caribbean single mothers tend to be embedded within the black community and are capable of fully supporting and supplementing their children's education.

Concerning the absent (non-resident) father, Reynolds (2009) suggests that there is often a stereotyping of non-resident fathers as absentee parents. According to her research, the 'inclusive' policies in schools works to perpetuate a misunderstanding of black family life in

which black boys living with lone parents is viewed as a major factor when dealing with issues pertaining to them. Reynolds (2009) contended that contrary to popular belief there are ways in which non-resident fathers are actively involved in the raising of black boys. They benefit from involving female family members, grandparents, stepmothers, brothers and cousins in the caring and the raising of their sons.

Research has also suggested that there is a link between low parental income and children's educational disadvantages. The relative poverty of ethnic minority parents means that their children are unlikely to attend independent schools and receive private tuition (Bhatti, 1999). Bhatti (1999) continued that despite education maintenance allowance and university loans, low family income was a significant influence when contemplating post-16 education. This was particularly the case for single-income families, disproportionately affecting African-Caribbean children. However, Sewell (2009) refutes this argument by pointing out that there is an increase in the number of economically independent and highly educated African-Caribbean single parents who are capable of funding their household.

2.5.7 Behavioural/ inter-relational factors: pupil subculture/coping mechanisms

As a result of institutional racism within the school process it has been suggested that some African-Caribbean pupils turn towards distinct subcultures to resist differential treatment (Sewell, 1997). Sewell blames urban black youth culture that is regarded as anti-school and obsessed with the violence and hyper-masculinity of the street (Sewell, 1997, 2009). Sewell (1997) challenges the notion that institutional and teacher racism, were the only factors that lead African-Caribbean pupils to adopt a culture of resistance to schooling. Sewell suggests that the problem is not institutional racism but the unwillingness and inability of African-

Caribbean pupils to break away from an anti-school peer group (negative peer pressure) which sees street culture as more attractive. He argues that this black urban street behaviour tends to feed the stereotype that African-Caribbean students are more aggressive and ruder than white students. Teachers who share an ethnocentric view often assume that African-Caribbean boys in particular are against their authority, and Asian boys are the exact opposite. This results in a disproportionate amount of criticisms and conflict compared to other ethnic groups. This black resistive subculture draws on wider street culture which unfortunately is not conducive to academic success. Similarly, Youdell's (2003) work reveals an inversion of the 'coolness' of black male identities within youth subcultures by some teachers who reproduce black boys as being anti-school (Frosh *et al.*, 2002). Bodily and linguistic practices are often negatively interpreted as culturally deficient and then constituted by the school's organisational discourse as incompatible with active learning, and this can extend to black girls as well. Hence, the problem is perceived to be primarily with the black pupils and not necessarily with the school system.

It is important to note at this point that Strand's (2008) analysis using the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England shows that black pupils from middle and high socio-economic status homes underachieve relative to white British pupils, despite high levels of commitment to education. They are susceptible to an 'ethnic penalty' despite possessing all the positive attributes that white middle-class pupils have. This suggests that something more than black pupil sub-culture might be responsible for their poor performances relative to their white counterparts.

As Gillborn (1990) contends, it is institutional racism and not black youth sub-culture which

is mainly responsible for African-Caribbean underachievement. Gillborn (2008) claims that there are some contemporary processes of schooling which amount to institutional racism that reproduces and sustains inequality and contributes to unequal outcomes. Gillborn (1990) contends that African Caribbean pupil's adoption of an anti-school subculture was a 'negative coping mechanism' devised as a counter-response to the unfair treatment they encountered in school. He found that African-Caribbean boys were viewed as a threat to teachers' authority and were reprimanded far more than white or Asian students for the same offence. Gillborn (1990) found that the most common response was to be drawn together in increasing opposition to the school. In the resulting anti-school subculture, students displayed cultural specific behaviours, such as speech and walking style, and sometimes responded angrily.

This resistive sub-cultural formation discussed above can be compared with the white working-class 'lads' theorised by Willis (1977). Willis (1977) contended that working class students create their own culture of resistance to school knowledge through, anti-school counter-culture in which they disqualify themselves from the opportunity to enter middle-class jobs. This arguably bears similarities to African-Caribbean 'counter-cultures' that emerge out of conflicts within the school environment and are influenced by schools' dominant middle-class, ethnocentric values and the recognition of poor post school prospects and racism within schools and society (Foster *et al.*, 1996).

Sewell (1997) further argues that when dealing with black underachievement it is useful to look beyond white racism and challenge the youth culture which still believes that doing well in school means 'acting white'. For these students, excelling in school, subjects them to being accused of 'acting white'. This was also identified in North America by Fordham and Ogbu

(1986) who found that a key factor which explained the relatively poor performance of African-American students was the 'negative coping mechanism' they developed to retain their individual and cultural identity while functioning in school and in the wider society.

This notion of 'acting white' was discussed by Carter (2006) who found that successful African-American students ran the risk of being labelled 'brainiacs'. Consequently, they resisted school work in order to avoid attracting animosity and minimise the risk of being ostracised by their peers. According to Carter (2006), successful African-American students developed elaborate strategies to cope with the burden of 'acting white'. They deflecting attention away from their academic attainment and tried to prove that they were still part of the black circle. They stressed their sporting performances, acted like 'comedians', befriended bullies and shared test and homework answers with lower attaining students. These African-American students achieved academic successful and maintained their ethnic identity by being adept at strategically moving between mainstream worlds of school and their peers, drawing from multiple cultural codes. Conversely, Gonzalez (1999) found that there were school environments where academic success had little or no connection with the notion of 'acting white'. Puerto Rican high achievers in an urban high school in the US were academically successful while maintaining their ethnic identity.

2.6 Writing on Resilience

The work of Carter (2006) and Gonzalez (1999) in the US and in the UK by Mac an Ghaill (1988), Reay and Mirza (1997), and Rhamie (2007) shows that understandings of African-Caribbean pupils' experiences, identities and behaviour become atrophied if they are framed entirely within narrow underachievement theses. The current thesis draws upon broader

literature that offers insights into how pupils negotiate adverse conditions in their schooling. The key concern of this thesis being: how high attaining African-Caribbean pupils develop a particular resilience in order to negotiate schooling successfully.

According to Masten and Coatsworth (1998) resilience is the overcoming of adversity to achieve good development outcomes. Wang *et al.* (1997) claimed that the main characteristic of resilient children is the ability of being adept in identifying and engaging in relationships and environments that promote their growth, and having the ability to screen out negative messages. There has been some discussion on the construct of 'resilience' and the conceptualisation of its processes (Winfield, 1994; Gordon and Song, 1994; Sternberg and Subotnik, 2006; Rhamie, 2007). Gordon and Song (1994) argue that the construct of 'resilience' tends to refer to a passive human trait. They contended that the construct of 'defiance' connotes a more dynamic process or active human agency-purposeful effort. Hence the defiant individual does not simply 'bounce back' but actively struggles against adversities and/or seek solutions deliberately. Sullivan (1984) refers to acts of active navigation, through or around challenges and towards more adaptive situations, as human agency. This involves behaviour that is intentionally created and directed at the alteration of one's environment.

According to Sternberg and Subotnik (2006), in order to navigate both the school and community cultures ethnic minority students learn to 'switch codes' by becoming competent in both the mainstream and their own culture's way of communicating. Cross and Strauss (1998) contended that code switching by black students, required them to talk, act, dress and think in ways that made white teachers and pupils, as well as their black peers, feel comfortable. This ensured that they received equal treatment from all members of their school

community. Carter (2006) commented that this process of constant switching, on and off, of codes, helped to prevent high attaining black students being treated unfairly by others on one hand and being treated as 'sell out' by their black peers on the other hand. Carter (2006) added that high attaining pupils were able to balance the two socialisation forces and the privileges of each in various situations. Sternberg and Subotnik (2006) suggested that these students had a tendency to behave, engage, and/or respond flexibly to the environment. This process of productive adaptation is often a function of resilience.

In the UK, Rhamie (2007) found that high achieving African-Caribbean children were protected from risk factors by being well supported by parents who used a range of supportive measures to supplement their children's education. Rhamie (2007) summarised that African-Caribbean children, who were academically successful, tended to be involved in community activities supplemented by a positive home environment. This provided a focus for achievement-oriented engagement and a strong network, which enhanced children's resilience. Involvement with the church, clubs, participating in music and with positive role models, provided consistent support to enhance resilience and academic achievement.

As well as parents, it is believed that mainstream schools can also employ resilience building skills by providing a protective mechanism for students such as high teacher expectation, a diverse curriculum, a school climate that promotes active participation and a sense of small learning community and peer learning programmes, mentoring and extra curriculum activities (Winfield (1994).

Winfield (1994) claims that within every young person there is a delicate balance during critical life events between the protective processes and the risk factors. Winfield (1994) suggests that the school environment is an ideal place to provide a protective mechanism for African-American students because this is where peer group pressure begins to influence youths and potentially becomes a powerful risk factor. Winfield (1994) found that for females, peer group pressure operates to influence sexual behaviour and for boys anti-intellectual pressure aimed at not being successful in school. Winfield's findings provides possible strategies that can be directed towards practices, policies and attitudes among professional educators to aid the development process of resilience in African-Caribbean children in schools.

2.7 Writing on Identity

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are definitions and theoretical perspectives of how human behaviour leads to identity formation (Hall, 1990; Holland, 1998) and in particular ways in which young black people develop and maintain resilient identities (Cross, 1971, Wright *et al.*, 2010). Wright (2013) discusses how resilient young black people, despite having been labelled as potential educational failures, resist racist stereotypes and refuse the 'fate' of educational failure, by taking on identities and exhibiting 'educational urgency' that nourishing their desire to have positive educational outcomes (Mirza, 2009). Mirza (2006) argues that the 'educational urgency' exhibited by many black people is a racialised process (2006: 144). She suggests that while young second-generation Caribbean women may appear on the surface to wanted to achieve academic success by gaining qualifications, their motivation was driven by a desire to succeed against the odds and shaped new identities that were grounded in a refusal to be quantified as failures (2006: 144).

The narratives of the African-Caribbean students in this study suggests that despite being labelled as low attainers, they are driven to achieve academic and social progression by an insatiable desire to defy the odds.; they had a desire to overcome the barrier of the possibility of success and responded in way that would help them overcome such barriers. For example, getting away from people or places that stifled their academic progress and engaging with the ones that enhanced their educational success.

Studies have highlighted the influence of families and communities in offering and generating resources for identity formation at critical and transitional stages in the lives of young people (Maguire, 2000). In this thesis, these resources are defined in terms of black social and cultural capital within African-Caribbean homes and communities. The concepts of black social and cultural capital will be discussed in Chapter 6. As (Wright *et al.*, 2010) commented, the social and cultural capital within the black community fosters a pro-active approach to accessing education, providing strategies for social progress, developing constructive racial and cultural identity and focusing on achieving success through personal transformation.

In short, the notion of black social capital involves interrogating stereotypes of black communities as being anti-school and culturally deficient. Where current stereotypes obsess over gun crime and gang culture, it is necessary to counter the view of life within black communities as a debit, and to examine the ways in which young people draw for support and guidance on the networks of , for instance, family, church, community activity/ activism and friendship groups. Thinking in terms of black cultural capital involves examining the

distinctive funds of knowledge and experience that are produced in these black social settings and through the life experience of resisting racism and marginalisation.

Cross's (1971) study provides a model of black identity development that offer ways in which young black people move through stages in which they develop constructive racial and cultural identities. He calls the first stage the encounter stage where a person first experiences or observes incidents (usually of a racist nature) which forces them to confront their 'blackness'. This stage usually occurs at about age 7 – 9. The next stage is an awakening stage where the person explores the host culture and the heritage culture, rejecting, accepting and acknowledging differences and similarities. They may become angry or adopt ethnic symbolism such as locks in hair, cultural dress, dialect or diet and join rebellious groups. At this stage many black boys turn to anti-school subculture and patterns of black school disaffection, exclusion and underachievement often occurs. They may question views and beliefs about themselves and explore new information about differences. This stage usually occurred among black teenagers and some adults.

The next stage involve processes of internalization where the person separated the old undefined self and the new self by harmonising or understanding the two states, thus moving on to a positive black identity. The person expresses pride and knowledge of their history. They go through a final stage of externalization where they participate in many ethnic group activities and present themselves to the wider community with confidence. They are consistent with self-referral, for example, 'I am Jamaican' or 'I am Black British'.

In a UK context, a possible barriers to African-Caribbean pupils reaching Cross's final stages

of identity development (internalizing/externalizing) is being constructed by school as un-academic and un-ambitious. Cross's theory is relevant to this current study and further studies concerned with how high achieving African-Caribbean pupils resist these dominant discourses that claim they are un-ambitious, un-academic and not worthy of occupying the academic spaces reserved for 'high achieving' pupils.

2.8 Collective responses to racial inequality in education: Black supplementary schools

The educational outcomes of African Caribbean pupils within British schools, however, have not only been the concern of policy makers and academics. The African Caribbean community has a history of activism around education that has shaped relations with the school system. From the 1960's when children of recent immigrants began to enter British schools, African-Caribbean parents have lobbied against educational inequalities and sought ways to develop alternative and/or supplementary institutions and pedagogy (Reay and Mirza, 1997). They have mobilised community resources in order to improve their children's academic self-image and resilience, and instill an African-centred orientation to knowledge. As Reay and Mirza (1997) puts it:

'Black supplementary schools are a response to black people's continuing exclusion from the mainstream public spheres, which in turn is primarily a consequence of endemic social and institutional racism. African-Caribbean parents felt that racism within the education system and the structural processes which existed conspired to provide an environment that was hostile to their children's learning, placing them at risk of disaffection and exclusion, and was ultimately responsible for their under-achievement'.

(Reay and Mirza, 1997: 534)

According to Reay and Mirza (1997), these schools were seen as a way to make up for the difficult features encountered in mainstream schoolings' basic delivery, which they felt was responsible for their children's continuing failure.

One of the approaches adopted by some supplementary schools was to support mainstream achievement. These schools usually took place on Saturdays and focused mainly on helping African-Caribbean pupils to achieve good GCSE examination grades and preparing them for higher education (Reay and Mirza, 2001). Supplementary schools also aimed to combat the disadvantage faced by African-Caribbean pupils as a result of having to follow a 'Eurocentric' curriculum (Reay and Mirza, 1997). Black academics and activists have had a long tradition of challenging a Eurocentric education. They have for some time been lobbying for the black community to have greater educational autonomy, thus moving away from an educational monoculture.

2.9 Critical Race Theory and Cultural Capital

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is important to this research since it provides a present-day theoretical and analytical framework that seeks to make visible and challenge the presence of racism in fields such as education (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). As well as challenging dominant discriminatory ideologies and practises, CRT directly addresses the issue of social justice in education. It acknowledges the contradictory nature of education where schools often oppress and marginalise minority groups while maintaining the potential to empower and liberate them. The most prevalent form of contemporary racism in the US and the UK is

believed to be deficit thinking. Deficit thinking assumes black students enter school without the 'normative' cultural knowledge (cultural capital). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) cultural capital is the accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privilege groups in society which are converted to educational success. The dominant groups within society are able to maintain power because access is limited to acquiring and learning strategies to use these forms of capital for social mobility.

Hence, black pupils have cultural knowledge which is valuable to them and their families but which is not necessarily considered to carry any capital in the school context (Delpit, 1995). There are various schools of thought, which refute the assumption that the black culture is one of 'cultural deficit'. Yosso (2005) challenged the assumption that black people 'lack' the social and cultural capital required for social mobility, and that their children come into the classroom with cultural deficiencies. She suggests that when black people share the cultural wealth with one another they develop the social capital for survival and success in a segregated world surrounded by the presence of racial discrimination.

I have drawn on the tenets of CRT which is concerned with shifting the research lengths away from viewing black communities as places full of cultural poverty or disadvantage to one of assets and wealth. Indeed, the main goal of identifying cultural wealth is not just to empower black people to utilise assets already abundant in their communities, but also to transform education. Black parents who do not function in the 'culture of power' want schools to appreciate and utilise the cultural wealth that their children bring into the classroom. They want their children to be equipped with the discourse patterns, interactional skills, spoken and written codes that will enable them to succeed in the wider world (Delpit, 1995).

2.10 Conclusion

This literature review chapter has given a brief history of Caribbean settlement in Britain and the emergence of writing on race on education in the UK. It critiques the underachievement thesis and examines some of the common and 'well worn' explanations of black pupils' educational outcomes. This chapter discusses the movement of this thesis away from the underachievement thesis and cultural deficit models towards an interpretative approach which draws on critical race theory. It discusses the key concepts in this thesis and explores resilience as a dynamic process by which students find productive ways of being educationally successful. It also introduces the inter-subjective development of identity, resilience and 'success' within school systems that have not, by and large, produced consistently successful outcomes for black pupils. It explores the importance of Critical Race Theory (CRT) thus providing this research with a current theoretical and analytical framework which seeks to highlight and challenge the presence of racism in education. The next chapter will cover the methodology and methods used in this research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this research. In this study the object of investigation are the resources, strategies, and understandings drawn upon by successful African-Caribbean pupils in order to find ‘ways of being’. Consequently, I have chosen to use an ‘interpretive’ approach in order to gain insights into the social lives of African-Caribbean high achieving pupils in an attempt to explore in-depth their experiences, beliefs, and attitudes (Burgess, 1984). I used semi-structured interviews with a focus on students’ oral history accounts to gain students’ narratives and understandings of the social processes which occurred during significant periods of their secondary schooling, particularly their interactions with other family members, their peers and teachers.

3.2 Interpretive methodology

The theoretical underpinning of this research is best described as the *interpretive paradigm*, which also has epistemological links with *phenomenology*. In interpretive research, the social world is interpreted from the perspective of the people being studied, that is:

‘The topic of investigation for research (is) the common-sense methods that people use in making sense of their social environments.... this method of theorising examines how we create the social world through an inter-subjective process’.

(May, 1997: 38)

The notion of ‘ways of being’ is implicit in May’s (1997) description of the interpretivist

framework, wherein:

‘...all social interaction should be treated as skilled performances by people. Our topic of inquiry is the way in which people view society and render it comprehensible to each other ... common-sense itself is a topic of research. We.... dispel the idea that we can have access to an objective world beyond people’s interpretations’.

(May, 1997: 38-39)

Similarly, phenomenology is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them (Bryman (2004). Social reality has a meaning for human beings and therefore every action is meaningful for them. They act on the basis of the meanings that they ascribe to their actions and the action of others. Hence phenomenologists view human behaviour as a product of how people interpret their world. According to Bryman (2004: 279), ‘in order to grasp the meanings of a person's behaviour one must attempt to see things from that person’s point of view’. This approach is appropriate to my research because it encourages the researcher to find out about the experiences, perceptions and points of view of the participants. However, as Prior (1997: 64) cautions, ‘the ultimate goal of the qualitative researcher is rarely, if ever, the mere replication of the ‘native’s point of view’, for usually the ethnographer’s eye is focused on a broader target.’ As Warmington (2000: 98-99) commented, ‘the analysis of interview data is predicated upon the view that qualitative interviewing provides access to the ways in which the interviewees experience their material, social and cultural worlds, and access the meanings that they ascribe to their educational projects.’ In the case of the current understanding of African-Caribbean high achievers, their perceptions and identities are, of course, embedded in concerns about wider educational

matters relating to the performance of African-Caribbean pupils within British schools.

The main conceptual framework of my methodology was based on oral history account. Oral history research is different to life history research in the sense that whilst life history research focuses on the entire life of the individual, oral history research reflects on specific events or periods in the past with the purpose of understanding the individuals' experiences and interpretations in relation to a broad context, for example, familial, institutional and/or societal. Hence, it tends to be more focussed than life history research (Coles and Knowles, 2000). Oral history account has the critical effect of allowing evidence from new directions as it sees reality as complex and many-sided. It has the primary advantage over most sources by allowing the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated. It also provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past and challenges established accounts. In so doing, oral history has radical implications for the social message of the past as a whole (Perks and Thompson, 2003). Bryman (2004) suggested that the key feature of oral history research was that it:

‘...allows the voices to come through of groups that are typically marginalised historically, either because of their lack of power or because they are typically regarded as unexceptional’.

(Bryman, 2004: 323)

Hence, oral history research seeks to include individuals and groups that historically have been marginalised, silenced, disenfranchised, or otherwise had their experiences and perspectives left out of history. These individuals may include women, black people, the disabled and LGBT people. This research methodology is generally conducted with social

justice in mind in spite of other theoretical influences (Leavy, 2011).

Thomson (1988) suggests that oral history results not merely in a shift in focus, but may also transform the social meaning of historical study. Thomson states that:

‘by introducing new evidence from the underside, by shifting the focus and opening new areas of inquiry, by challenging some of the assumptions and accepted judgements of historians, by bringing recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored, a cumulative process of transformation is set in motion. The scope of historical writing itself is enlarged and enriched; and at the same time its social message changes’.

(Thompson, 1988: 7-8)

Thomson (1988) argued that since most existing records tend to reflect the standpoint of authority, oral history approaches are valuable in producing inside histories of immigrant groups; ones that counter official narratives of immigration as a social problem.

Oral history can be employed to chart individuals’ stories as well as the collective group histories. In the current study, while the overarching focus is on group experience (the experiences of high-achieving African-Caribbean pupils), the interviews helped both the researcher and the participants to explore individual experiences too. According to Ritterhouse (2006), this bringing together of accounts is fundamental to the understanding of interior processes by which individuals come to think of themselves and others in distinctly racial terms. Ritterhouse (2006), use of oral history interviews were central as they emphasised the importance of experience and memory. She contends that participants

recollected events from their past which were pivotal to the production of their racial identity. The use of oral history interview in the current thesis has enabled me to gain an insight into the experiences of the participants, and to understand how their particular experiences of schooling, friendship groups and family shaped the development of 'racial' identity and resilience.

3.3 Settings and participants

My sample schools included three secondary schools (Broadfield, Highbury and Kingsley) located on the outskirts of Birmingham inner-city and a supplementary school (Angelo) in the inner-city of Birmingham. Broadfield Secondary school is a smaller than average multicultural comprehensive school situated in an area where unemployment is relatively high. Most pupils live in the immediate area and around half the pupils are eligible for a free school meal. Around 75% are from Indian or Pakistani backgrounds and about 20% are from an African-Caribbean background. Only 5 % are white British. The school was judged a good school by Ofsted during the time of data collection. Highbury Secondary School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average, as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The largest minority ethnic groups are students of Indian (52%) and Black Caribbean origin (22%). 6% are mixed heritage and only 7% are White British. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average because of the provision of a special needs resource base. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school was judged as good by Ofsted during the time of data collection. Kingsley Secondary School was similar in

context to the other two schools but only one student was interviewed at this school.

My research sample consisted of 47 participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 African-Caribbean sixth form/college students, aged 17 and 18, and 2 year 11 students, aged 16 from three secondary schools. This included 4 boys and 10 girls from which all the boys were sixth-form students. I also conducted a focus group with 5 students, 2 boys and 3 girls from one of the secondary schools from which only 1 student was not involved in semi-structured interviews. I interviewed 6 parents and 6 teachers in three secondary schools. At Angelo Supplementary School, I interviewed 2 students in year 10, aged 15, and 6 students in year 11, aged 15 and 16. This included 5 girls and 3 boys. At the supplementary school I conducted semi-structured interviews with 1 parent and 3 teachers, and held a focus group with 5 parents who were not involved in individual interviews. There was no overlap between the students from the secondary schools and the supplementary school, however, I asked all the sixth-form students about their involvement with supplementary school during individual interviews. I also interviewed 3 university undergraduates in their second year, 1 boy and 2 girls (see Appendix 5).

A multi-site approach was adopted in order to offer a measure of comparability and perhaps improve, albeit on a small scale, the reliability of the research. My aim was to interview an equal amount of boys and girls, but this did not occur. Girls' availability for participation outnumbered the boys' within all the research settings (18 girls and 8 boys). My observations also suggested that there were more girls than boys in the schools' sixth-form.

All the student participants were of African-Caribbean descent, brought up in the UK. Most of

the teachers interviewed taught students at both compulsory ages and sixth-form. Three teachers in the mainstream schools taught at a supplementary school in the past. Most of the teachers interviewed were born and educated in the Caribbean. Some teachers came to England at an early age and completed their education in England while some taught for a few years in the Caribbean before continuing to work as teachers in the UK. One teacher was from Ghana in West Africa. I also interviewed some of the parents in three research settings. For details of the background of the research participant see Appendix 5. I also thought that as most of the parents and teachers at the school were not British born, it would be useful to get the views of British born African-Caribbean university undergraduates. Ascertaining their views added valuable information about their educational journeys and adulthood.

Semi-structured interviews with students, teachers and parents took approximately ½ hour to 1 hour each. A focus group was conducted with students from Highbury Secondary Schools, some of whom had experience of supplementary schooling. This focus group interview took approximately 1-2 hours. The focus group with 5 parents of children at the supplementary school took about 1 hour.

I used a 'purposive judgement sample' which involved selecting certain students whom I believed had similar characteristics, experiences, behaviours and that were relevant to the research study (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam, 2003). The main group of participants comprised high-achieving African-Caribbean students who were in sixth-form. To attend sixth-form these students had achieved the benchmark of success at GCSE level (5 or more GCSE passes including English and Mathematics). After gaining access to the research sites, I provided information about my research to the Heads of sixth-form. This included an outline of the nature of the research, the interview schedule and consent forms. I also informed them about the number of potential participants that were required for the study. The Heads

of sixth-form met with potential respondents to discuss the research and students who consented to participate were selected. My agenda for each student participant was to find out about their school experiences. The questions to pupils were designed to gauge their definitions of academic success and to ascertain to what extent they perceived themselves as being academically successful. They were also asked about the people around them that they thought contributed the most towards their educational success.

I also chose to interview black teachers at the schools the participating pupils attended. The black teachers in my study often interacted with black parents and students outside of school and so they tended to have an insider's perspective of the experiences of black parents and pupils. This, of course, is not to discount differences in power and position between black teachers and pupils. However, it might, albeit with caution, be suggested that black teachers form a part of the social capital network upon which black children and families draw. Milner and Howard (2004), for example, have suggested in the US context that black teachers are not just role models but have an understanding of the culture because they live it. Irvine (1998) has suggested that black teachers have a commitment to the students because they have a stake in the black community. While I have tried not to idealise or over-simplify relationships between black teachers and black pupils, among the participants in the current study were teachers who, in addition, to teaching in mainstream schools, also taught in black supplementary schools and most spoke knowledgeably and with passion about the particular challenges facing black pupils.

The main questions to teachers were designed to find out their views of secondary education and the performance of African- Caribbean in secondary schools. Teachers were interviewed

either in the staffroom or the school library.

I sought parents' views on both mainstream and supplementary schools as well as their perspective on African-Caribbean attainment. It was convenient and opportunistic to interview parents in the school environment when they came to collect their children from school. The main questions to the parents were about the types of approaches they used to help their children build resilience and their reasons for sending their children to supplementary schools.

Interviews with supplementary school teachers were aimed primarily at finding out the purpose of the school and the strategies they used to help and support the children who attended. Interviews with supplementary school students took place in classrooms and lasted about 30 minutes to 1 hour. Students were asked for their views about the supplementary school and how it affected their education and learning. At the supplementary school I conducted a focus group interview with five parents who had brought their children to the school. The focus group took place in the common room which was the normal meeting place for parents who engaged in discussions, while their children were in lessons. The school's manager organised the focus group interview.

3.4 Issues of Access

Being a teacher/researcher working in a secondary school, provided me with easy access to the research setting where I worked. My head teacher assisted me in gaining access to other local secondary schools. Gaining access to Broadfield, Highbury and Kingsley Secondary Schools was unproblematic, however, Kingsley was unable to find sufficient students of

African-Caribbean background to participate. Most of their black sixth-form students were African nationals. I managed to interview an African-Caribbean girl and made up the quota, by interviewing more students at Highbury and Broadfield Schools.

Gaining access to Angelo Supplementary School was a difficult task. I first contacted the school in November 2008 and was told that it was inconvenient for me to conduct research there, as earlier that year they had entertained researchers from a university in London. They said that the interviews took up too much of the children's time. I contacted Angelo and other supplementary schools in spring 2009 without success. In summer 2009, I contacted Angelo again and was recognised by the manager who again seemed reluctant to allow access. The manager asked me how I had heard about the supplementary school and I mentioned the names of my colleagues who had previously worked at the supplementary school. The manager said that one of my colleagues was her current assistant. The manager immediately arranged access.

3.5 Interviews and oral histories

In this study oral accounts looks at changes in critical moments in the individuals' lives. Thus, the formation of genuine relationships between the researcher and the respondent was vital. An important element of conducting oral histories is the recommendation that fewer rather than many respondents are involved. Its goal is one of depth, rather than breadth. Cole and Knowles (2001) promote oral history research on the basis of four guiding principles:

- Relationality: a genuine relationship, care, sensitivity, trust and respect for the research subject.

- Mutuality: working together with the research subject to develop the direction of the research.
- Reflexivity: necessary for the researcher, in order to develop a ‘contextualized understanding of the human phenomena and experience’.
- Sensitivity to and respect for, the subjects’ confidence, painful experiences, and expectations.

3.6 Interviewer’s approach

Firstly, I started the semi-interviews with students by introducing myself and my research. This was followed by an informal discussion with participants about their chosen subjects, length of study and their future aspirations. This seemed to put the interviewees at ease. The interview schedule consisted of a list of open ended and loosely structured questions which were designed to get them talking about their educational experiences and help from school and significant ‘others’. Interviews were held in the students own classrooms and the library at lunch-times to ensure a relaxed environment. Being African-Caribbean, I had a good understanding of their body language and vernacular. That said, I felt that at Angelo Supplementary School the interviewees seemed to express themselves more freely than in the mainstream school setting, which might link to emerging themes of this research. However, my relationship with the participant always felt like a reciprocal engagement.

3.7 Semi-structured interview

Using a semi-structured interview approach meant that while the overarching themes and principal questions remained consistent in all interviews, sufficient space was allowed to follow-up avenues suggested by the interviewees’ responses, where these were thought to

offer illumination. In this process ‘aspects of the participants’ social worlds that are particularly important to them, but might not have been thought of by the researcher, are most likely to be revealed’ (Bryman (2004:321). The semi-structured nature of this data collection method also had the advantage of being flexible. I have the option of responding to emergent findings of the study much more easily than in quantitative research, which tends to have a built in momentum once data collection starts. The aim of this method was to reveal patterns of experiences or interpretations within the African-Caribbean groups that may have similar characteristics, attributes or experiences. There might also be differences that might be significant to the research. I found this approach particularly useful because it gave me important and useful access to the ways the interviewees’ understood and interpreted their worlds.

Interviews were audio-recorded assuming that the participants give permission, otherwise field notes were taken. Audio recordings were fully transcribed to ensure that issues and themes were not discarded at ‘face value’ and field notes were word-processed. Field notes recorded any problems experienced or any observations, which I felt was significant in relation to the general ambience of the interview.

3.8 Focus group

Focus groups were used in conjunction with semi-structured interviews in order to enhance the breadth, depth, and reliability of the research. Following semi-structured interviews, I used focus group to check the emerging conclusions from my initial analysis and to obtain the reactions of participants in a different social context. Focus groups offered me insights into the ways in which the participants discussed issues as members of a group, rather than simply

as individuals. I could study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it. 'It therefore reflects the process through which meaning is constructed in everyday life and to that extent can be regarded as more realistic than individual interviews' (Wilkinson, 1998: 111-125). I conducted focus groups after gathering interview data and following my initial data analysis. Following initial analysis of interview data, I sensed that there were enthusiastic students who wanted to contribute more to the research. They were chosen to take part in the focus group. There were also emerging themes from the individual interviews with students that I thought warranted fuller exploration. After the initial problems of finding a free room to conduct the focus group the session started off in the students' common room. The researcher and the respondents became slightly uncomfortable as other students wandered in for their break. We moved to a private room for the remainder of the session, which continued smoothly. However, there were teachers in the adjacent room which made us conscious of our voice levels.

For the focus group I used interview data and quotations to produce scenarios about key issues and emerging themes and got pupils to discuss them. Hypothetical scenarios were produced for discussion. These hypothetical scenarios allowed the respondents to talk freely about their experiences without implicating themselves. The focus group was used as a vignette and also mirrored the data collected by oral history interviews. This method gave me the opportunity to allow the students to probe each other's reasons for holding certain views. It is less predictable than the question and answer approach. As they begin to listen to each other, they may want to modify or qualify their own views, or even voice agreement to something they might not have agreed with if they did not have the opportunity to hear others points of view. As a result of individuals challenging each other's views, I might end up with

a more reflective account of what pupils think, because they are forced to think about and possibly revise their view. There was an emphasis on interaction with the group and the joint construction of meaning. The participants were selected because of their similarity, for example, they were academically successful and some had previously attended a supplementary school. They were called upon to recall crucial moments in their lives when the protective process was strengthened, hence the coping skills that form the backbone of their resilience.

The adoption of an oral history approach to this research was also ideal because I possess the personal characteristics that would positively influence the personal dynamics between the respondents and myself, which lead to the collection of 'quality data' (Sikes *et al.*, 1996: 43). I am fascinated by, curious, and interested in how African-Caribbean people make sense of the world around them. I am also sensitive to the issues and experiences of the respondents. Being a good listener who listens beyond what is actually being said enabled me to ask sensitive and important questions in a non-threatening way. I initiated all my interviews by briefly sharing relevant information about myself and portrayed myself as someone that the respondents would want to talk to. As a result I was able to develop the sort of relationship that encouraged the respondents to 'open up' and give 'in-depth data'.

3.9 Analysis

After tape recording the initial interviews, I transcribed the recordings myself. Although this process was time-consuming it enabled me to become more familiar with the data. This helped in the analysis of the data as I began to identify common themes and ideas that were beginning to emerge and develop (Lofland and Lofland (1995). Through listening closely to

the respondents' annotations, I was able to connect this with their body language and gestures which helped with subsequent readings and interpretations. Following the first stage of interviews, I began fully transcribing the data. I started to observe emerging themes and issues that were surfacing. While conducting interviews at Highbury Secondary School I began to notice that there were common elements of the respondent's accounts which mirrored the accounts of the first group at Broadfield Secondary School. By the time I conducted the focus group it became apparent that the data coming from the focus group though illuminating was also centred on the emerging themes of resilience, identity and social and cultural capital. The focus group consisted of mainly the students with whom I conduct individual interviews. I also felt that the data received from teachers and parents added to the breadth and richness of the data. At this stage I felt that my data had reached a point of saturation.

I started by using 'open coding' which involved breaking down the data, examining them carefully, comparing them and look out for emerging themes (Silverman, 2000; Bryman, 2004; Thomas, 2013). My understanding of the relationships within the data which came from my knowledge of pre-existing research and my research questions also helped to provide a focus for my analysis. However, at each stage of the analysis, I had to be reflexive to ensure that my background knowledge of the data and position did not affect the research process.

My approach to analysing the accounts contained in participants' interviews drew on what Thomas (2013) describes as the 'constant comparative' method. This method is the basic method used by interpretative researchers. It involves going through the data several times and comparing each element, phrase, sentence and paragraph with all other elements. From the constant comparison the data is marked up with codes (abbreviations, names, colours)

with describes its important facets. Eventually themes emerge which captures or summarises the content of the data.

I began a constant comparison method, by firstly looking for key events or turning points in the respondents' lives as well as the impact of significant others. I also compared patterns of behaviour of the cultural group within the school setting and considered the shared assumptions, view, beliefs and some of the taken for granted norms within the culture. I then looked at the means by which the family help us to make sense of individuals' lives in the context of the home and broader cultural context such as black supplementary schools and black churches.

The emerging themes which surfaced from my initial analysis formed the basis of the main categories, that is, resilience, identity and black cultural and social capital. I examined the complete data field carefully and highlighted the bits of data that might relate to each main category and merged them with the main categories. Following this, I wrote a summary of the merged data. Through a process of 'constant comparison' (Silverman, 2000; Bryman, 2004; Thomas 2013), I examined the merged data segments in order to identify similarities, differences and connections between them. This enabled me to identify sub-categories which were further summarised and refined. This lead to an analytic account and an explanation of theory 'grounded' in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I used the Microsoft Word programme to highlight and tag text which related to particular emerging themes and to merge the data with the particular categories to which they belonged.

3.10 Limitations

The use of a qualitative (or interpretive) method presents challenges with regards to reliability and validity. One of the threats to the validity of qualitative research is that it tends to be anecdotal in its approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions and explanations (Silverman, 2000). In order to achieve validity, it was important that I overcame the temptation to jump to easy conclusions because there was some evidence which was leading me in an interesting direction. I avoided this by testing the emerging themes through a constant comparative method which I outlined above in the analysis section.

Interviews held with students adjacent to the staff room may have affected the quality of the data because I felt at times student participants were 'holding back' in terms of voice level and freedom of expression. Students were much more vociferous in the focus group setting. However, I felt that interviews held in the room adjacent to the staff room provided sufficiently honest data which was cross-checked with other interview data.

A limitation of being a teacher/researcher is that students arguably saw me as an authoritative and powerful figure. As a result they might have felt compelled to participate or thought they were giving the type of information that can be used against them in the future. I already had trusting relationships with the pupils at my workplace and ensured that steps were taken at the other school to gain the trust of the participants. I ensured that all the pupils had freely consented to take part, were informed about the nature of the research, and were kept informed at all stages. I also reassured the pupils that they were co-researcher rather than having research carried out on them. As an African-Caribbean researcher I acknowledged my

experiences, values and assumptions which might introduce bias and affect the direction of the research. Although I had a good rapport with students and parents and was sensitive to their experiences and views, it was important that I explored all possible meanings and different perspectives from all of the data. During interviews I asked open questions and avoided showing signs of approval or disapproval to responses. At times I had to separate myself from 'being African-Caribbean' to ensure that the extent of my passion for the topic was not seen by the respondents. I had to detach myself from the data for small periods and return to the material later in order to find elements overlooked in my first investigation.

Conducting research in a school setting can put pressure on student participants as they may view teachers as experts and powerful figures. Being aware of this, I took steps to address the power imbalance which often occur when conducting research with young people. According to Delpit (1988), the teacher's personal power as experts can be dis-empowering to students since it may not only deny them access to the codes of the culture of power considered necessary for academic success but also the opportunity to be their own 'experts' regarding discussions, discourses and instructions that is in their best interest. She comments that 'we must keep the perspective that people are experts on their own lives' (Delpit, 1988:297). It was therefore important while interviewing students that I acknowledged my position of power and 'cease to exist' for a moment in order to allow students to express alternative views and interpretations on issues pertaining to themselves.

Delpit (1988) also claimed that many black pupils expect authority figures to act authoritatively. As a result they may feel inhibited in expressing their views. Conversely, when teachers act like friends, the message that may be sent to them is that the teacher is

‘weak’ and has no authority and the children may act accordingly, for example, they may disobey the teacher’s instructions (Delpit, 1988). I believe that being a friendly teacher who have good relationships with students aided in drawing the students in and allowed them a greater freedom of expression than would otherwise be the case. I have also found that the adoption a non-authoritarian approach to my teaching is not done at the expense of my classroom management. I believe that this helped them to feel comfortable and to freely express themselves, thus giving quality data (Shaw *et. al.*, 2011). I tried to ensure that the interview room was as informal as possible and I dressed in ‘smart casual’ clothing for interviews.

Interviews with teachers in the staff room and library could have had an impact on the data as the library was a public space and might have presented problems regarding confidentiality. However, there were no major interruptions in the staffrooms and the sixth-form students in the library were studying at a sufficient distance away that they were unable to listen in. Teachers in the staffroom seemed relaxed during the interview process but I felt slightly uneasy when a teacher came into the staffroom and looked over inquiringly. The decision to have interviews with teachers in the staffroom was a mutual one. After I spoke to the teacher respondents about the content of the interview schedule I asked them to suggest an interview location where they felt comfortable to speak freely. I suggested several potential sites such as classrooms, the staffroom, the library and the school canteen. Some teachers decided on being interviewed in their classroom while others chose the staffroom.

The interview setting at Angelo Supplementary School was altogether different to the settings at the secondary schools. The layout at the supplementary school was informal and the

students and staff appeared to be more informed about the research and enthusiastic about it. The atmosphere seemed to allow a greater confidence and freedom of expression compared to the secondary schools. Comparing data from the supplementary school with the data collected at the secondary schools helped to improve the reliability of the data. I met with students in the secondary schools on two occasions and the supplementary school on one occasion. On the second occasion secondary schools students had the opportunity to give additional information which they recalled at a later date. I met with some secondary school students three times- the third was for the focus group.

The limitations of using a focus group is that the data collected are more difficult to organise in terms of getting the participants to turn up at the same time as well as having elements of group effects. It was important that as moderator, I made it clear that everyone's views were equally important (Bryman, 2004). It was also difficult to transcribe audio-recordings because of the persistence of participants talking at the same time. I used a combination of audio-tape and field notes.

A limitation of this research is that it is a small-scale study and may lack generalisability. However, the group which I chose to sample was relevant to my research questions, the theoretical underpinning of the research and the understandings and accounts that I was developing (Mason, 1996). I also chose the research settings which contained the phenomenon being investigated. Therefore, the accounts, analysis, and findings of this research may be generalised to similar educational settings.

One of the advantages of being a teacher/researcher is that I brought to the research a nuanced understanding of the respondents' backgrounds and the school context. I had an in-depth awareness of the data which an outside researcher cannot possibly match. It was also easier for me to gain access and permission from pupils, teachers and parents to participate.

3.11 Ethical considerations

I discussed the nature of my project with the head teachers, managers and the heads of sixth form of the three schools and the supplementary school. Official letters of access were given to the head teachers along with letters of consent for participants that briefly outlined the purpose of the research and the relevant ethical consideration. This information was then passed on to the students, parents and teachers who agreed to take part in the project.

I adhered to BERA'S current guidelines on educational research and working with minors (BERA, 2011). In compliance with Article 3 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (DfE, 2012), I ensured that my actions relating to the young people were in their best interest, and that they were allowed to freely express their views on all matters affecting them. Each participant was given a written project outline and consent form, so that their participation was fully informed.

One of the main ethical considerations was putting African-Caribbean students under the spotlight. I realised that this could create anxiety and make these students feel that they were under particular scrutiny. The students were reassured that their views were important, appreciated, and valuable. They were made to feel like co-researchers and important contributors to the research (Alderson, 2000). I did sense an air of anxiety among some of the

sixth-form teachers. This was understandable given the longstanding concerns about African-Caribbean underachievement. This was alleviated as they became more familiar with me following brief conversations during subsequent visits.

I made sure that participants clearly understood their right to withdraw from the study.

Due to the nature of oral history research, students might feel obliged to give personal and sensitive information. If at any point I recognised that any participant was experiencing distress, I was prepared to take the necessary steps to reduce their anxiety and put them at ease. The participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any time if they felt they were unable to continue. This was explained at an early stage in the interview and clearly outlined in the consent form.

I informed the participants that their anonymity and confidentiality will be protected and that their identities will be kept anonymous in the case of publication of research (BERA, 2011). No video tape or photographs were used since this may cause subjects to be identified and pseudonym names were used for the participants and schools. I ensured the safe and appropriate storage and handling of data in compliance with the legal requirement in relation to the storage of personal data as set out in the Data Protection Act (1998). I ensured that data was stored securely at my home and on my personal computer/memory stick. Audio recordings will be destroyed after completion of the project. Interviewees were thanked for their help with the research and will have the opportunity of being debriefed at the conclusion of the research. They will also be informed of future access to any future publication as appropriate. The next chapter outlines the data collected and analysis.

CHAPTER 4

VISIONS OF SUCCESS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with exploring understandings and definitions of ‘educational success’, from the perspectives of high achieving African-Caribbean students. Educational success can be defined as a favourable or desirable educational outcome. The indicator of student success which I used in this research was based on students’ educational attainment, achievement and advancement. Educational attainment is successfully completing what is regarded in the UK at the time as the benchmark of success at the end of compulsory education (5 or more A* to C in GCSE). I also included students in year 11 who were on course to achieve this standard. Academic achievement means that students have achieved a satisfactory or superior level of academic performance which enables them to proceed to A – Level at sixth-form/college. Student advancement refers to students proceeding to and succeeding at subsequent educational endeavours (sixth-form and university).

Students’ definitions of educational success/achievement are important in this research, as conceptions of what constitutes success might reasonably be expected to inform high achieving students’ school identities (Wexler, 1992). This chapter uses interview material to reconstruct the participants’ views and experiences, in order to produce a critical reading of students’ perceptions, motives and actions in aiming for educational success.

4.2 Instrumentalism and credentialism

In individual interviews, high achieving African-Caribbean students were asked to give their

definitions of educational success. The majority offered instrumentalist definitions of success linked to 'conventional' notions of academic (and career) success; that is, their definitions involved getting good GCSE and A-Level grades and being well qualified in order to get a career that offered social status, professional opportunities and personal satisfaction. This suggested that the findings of Fuller (1987) and Brown (1990) were still pertinent; both researchers claimed that the majority of pupils in secondary schools adopted an instrumentalist attitude towards school. During individual interviews, sixth-form students from Broadfield School and Highbury School defined educational success as:

Nicola: 'Good grades equal a good job. Good job meaning money so that you can live an ok life'.

Clive: 'I will define educational success as getting good grades at the end of the year getting As and Bs and 3 A-levels'.

Nicola, and Clive offered instrumental definitions of success linked to 'conventional' notions of academic success.

The prevalence of instrumentalism among students and others in contemporary education did not occur overnight. Researchers have noted since the late 1970s, arguably starting with James Callaghan's Great Debate, that policy-makers, schools and careers educators have put more and more emphasis on the links between educational qualifications and the job market (Callaghan, 1976; Blair, 1995; Avis, 2007; Ainley, 2009). Callaghan (1976), wanted to draw the country into a great debate about the state of education in Britain. He stated:

‘The goal of education is to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive place in society, and also to fit them to do a job. There is no virtue in producing, socially well-equipped and well-adjusted members of society, who are unemployed...’.

(Callaghan, 1979: unknown)

The Labour party’s agenda on education in the nineties had the theme of ‘improving’ education in order to improve the economic prosperity of the nation; indeed, New Labour echoed Callaghan’s rhetoric in suggesting that Britain’s economic competitiveness was dependent on raising levels of skills and educational qualifications. Blair (1995:12) stated, ‘I can say without hesitation that unless we improve our education system we will not reverse our economic and social decline’. New Labour’s 1998 white paper, ‘The Learning age: A new Renaissance for a New Britain’, reinforced the symbiosis between education and economy, suggesting that lifelong learning was the key to acquiring the new skills and qualifications needed for employment in a rapidly changing global economy; educational advancement and the acquisition of formal qualifications would increase the earning power of individuals and the competitiveness of the national economy (DfEE, 1998). Authors such as Ainley (2009) have charted the growth and constant reinforcement in schools of the discourse that rationalises educational participation in terms of the instrumentalist motives of gaining labour market credentials. This has been critiqued by Avis (2007) as an aspect of a neo-liberal educational discourse in which education was subordinate to the immediate demands of the economy.

The notion of instrumentalism was explored in great detail by Brown (1990), who made distinction between two types of instrumentalism. He describes 'normative' instrumentalism as instrumentalism that values the pursuing of academic qualifications to attain economic wellbeing as well as intrinsically valuing schooling, institutional values and high achievement. Brown claimed that this type of instrumentalism was mainly exhibited by middle class families. In contrast, Brown also describes what he called 'alienated instrumentalism'. In this type of instrumentalism there is a lack of identification with formal school culture, what teachers stand for and what is happening in the school but students still participating in education because they believe it has exchange-value, and that it would yield labour market opportunities. He observed this type of instrumentalism amongst many minority ethnic and working class students.

This connection which Brown (1990) made between alienated instrumentalism, ethnicity and social class is interesting as it seems to suggest that many minority ethnic groups including African-Caribbean, due to being predominantly working class, are unlikely to exhibit 'normative' instrumentalism that intrinsically values education. The danger of this view, however, is that it potentially reinforces the view that African-Caribbean children tend to under-value education, and that African-Caribbean parents are not as inherently interested in education as middle-class parents. Tomlinson (1984) provided evidence to the contrary, stating that, while the white working-class parents' views on education were strongly related to their own levels of education and their socio-economic background, minority ethnic parents' views were harder to read in class terms. That is, working-class black parents were strongly influenced by their colonial backgrounds that promoted high regard for academic achievement. According to Tomlinson (1984):

‘This means that minority ethnic parents’ views and expectations will be different to those of indigenous parents. In particular, although most minority ethnic parents in Britain, are in crude terms, working-class, their views and expectations have always approximated more to those of the middle-class, but without the detailed knowledge of the education systems and its intricacies that middle-class parents in Britain usually has’.

(Tomlinson, 1984: 51)

This affirms the fact that traditionally African-Caribbean parents in Britain have held high aspirations for their children academically and have organised themselves into groups to provide support and devise strategies to reinforce the norms to which they were accustomed in the Caribbean. Phillips and Phillips (1998) argued, in similar terms, that African-Caribbean families arriving in Britain in the 1950s and 60s were hard to read in class terms because they were working class people with middle-class educational aspirations. This gives us a clearer understanding of the intrinsic value placed on educational achievement as well as high academic expectation, which existed and still seem to exist (Rhamie, 2007; Gillborn, 2008; Warmington, 2014), in many African-Caribbean homes in Britain, despite endless media depictions of black underachievement, gun crime and gang culture.

This intrinsic value placed on education by many Caribbean people as well as distinct approaches to their children’s education may have its roots in their colonial past (Gordon, 1963). Traditionally in the Caribbean, education was not only seen as a route towards achieving economic prosperity and social mobility (instrumental) but also intrinsically as a

means of attaining personal pleasure, utility and happiness. It was also considered to be a process which helped to create a more stable, cohesive and productive society (Miller, 1989). These values and approaches to education were considered to be fundamental by many Caribbean societies prior to, during, and after their independence from Britain (Miller, 1989). It was during the period before independence from Britain (40s and 50s) that Caribbean people started to enter Britain bringing with them many of their values, views and approaches to education which they were accustomed to in the Caribbean. Miller (1989) in his study of education in Commonwealth Caribbean societies commented that the educational system of the Commonwealth Caribbean played a dominant role in the socialisation of young people and was developed in the image of the highest standard of British public school education.

There have been studies which have suggested that this highly intrinsic and economic value of education still seems to be a feature of many Black British families in the UK (Reay and Mirza, 2001; Majors, 2001; Rhamie, 2007; Archer and Francis, 2007). This resonates with Crozier's (2005) study which found that black families in the UK invest considerable financial, emotional and cultural capital in their children's education, engaging in similar practices to the white middle-class.

4.3 Traditional African-Caribbean values: family norms, expectations and aspirations

There are risks inherent in referring to 'traditional' values, in relation to African-Caribbeans or any other group. Defining any set of values as traditional accords it an authenticity and longevity that is as much ideological as factually historical. There is a risk that marginal but important practice, values and identities will be ignored in order to suggest a homogenous imagined community (Gilroy, 2007). On the other hand, even Stuart Hall has pointed out that

while identities are not fixed, neither are they endlessly (Hall, 1990) fluid. The field of kinship studies has also emphasized ideas about relatedness, genealogy and shared points of departure (Tyler, 2012). Therefore, there are valid arguments for trying to understand the experiences and identities of second and third generation black Britons in relation both to genealogies within and beyond the immediate British setting (Tyler, 2012). In this context the current thesis relates the educational values of black families in Britain to wider colonial and post-colonial experiences: in particular, educational values shaped in ‘traditional’ Caribbean societies.

In this study the students who most obviously exhibited strong elements of ‘normative instrumentalism’ were those who were not pushed unduly. They lived in homes in which the pursuit of academic success was the norm. They had views on educational success which were not only influenced by the dominant instrumentalism of Britain’s 21st Century neo-liberal educational discourse, but also by their home environment: an older black Caribbean tradition where the pursuit of academic success was instrumentally, as well as intrinsically, valued (Magocsi, 1999). They were typically third generation British born that fitted elements of Ball *et al.*’s (2002) description of ‘embedded choosers’. Their parents tended to be second generation Britain born and they had family members who attended university. For these students, attending well established universities (elite) was expected and was part of their ‘normal biography’. Not going to university was unthinkable. Families were able to easily mobilise the necessary support and money was not an issue. They had specialist details of the various routes towards higher educational institutions.

Keith and Becky, two third generation middle-class sixth-form students spoke in individual

interviews about not being pushed by their parents.

Keith: 'My parents sort of let us get on with it because both my brother and sister have been successful in their educational lives. My brother has gone to Oxford University and my sister is doing languages, so my parents didn't really have to push them that much so they kind of like left me in a similar position to like fend for myself really'.

Becky: 'A lot more has to do with the way I was brought up because school/education is something that has always been there. It has never been a question about, you don't have to do this you don't have to do that, it's something that has been instilled in me, and so it's natural. It's just something I know I have to do. It's not a question of maybe I have to do it'.

Keith's home environment was one in which academic success was the norm. It could be argued that Keith's family setting was a common middle-class type, bolstered by sufficient cultural and social capital to make higher education a tacit expectation. According to Keith, little needed to be said in the home about aspiring to a university education; it was simply the 'done thing'. Becky's home was much like Keith's home where education was always in the family and came naturally.

On the other hand, the students who were pushed tended to be second generation British-born. Some fitted aspects of Ball *et al.*'s (2002) description of 'contingent choosers', who were typically the second generation British born whose parents tended to be born and educated outside the UK. Students were not always the first in their family to attend university as some

of their parents went to university in the Caribbean and were furthering their careers in Britain. Some of these parents worked at various levels within the education sector. Expectations about future ambitions (attending elite universities) were high and mothers featured heavily in giving encouragement and practical support. Education was seen as a means of achieving social mobility in Britain and they were aware of some of the impending barriers they might have to overcome in order to obtain admission into Britain's elite institutions.

Clive and Charmaine, two second generation sixth form students in individual interviews spoke about being pushed by their parents.

Clive: 'My parents are kind of strict. They tell me to revise and to do a certain amount. I have a lot of support from them. My mom knows what I am doing and what I need to do in school so I can't hide anything from my mom. She knows exactly what needs to be done and at what point so she always knows what I am up to'.

Charmaine: 'I get a lot of encouragement from my Mom and Dad especially my Mom because she has been in the school environment. She used to be an English teacher so she knows what it's about; she knows how the system works and what you need to excel'.

Clive and Charmaine described their parents as people who pushed and encouraged them.

Students' high aspirations to attend elite universities were reinforced in individual interviews

with students at Broadfield School.

Interviewer: Do you plan to go to university?

Susanne: 'Yes'.

Interviewer: Which university?

Susanne: 'Oxford'.

Interviewer: Do any family/parents/friends attend university?

Susanne: 'Yes, a lot. I am from a high achieving family. Well, at the moment I have five cousins that go to University, several of my aunties have been, my stepmother has been and two of my uncles'.

Interviewer: Do you plan to go to University?

Charlotte: 'Yes. It's not an option. I have to go to university. I know that my family has high expectations for me. But I do want to go to university'.

Interviewer: Which university?

Charlotte: 'Oxford'.

Students often expressed high aspirations to go to Oxford University, one of the most prestigious universities in the UK. These elitist universities are known as 'The Russell Group' which comprises of 24 universities known for their excellent records in academic achievement and, crucially, research.

Despite the application of varying amounts of pressure on children to achieve academically, the families of these students all placed a high value on education and had a good knowledge of the education system. According to Rhamie (2007) and Reay and Mirza (2001), this traditionally high intrinsic educational value seen in many African- Caribbean homes in Britain remains a feature of parts of the African-Caribbean community in the UK over decades, despite the prevalence of representations of 'black underachievement'.

4.4 Children of the Black middle-classes?

An emerging theme in this research is that these African-Caribbean families and students are atypical of black families who are going to universities. They appear to be much more furnished with a 'hot knowledge' of the education system and its intricacies. One or both parents as well as older siblings had been to university and they possessed networks and strategies which were similar to the white middle-class regarding education. They are similar to the families that Rollock *et al.* (2012) describes in their recent study of the black middle-class in England. Rollock *et al.*'s (2012) research suggests that black middle-class parents are resourceful, and resilient. They use a range of social capital and economic resources to monitor carefully their children's progress through the education system. They drew on social networks and often other middle-class black families and their children's engagement in extra-curricular activities/tutoring was standard. Activities which their children often engaged

in involved music, sports, dance and drama. They share similar strategies with the white middle-class regarding education however, due to their past experiences and awareness of low teacher expectation and racial stereotyping in the labour market and institutions, they have a different orientation to schooling to white middle-class that inform their more careful monitoring of their children's progress through school.

Rollock *et al.* (2012) commented that the white middle- class often assume that their children are entitled to a high standard of education and educational success. On the other hand, black middle-class parents are intent on protecting their children and insisted on a high standard for their children. This action occurs as a result of their experiences of the work place, wider society and schools on account of their race. Consequently, they are aware that they do not have the same 'security of entitlement' as the white middle-class. According to Ms Jeffrey a parent from Angelo Supplementary School commented:

Ms Jeffrey: 'The education they get in school is not enough. Parents need to take a stronger role. This type of school is just a supplement. Our children already carry labels that they are aggressive and they don't work, we need to give them extra help'.

Keith, a year 13 student from Highbury School and an aspiring medical doctor, spoke about being warned of complacency by his middle-class parents.

Keith: 'Out of all the black pupils in the school I was one of the highest achieving ones. I am doing Maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology at A-level. I got through year 11 and I got 5 As and the rest Bs and I hardly did any work and I just thought it would

be the same thing now. But my parents keep telling me don't take it for a joke.

They say I have to work three times as hard in order to achieve because I already carry a label that I am from the Caribbean so I am not going to do well. So I have to excel in a sense that I have to work extra hard to convince people that I am capable and hardworking'.

Keith's mother reminded him that he needed to expend more effort than his white peers in order to gain acceptance within the academia and beyond.

4.5 Introducing the 'balancing act'

The reflections offered by the pupils interviewed suggested that they orchestrated a 'balancing act' between contemporary educational instrumentalism and traditional Caribbean educational values. How did these pupils live out the balancing act within this dichotomy? The dominant instrumentalist ideology concerning the constitution of high achieving pupils is based on discourses along race, class and gender lines. In dominant educational discourses the 'ideal' pupil and 'high achievers' are almost always implicitly white, male and middle-class and the 'ideal' (passive and conformist) are almost always white, middle-class and female or else a 'model minority', such as British Chinese students (Archer and Francis, 2007). On the other hand, African-Caribbean pupils are often perceived as being under-achievers (in academic terms) and undisciplined or resistant (in behavioural terms). Archer and Francis (2007) suggest that an examination grade which is considered mediocre for perhaps a Chinese pupil, would be considered 'good enough' for an African-Caribbean pupil, reinforcing the limited academic expectation which the school system tend to have for African-Caribbean pupils. It is for this reason that high achieving African-Caribbean students having a traditional Caribbean

value in education are faced with the tasks of defying and combating these dominant discourses by displaying complex 'balancing act' in their social relationships with other African-Caribbean pupils and teachers. They re-constructed or re-affirmed their own versions of successful school identities based on self-knowledge; a redefined knowledge of 'being' an educationally successful African-Caribbean students.

4.6 Teachers' low expectations

In individual interviews some pupils spoke about the dangers of being labeled underachievers by teachers.

Clive: 'It is weird what's going on. All the way through you hear teachers saying that black people are the underachievers. So it sets that thing in your mind that if you underachieve it is just natural'.

Keith: 'If you see them it's always we need help, how could black boys achieve? Why aren't they achieving? We never get treated as average people. It's like they are achieving what's so special or they are underachieving you never see the middle ground'.

These pupils appeared to be fully aware that the low academic aspirations of them in school contrasted significantly with the expectations within their homes. They felt excluded from school's definition of high-achieving pupils and were determined to defy these negative images of themselves and views about their academic ability. An individual interview with Charmaine a sixth-form student from Highbury Secondary School depicted this type of

defiance.

Charmaine: 'They might still be labeling you but even when this happens just prove them wrong every step. So when they are predicting that you will get a C, you come and get an A. Don't make them put you down. And don't think because they are stereotyping me anyway just carry on and be that stereotype. Don't give them that excuse. Make them talk about you for good reasons'.

4.7 'Need' personal help and support? and ambivalence

Some student participants in the current research spoke positively about the help they received from some teachers and form tutors. In individual interview with students from Broadfield and Highbury Secondary Schools students described having good teachers.

Becky: 'Having good teachers that you can talk to (good rapport with teachers) and having teachers who encourage you individually'.

Tanika: 'They have really good teachers. They were really good at giving one on one attention to pupils and that helped me do well.'

On the other hand year 11 students from Broadfield Secondary School, in individual interviews spoke about wanting more individual interest and support from teachers.

Shanique: 'But I believe that there is more that can be done like more extra classes, more of that support instead of here is your lesson, that's what you do in your lesson

and that's it. You need much more explanation than what we get and personal interest. Sometimes you need personal interest on a one to one basis. I believe as students we can be hard work but they should bend their backs to help us and not give up on us so easily. This will help us to see- hold on that person does have interest and it will motivate you to want to do more in your work'.

Charmaine: 'At my previous school there were two teachers that would know my ability and would push me and make sure. Even when sometimes I think I can't be bothered with it they just like push me and get me to do it. That's the support the teacher should give really'.

Despite achieving well in school, Shanique like many of the other students felt that the onus was on teachers to take an individual interest her. However, the students appeared to be reluctant to put effort into their end of the relationship with teachers. The reason behind this apparent lack of reciprocity and mistrust in teachers was investigated further. Data from the focus group conducted with sixth-form students from Highbury School provided interesting insights into students' relationships with their teachers. In order to encourage students to discuss their views, I presented them with a number of scenarios which are believed to cause conflicts between African-Caribbean pupils and their teachers (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996).

Interviewer: You have a misunderstanding or confrontation with a teacher and the teacher call you stupid and/or use terms which suggests that you are not as intelligent as other pupils. How would you react?

Charmaine: 'My first reaction would be, pardon- what did you just say? And you will actually get rude. I would have said it soon after she said it'.

Clive: 'It depends on the reputation you have as well. They tell other teachers and they all talk - then they all know about you'.

Kim: 'As soon as you go into the class they know who you are and then straight away put you to sit at the front'.

Shaq: 'A teacher called me and my friends gibbons, but we didn't know what that was at the time but I think it's a kind of monkey'.

Kim: 'Where was that?'

Shaq: 'That was here, it was Mr. [REDACTED], and he called us grunting gibbons.

'We complained and there was a meeting and he tried to deny it'.

Interviewer- Where did it go?

Shaq: 'I think he didn't come to school for two weeks, then he came back'.

Kim: 'And he kept his job? If we say anything like that then we get expelled'.

The students' comments suggested that they felt they were victims of overt and blatant racism and that there was a kind of conspiracy amongst teachers which negatively influenced

subsequent classroom encounters with teachers.

Scenario 4 of the focus group interview involved asking students how they would react if they knew the answer to a question but the teacher constantly ignored them and carried on asking other students who received praise for their answers. The students responded as follows:

Clive: 'I would do everything possible to get their attention and prove that I know the answers'.

Shaq: 'I am a bit more outspoken. I will tell the teacher why are they just asking the others and not me while I am sitting here I know the answers. So they would know that I know'.

Clive: 'I would tell them that they have their friends in this class. I'll just ask them, why didn't you pick me?'

Kim: 'I would shout out the answer'.

Desmond: 'I would try and make their life bad in the class. When they are talking I would talk and stuff like that just for them to know that I am there'.

Charmaine: 'That's actually true' In order to get your opinion across you will play them at their own game'.

These students' responses suggest that they would display acts of defiance. They all gave different reactions that would get the attention of the teacher in some way. It should be emphasised that these pupils were not underachievers but relatively successful pupils. Disturbingly, they felt that they were often treated unfairly, labeled as badly behaved and were victims of overt racism by teachers. Hence it may not be surprising that they were ambivalent towards their teachers.

4.8 Teachers negative perceptions, labeling and racism

Individual interviews with teachers have also provided evidence of African-Caribbean pupils being labeled as badly behaved and underachievers as well as being treated unfairly and racially discriminated against. Teachers from Broadfield and Highbury Secondary Schools commented:

Miss Jackson: 'They are not being taught properly due to teachers low expectations. If that is what the teacher is expecting and the students know what they are expecting that is what they work towards'.

Mrs Marshall: 'Some of them have been told that a D is good enough for them so they think that they are only a D student and can't do better because that was hammered into their heads over and over again'.

Mrs Brown, a teacher at Broadfield Secondary School and Kim, a student at Highbury Secondary School in individual interviews commented:

Mrs Brown: 'Also, discipline can be dealt out on an unequal basis. Some black kids can do something and it will be dealt with one way and another kid might do the same thing and it will be dealt with in a different way. If kids see that it's fair they will be more understanding with the situation. There is no arguments, there is no problems, but it's when they feel that they have been dealt with overly harshly and other student have been dealt with differently they look at the comparison and say no. Then you end up with confrontation'.

Kim: 'Teachers punish them a bit too much. A white and a black boy have a fight-the black boy is blamed. They might just be living up to the status that they have given them'.

Keith: 'From the time I have had a teacher tell me black man has been the weakest of the races and I have had to tell her no that is not the case and she said well that's what you hear. Well, I was thinking to myself'.

The accounts of the students and teachers given above concurs with discussions by (Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Gillborn, 1990) who suggests that classroom conflicts were mainly caused by negative labeling and perceived differential treatment of African-Caribbean pupils by white teachers. Alleged unfair treatment and racism by teachers might have contributed to a lack of trust in and conflicts with teachers; these tensions might lead to feelings of alienation, even among relatively successful pupils.

4.9 The ‘balancing act’

Students in this research also gave definitions of educational success that were less dependent on instrumentalism. They defined educational success in terms of having ‘self-knowledge’.

Desmond: ‘So I would define educational success as knowing who I am and getting to where I want to get to in life’.

Charmaine: ‘Being successful is like still being yourself and knowing yourself and knowing what you can achieve and what you need to work on in your own personal life’.

Desmond and Charmaine believe that having ‘self- knowledge’ is essential in helping them enhance their academic outcomes. However, their responses suggested that their self-knowledge involved elements of self-awareness. Self-awareness is defined as:

A collection of schemata regarding one’s ability, traits and attitudes that guides their behaviour, choices and social interaction.

(Brain, 2002: 1808)

This self-awareness part of self-knowledge plays a vital role in self- regulation because a person cannot change a particular behaviour in a desired direction without knowing how they would act or respond to given situations. These students’ ambivalent participation in education did not quite equate with either of Brown’s definitions of instrumentalism because of its racialised outlook. The students were likely to profess a belief in the exchange-value of

education (its power to enable desired career outcomes) but also, in most cases, held on to a residual Caribbean belief in the intrinsic value of education. In this sense they could not quite be described as alienated; however, their racialisation within the school system meant that they were critical of perceived differential treatment and labeling by teachers.

In less racialised terms, Conner and Armitage (2006) claims that people with higher levels of accuracy of self- knowledge tend to be more successful regardless of their own definitions of success. Perceptions of themselves as learners which may include knowing their identity and personal goals, influences the way they initiate strategies designed to regulate their learning environment in order to improve their academic outcome. An important part of some of these students self- knowledge involve developing their own version of a successful school identity which draws on a combination of the dominant values of instrumentation held in the UK and traditional Caribbean values about education, some sticking closer to non-instrumental, non-materialist and 'Pan-African' values.

Pan-Africanism is an ideology that calls for African unity (both as a continent and as a people), nationalism, independence, political and economic cooperation, and historical and cultural awareness (especially for Afrocentric versus Eurocentric interpretations). In recent times, Pan-Africanism is seen much more as a cultural and social philosophy than the politically driven movement of the past. According to Asante (2003), modern Pan-Africanism is a mode of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values and perspectives predominate. It also seeks to enshrine the idea that blackness itself is a part of ethics. Hence, to be black is to be against all forms of oppression and white racial domination. Pan-Africanism recognises the importance of African heritage and seeks a re-evaluation of

Africa's place and the Diaspora, in the world.

In individual interviews, Tim and Desmond gave non-instrumentalist definitions with strong elements of Pan-Africanism.

Tim: 'It depends on how you see education really because from my experience living in Western society and culture I don't really aspire to be great in their system.

Educational success is learning the right thing. So I want to be a Doctor - I think do I really want to go to University, do I really want to learn what they want to teach me because I know it probable have nothing to do with it but slavery- they don't really want to help us. We are here for them really. They don't really care about us'.

Desmond: 'I think it also has to do with knowing your history. I believe that educational success has to do with the school and knowing your history. Because when you go into school at lot of what is taught go against who you are as a person. Regardless of how white society is based; on Europe, America, it is based on negativity. When you try to bring a positive influence there would be strife and I just think that society tries to keep people down low. We need role models as well. We don't have enough role models as we use to have. Forty years ago we had Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King Jr. I think it's our obligation to carry on the battle for what they were fighting for. I think British society is against black people, the history they teach and what they show on TV. You have shows on television saying that black people have the lowest intelligence genetically, well that is just false'.

Tim's comments are interesting as he seemed to be speaking from a 'Pan-African' perspective. Although Tim clearly states that learning is important, he seems to lack trust and confidence in the authenticity of knowledge and its position within the Western World. Desmond also seems to be speaking from a similar Pan-African perspective. These students seemed to be balancing two ideological positions in order to construct their own sense of a successful educational and black identity.

4.10 Friendship groups

Another way in which these students balance out positions with their peers is by collectively forming subgroups of African-Caribbean high achievers. Together they devised ways of negotiating school; within the group ethos there was a heavy reliance on shared experiences and the utilising of cultural resources. Sixth-form students from Highbury Secondary School in individual interviews commented:

Clive: 'With my friends all our parents want us to go to university so that we will be happy and have good jobs. We have competitions with each other which help us to work harder'.

Shaq: 'We just have a laugh. We can make a joke out of anything really. We always play football together... There is respect and pulling together and helping each other out so that's a good thing'.

These students formed friendship groups with like-minded African-Caribbean students who

supported each other, studied together and socialised outside of school. Similarly, Shanique a year 11 student from Broadfield School commented:

Shanique: 'They are my closest friends, we encourage each other. We all want to do well so ... We revise and go to the central library together instead of just sitting down at home doing nothing. We all encourage each other'.

This economy of friendship was evident among the students in both sample schools. Students formed friendship groups that were engaged in actions and activities that allowed them to draw on the support and resources of the group in order to maximise their learning capacity and progress. The students supported each other, studied together and socialised outside of school.

4.11 Conclusion

The students in this study had definitions of educational success which were not only influenced by the dominant instrumentalism of Britain's 21st Century neo-liberal educational discourse but also by their home environment: an older black tradition where the pursuit of academic success was instrumentally as well as intrinsically valued. Some came from the emergent black middle-class families who have networks and strategies which are similar to the white middle-class regarding education. Most of the student participants were clearly pro-education and appeared to want teachers to establish a close working relationship with them but were not prepared to reciprocate. They lacked trust in their teachers who they claimed treated them unfairly and stereotyped them as underachievers and badly behaved. They felt excluded from school's definition of the 'ideal' student both in terms of achievement and

behaviour which might arguably account for their ambivalence towards their teachers.

Students' ambivalence could be seen as a weakness but for these pupils it probably is not, because their ambivalence enabled them to live out the 'balancing act' with other African-Caribbean youths. This was also part of their 'self-knowledge', the critical engagement in education, wherein they believed in participating in education but were still critical of what they perceived as schools' racism and over conformity. Their ambivalence meant that they were unable to reap the possible benefits that having a close and trusting working relationship with teaching staff brings. Nonetheless, they found ways to balance this by establishing good relationships with their peers, mentors, and non-teaching staff. They formed subgroups with other like-minded high achieving students, and distanced themselves from students who were not committed to education.

The 'balancing act' which students demonstrated within school and with other students enabled them to articulate their own versions of educational success based on self-knowledge thus redefining themselves as 'being' educationally successful African-Caribbean students. The next chapter focuses on students' resilience and ways of being high achievers.

CHAPTER 5

AFRICAN- CARIBBEAN RESILIENCE AND WAYS OF BEING

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 was concerned with exploring understandings and definitions of 'educational success', from the perspectives of high achieving African-Caribbean students. It also explored how high achieving African-Caribbean students in this study demonstrated resilience (Chapter 1 and 2) in displaying complex 'balancing acts' with their peers, teachers and significant adults. This chapter focuses on students' resilience and the ways in which they carved out viable 'ways of being' high achievers with their peers, teachers/mentors and significant others within the community.

5.2 Keeping a distance

As discussed in Chapter 4, the high achieving African-Caribbean students identified and engaged in relationships which they felt would enhance their academic progress. However, they also avoided students who were not committed to education. Sixth-form students in individual interviews commented:

Keith: 'But there are a few people that I don't need to talk to. Some of the others from year 11 went to college and most of them have dropped out and are doing nothing. I avoid others who don't have high aspirations like me'.

Clive: 'The ones who I avoid are the ones that drink a lot and smoke a lot, go partying, and I do admit at times I go, but that is just when I want a break from

sixth-form life. But then I try to influence my own opinion on them. I say to them, 'What you doing with your life?' Each time I see them I say what are you doing at the moment, and they say nothing. I get disappointed but then I don't want to seem like their Dads, but I still try and help them'.

These students spoke about avoiding the negative influences of students not committed to education. Clive occasionally socialised with his past 'friends' who underachieved in school, and took the opportunity to positively influence them. Similar to Clive, John spoke in an individual interview commented:

John: 'I have some friends from the area they wanted to just chill and smoke all the time. I became infamous for not smoking. They did admire me. They just knew that I was being me. He is into his books and they still respect today when I meet them when I go back to London. It's all good, really'.

It is interesting to note John and Clive appeared to want keep in touch with their black culture and community. It is possible they were avoiding being labeled a 'sell out'.

During focus group interview students demonstrated resilience by claiming that they ignored being called a 'sell out', a term which is synonymous with 'acting white'. When asked how they would react if they were accused of 'acting white', Shaq and Kim in the focus group interview said:

Shaq: 'Don't think that you are a *'sell out'* to black people if you want to get

that education. Because that is one of the things that people have been telling me and stuff. I would tell them to like know themselves’.

Kim: ‘I don’t care’.

5.3 Avoiding the disciplinary system

Student’s disassociation with peers who were not committed to education helped them to avoid the school’s disciplinary system. As Becky commented:

Shanique: ‘We know that education is the way forward but there are other girls who are not bothered about their education. They go to school to mess about and that’s not how I want to be. I wouldn’t associate with them because I don’t want to be brought down. I stay away from that so that they don’t rub off on me’.

Another way in which students avoided the disciplinary system in school was by being careful not to respond in ways that would cause them to be seriously reprimanded despite alleged unfair treatment by teachers. In response to alleged unfair treatment and racism by teachers, some students said that they would follow their parent’s advice to think carefully before responding.

Charmaine: ‘I get told (by parent) not to say anything for a few seconds because I am hot headed. Sometimes a response can get you into trouble but if you don’t respond then it passes’.

Clive: 'At times my parents agreed with the teacher which made it worse. But on the other hand, it was good because my Dad said that he had been there before, so I should think before I talk'.

5.4.1 Adult encouragement and support

A common theme which emerged from students' accounts was that some students were unanimous in their claims that non-teaching staff were much more supportive and helpful than teachers. They claimed that people who worked in a pastoral capacity such as heads of year had a more positive effect on their school success than class teachers.

A head of year is required to monitor the personal development as well as the academic progress of pupils in their year. Kim commented:

Kim: 'My head of year was really good. We were close with her she was really nice. My year was mainly blacks and Asians and there was always focus groups and our year was the worst year. We still get mentioned now. We left in 2007 and we still get mentioned now. The head of year really pushed us and kept us in school. Even the ones who were at risk of exclusion she made sure that they stayed and get their GCSE's. The assemblies that she gave and everything. She organised for students to have mentors in the older years'.

As well as heads of years students gave accounts of non-teaching staff such as mentors, career guides and role models motivating them and giving support and guidance.

5.4.2 Support from non-teaching staff

In individual interviews with Charlotte and Coleen from Broadfield and Kingsley Secondary Schools respectively, they spoke highly about the support they received from non-teaching staff.

Charlotte: 'There is a woman who comes into our citizenship lessons and she gives us information about where we can find jobs and advice about our careers and how to go into careers, and she gives us websites. She lets us ask questions and she always has the answers. She also gives us really good advice and encouraged us, so that helps'.

Coleen: 'We had a careers meeting run by a black lady name Joan. She used to help me a lot. We used to talk about what we wanted to be. I had to do this and then this and that. Also when I was in year 7, I was put into behavioural support and this lady helped me and made targets for me telling me don't do this and don't do that and eventually I just changed'.

Charlotte spoke about a woman who came into her school and gave her information and advice. She believed that the individual interest given to her was a source of motivation and contributed significantly towards her school success.

5.5 Relationship-based education

Students apparent interest in and desire for individual interest, help and support may have originated from the multi-cultural curriculum and the deficit model. The bases of the deficit

model from the perspective of African-Caribbean students, is that their educational failure is due to their poor self- concept and self-esteem which can be treated in order to improve school success. It is believed that some black children often have negative self-concept due to the effects of racism and that part of the explanation of African-Caribbean failure in school is the work of negative self-concept in which the child does not see themselves as a success and as a consequence does not succeed.

The fact that African-Caribbean pupils in Britain are overrepresented in the lower sets in secondary schools and are amongst the lowest academic achievers, has contributed in making these self-concept and self-image theories attractive to educationalist and teachers.

Consequently, schools have been under pressure to respond to the 'needs' of the pupils by developing pseudo-therapeutic programmes. Teachers have been encouraged to develop personalised teaching styles to improve students' self-concept, and deliver 'relevant' compensatory curricula, for example, 'cultural enrichment' programs of studies, aimed at offsetting the effects of negative racial stereotyping, enhancing self-concept and improving achievement.

This personalised approach employs teaching techniques which relates to learning needs and background of the pupils (e.g., gifted and talented, minority ethnic pupils, low attaining)? Teachers frequently ask questions as stimuli and pupils have the opportunity to collaborate and work in small selected groups. These groups are often assigned support teachers and individual pupils are sometimes assigned personal mentors. Schools also have a statutory requirement to adapt its delivery of the curriculum to meet the individual needs, aptitudes and interests of every pupil to ensure that they all achieve and reach the highest possible standard,

notwithstanding their background and circumstances (DfES 2006c:5). This approach was deemed necessary in the face of the apparent failure of conventional instructional and cognitive approaches to impact on the attainment of working-class and black pupils.

However, the government's personalisation agenda, which promises flexibility, may on one hand lead to the creation of low attainment groups that are well taught and highly supportive. On the other hand, it can also be used to justify separate tracking, as well as restrict students' experiences and opportunities, by exposure to a diluted, limited curriculum (DfES, 2005). Also, pupil grouping is usually based on teachers' judgements and interpretation which may account for the uneven relationship between set allocation and prior attainment (DCSF, 2007a, 2007b). For example, teachers' choice of individuals for lower sets is often influenced by judgements about behaviour, or the particular social dynamics and ethnicity of the pupils. (DfES 2006c).

5.6 Support from mentors/role models

As well as receiving personal interest and support from non-teaching staff students also spoke about how their academic success was enhanced by having older mentors and role models in and out of school.

Desmond: 'Keith's brother who goes to Oxford University is a real role model to us all. He comes into school regularly and talked to us'.

Carmel: 'I was a mentor while I was in school for about three months; we went on this training course and it was really good. Even though we got taught how

to mentor other people they help/mentored us as well, telling us to stay in school and about jobs’.

Studies have also found that black mentors and role models increased achievement among African-Caribbean pupils (Majors, 2001). Majors (2001) stated that:

‘Black mentors have an insider-knowledge of the cultural values and attitudes of the mentee, as well as an intimate and shared understanding of racial dynamics and racism. This encourages a more rapid establishment of empathy, which is deemed crucial in the evolving relationship between the mentor and the mentee’.

(Majors, 2001: 208)

Educational professionals in some cities within the UK have used mentoring with the aim of counteracting the feeling of alienation and inequality faced by ethnic minority pupils placing them at risk of disaffection and underachievement (Majors, 2001). In Manchester, Nottingham and London mentoring schemes have been making a positive impact on the lives of young African-Caribbean students by giving young disadvantaged black men guidance, advice, support and personal education and training. An audit of mentoring schemes in the UK commissioned by the CRE found that the mentoring process was more effective when black males were matched with black role models in school and in the community. The scheme also had some success with African-Caribbean girls (Majors, 2001).

However, despite the benefits of same-race mentoring there has been research evidence which

has suggests that a cross-race mentor/mentee relationship can be equally effective in certain circumstances. The question of whether mentors and youth should be matched based on characteristics such as race and ethnicity has been strongly debated (Jucovy, 2002). Some research on formal and informal mentoring of ethnic minority youths suggests that cultural differences seem to play a role in expectations, outcomes and experiences of both the mentor and mentee (Liang and Jennifer, 2006). Perceived similarities such as race and interests have been associated with mentees' level of satisfaction with the mentor-mentee relationship (Ensher and Murphy, 1997).

More specifically, the quality of mentoring relationships is believed to be shaped by the way race-related issues are negotiated by mentor-mentee pairs. For example, cross-race matches may be affected by the degree of cultural sensitivity on the part of the mentor, the level of cultural trust on the part of the mentee, and feedback provided to the mentee (Sanchez and Colon, 2005). For example, minority youth internalize the racial attitudes of the larger society which makes them vulnerable to low self-esteem and to a limited vision of their opportunities in life. Only a mentor with a similar racial background can fully understand these challenges and help frame realistic solutions. Jucovy (2002) argues that they may also feel that their white mentors are judging them according to negative stereotypes, perceiving them of being 'at risk' and needing to be "saved" from the perceived "hazards" of their environment. This could lead to mistrust and a feeling of dis-empowerment on the part of the mentee (Jucovy, 2002).

However, research studies suggest that once the mentor relationship was established, regardless of whether it is same-race or cross-race, other factors may begin to play a larger

role in determining the success of the relationship Ensher and Murphy, 1997; Rhodes et., al 2002). These might include, for example, whether the mentee perceives his or her mentor as similar in other ways such as having shared interests and personality. Rhodes *et.al* (2002) compared same-race and cross-race matches where all cross-race mentors were white Americans. When matches were based on shared interests, geographic proximity, and youth and parental choosing same-race pairs, no differences were found for the same-race and cross-race groups in the frequency of meetings and duration of relationships.

Thus, ethnicity and race may influence a number of aspects of the mentoring relationship, nevertheless, even when same-race matches may be desired, they may not necessarily achieve satisfying and beneficial mentoring relationships and outcomes. For example, some research have suggested that having similar interests and attitudes may be an even better predictor of mentees' satisfaction with their mentors and the support received than being demographically similar (Ensher and Murphy, 1997).

The discussion above seems to suggest that the qualities of the mentor, rather than race, are what matter the most. The mentor's personal skills, experience, common interests with youth, capacity to provide sensitive support, and openness to the nuances of cultural differences are the keys to building a trusting relationship. These findings also suggest the need for mentors and mentoring programs to work toward developing culturally sensitive youth mentoring programs (Liang and Jennifer, 2006).

5.7 Educational trips and extra-curricular activities

Some students commented that going on educational trips and being involved in extra-

curricular activities was significant in helping them to achieve educational success. Students from Broadfield and Highbury Schools in individual interviews commented:

Keith: 'We had a lot of support in terms of black boys- we all came together from different schools and went to Oxford University, I believe it was in year 10. And things like that have motivated me. There are sometimes when I think it's hard and there are so much people doing better than me and there is no one around. But when you go to these places you realise that you just have to keep on trying and go around with boys that are similar to me'.

Tanika: 'I don't really have any tutoring or anything, but activities that I do out of school. Like for example I go to the DRUM and do stuff like singing and acting and dance and that helps to build your confidence even though it's not like English, Maths and Science. But it helps to build your confidence in a different way because you meet people and make friends, you do performances and it makes you feel good about yourself. I think that applies to education because when you are in school you need confidence to put up your hand in class and ask questions, if you don't you end up falling behind'.

Student commented that going to the DRUM, a black led arts centre, and being school mentors and prefects helped them to be organise, responsible, confident and also gave them a sense of pride and importance.

5.8 Supplementary School: resilience building?

In individual interviews just under half of the students said that they attended a supplementary school at some stage. Charmaine, Keith and Latoya described how supplementary school helped them to be successful.

Charmaine: 'Going to Angelo really helped me because the school I went to wasn't a very good school and when you needed the help the teachers couldn't necessarily give you the help because they are spending most of their time on the students who were misbehaving. Going to Angelo was good because I could get one to one help. Once the work was set I could ask that teacher or another person or a student, quickly like 'what does this mean?' and that helped to boost me - that was good. It's educational but it's like it's your family. It's like a family atmosphere, you feel more relaxed whereas in school you are more tensed up. Because you are more relaxed you are more willing to learn. It's more fun. You feel cosy and that there is more support behind you; you are not just one of the 30. You could be one of the 10 but you will feel special'.

Keith: 'I started to go to one called Angelo which was specifically for black children and that really helped because it was run by black people - there were only black children there. It wasn't like a school as such - it was like a get together. The main purpose of it was Maths and Science, so we would go over things that we were taught at school and anything we found hard. And everyone could do the work, everyone was comfortable and they were trips and

stuff. It was really, really good’.

Latoya: ‘This place helps me socialise because at first I didn’t know many people but when I come here I meet other black girls in my year. It’s great. Coming to this school also helps me because what I learn here makes it easier for me when I go back to school. I already understand. They also encourage me to check my work when I get home. This is more than I get in school’.

These students enjoyed attending supplementary school spoke about how it helped them to achieve academic success. However, other students commented that although they received help and support, they did not like attending the school:

Abi: ‘Yes, because it helps me with certain topics that I do in Maths and Science. I don’t enjoy some of the lessons and the short breaks. I find Maths lessons really dull’.

Simone: ‘I don’t really enjoy coming to this school. After a long hard day at school you have to come to school again and you are tired’.

Some students said that they came to the supplementary school because they were sent by their parents. Nonetheless, they enjoyed being there.

Rianna: ‘My parents make me come here but I like it’.

Carmel: 'Forced by parents but I actually like it'.

Carmel commented that teachers treated her with more respect than in her secondary school.

Carmel: 'I am able to talk to teachers without getting a sarcastic answer and I am treated with the respect I need'.

The students' comments above suggested that they were provided with a culturally specific context for which to further their education in an environment where they felt safe and secure and part of a family. In the study conducted by Francis, Archer and Mau's (2008) pupils valued their supplementary school environments because they were 'free from racism' and were provided opportunities to work with like-minded and educationally oriented individuals in smaller classes and with greater teacher involvement.

Most of the students said that the supplementary school helped them to improve their school work when they returned to school.

Carmel: 'Yes, I learn much more than I learn at school. It helps with tests and especially how to behave'.

Latoya: 'Coming here has made me more confident because when you go in school you can answer the questions'.

Students said that they also learnt about black history and to appreciate themselves and their

culture. They also had teachers as role models.

Steve: 'I learn about black history and the way African-Caribbean people like me can achieve with support'.

Abi: 'They use teachers as role models and tell you how to appreciate yourself and what you do'.

The accounts given by students above demonstrates how supplementary schools enable African-Caribbean children to express self- determination and integrity, and provide them with an education that counteract their ever increasing marginalisation and mis-education (Reay and Mirza, 1997). Since its inception, black supplementary schools have taken different forms, aims and motives (Myer and Grosvenor, 2011). For example, some black supplementary schools focus mainly on teaching mathematics and science while others focus primarily on teaching children about their cultural heritage and history. Black parents wanted to develop resilience in their children by teaching them pride and self-respect which gave them confidence to progress in their studies- something they believe secondary school did not care about. Hence, supplementary schools and practices demonstrate how African-Caribbean parents and communities support their children appropriately while also challenging the negative processes inside school. Children's resilience was enhanced when both home and the community provide them with access to black cultural and social capital. Social and cultural capital will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. This resilience thus developed enabled these pupils to develop successful black identities which helped them to cope with negative experiences in school in ways that did not prevent their pursuit of excellence. For example,

challenging injustices in school without resorting to resistive subcultures and carefully responding to conflict with teachers in order to avoid being trapped in the school's disciplinary system.

5.9 The role of black churches/Sunday school

As well as black supplementary schools black churches (in both UK and US) have been a source of black cultural and social capital and have always build resilience in the black community. Attending church and Sunday school, helped students by teaching them good moral and ethical precepts, improving their social skills, and instilling in them principles of success. According to Charlotte and Becky:

Charlotte: 'I go to Sunday school, not Saturday school. Sunday school at church is not really educational like Maths, English and Science but it helps me to be stronger. It teaches me how to be a humble person and not to do the bad things in the world like killings and shoplifting. I listen to my Sunday school teacher because he really encourages me'.

Becky: 'Let's take Sunday school for example, the things that I learnt from the bible and quotations from the bible makes me think more deeply into what I am doing. It makes me think that to get where I want to get to I need to learn in school and go to University and like - The world is not nice and there are lots of people trying to keep other people down but obviously I have learnt to be strong and to keep going. It is about being strong minded enough not to be influenced. It is your upbringing that helps you to keep away from it all.

Otherwise you could be easily influenced. But I wouldn't be of course'.

These students benefited from the cultural and social capital (religious capital) engineered by the church community. According to Rhamie and Hallam (2002:163), church provides guidance in a strong supportive atmosphere, which provides the opportunity to experience success through working with projects and for rewards.

Haight (2002) in her ethnographic study of Baptist churches in the US gives a description of the socialisation processes within black churches which help to develop resilience in children. She emphasises that in Sunday schools in particular adults and children elaborate systems of belief through narratives, discussions, conflict, and plays. They are encouraged to practice these essential components in order to help them cope with the challenges of everyday life. For example, 'putting on the armour of God' will protect them in school and on the streets. The children in these churches also have the opportunity to lead devotions, sing in choirs, and provide services to families in church. They are challenged to keep high moral principles and live with deep optimism throughout their lives. This religious capital is a non-dominant and underestimated form of black capital.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter discusses fundamental ways in which these high achieving African-Caribbean students demonstrated resilience. One of the ways in which they demonstrated resilience was by maintaining friendships with like-minded students and distanced themselves from those students who were not committed education. Despite dissociating with past friends who were not committed to education they made an effort to meet with them and encourage them to

engage in more productive past-times. They wanted to maintain contact and contribute to the black community.

This chapter also highlighted the high value that these pupils placed on having an inter-personal relationship with non-teaching staff. They felt that teachers should 'push them' and take a personal interest in them as non-teaching staff often did. However, as I also discussed in Chapter 4, they were ambivalent towards their teachers. Concerning this issue of ambivalence, it is unclear as to why students tended to want a closer relationship with teachers but paradoxically, were reluctant to make an effort to establish such a relationship.

This chapter explores how a relationship-based approach to teaching might have influenced students' attitudes towards wanting an inter-personal relationship with teachers and other adults. However, a personalised approach to teaching to improve self-concept and self-esteem can be counter-productive as it places the black children and working-class children within the deficiency model as it may cause black children to be placed in lower sets and taught a diluted curriculum based on teachers' judgments and interpretations about their behaviour. This chapter also emphasises that the African-Caribbean pupils and teachers felt that the mentoring process was enhanced when African-Caribbean pupils were matched with black mentors and role models in their schools and communities. However, as discussed above, there are studies which support claims that cross-race mentoring can be also effective when the mentors and mentoring program are culturally sensitive.

This chapter also emphasises that when African-Caribbean families and communities work

together to create a 'sense of belonging' for African-Caribbean students, this compensates for the low expectation and a host of other negative experiences they have in school. Daniel and Wassell (2002) suggest that one of the key building blocks necessary for resilience in children is feeling a sense of belonging and security. Ford (1993) in his study of African-American achievement suggests that although a sense of belonging in school is important for all students, it may be especially important for African-American students, who are more likely to feel estranged in school environments where values and beliefs conflict with their own. This may place them at greater risk of school failure than their European American counterpart whose home culture has a closer connection to the culture of the school environment (DfES, 2007b).

Rhamie and Hallam (2002) claim that the community and home jointly provide the child with a 'sense of belonging' (Rhamie and Hallam, 2002; Daniel and Wassell, 2002), security and acceptance while stressing the importance of achievement and success. Also successes experienced in the supportive and caring environment of home and community (and sometimes church) provide evidence of what is possible and promote motivation to persevere at school.

Some researchers and educationists have highlighted that the experiences which African-Caribbean youths are exposed to at home and in their community play an important role in promoting resilience (Gordon and Song, 1994; Rhamie, 2007). For example, helping youths to manage exposure to risk can be a means of helping them to acquiring coping mechanisms. For example, they are given responsibility and opportunities to develop a sense of competence. They have access to strong relationships with supportive parents or external

mentors and other social networks and participate in extra-curricular activities. All these processes may give them a capacity to 'reframe' adversities (Newman, 2004).

In Rhamie and Hallam's (2002) study such activities included studying to gain badges in church organised clubs, preparing presentations for church services, planning and following through a community project from start to finish, and the discipline and practice necessary for competence as a musician appear to help develop skills that are useful in school. Alongside these learning experiences they gained confidence and improved their self-efficacy. Their self-efficacy develops when they learn that they have some control over certain things in their environment and that they are not helpless. Through accomplishing small tasks and interacting positively with an adult they are able to improve their social competence and exhibit help-seeking behaviour. Supplementary schools, black churches and black led community centres provide a secure environment where children can build up a sense of belonging and increase their self-esteem (Reay and Mirza, 2001). This chapter emphasises that high achieving students' academic success becomes a reality when school, home and the community work in conjunction with each other and the students to nurture and develop resilience and academic success in an environment where students feel a sense of belonging, and which also has a climate of excellence and high expectation. The next chapter explores underestimated and specific forms of black social and cultural capital.

CHAPTER 6

BLACK CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 discussed students' visions and definitions of success and how they developed successful school identities. Chapter 5 explored how students' resilience helped them to find 'ways of being' high educational achievers. This chapter focuses on the places and spaces which provide African-Caribbean pupils with invaluable sources of social and cultural capital.

The concepts of social and cultural capital are derived from Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1986) and have been widely used to theorise student experiences of education, social class and inequality. However, in this chapter, which begins by summarising Bourdieu (1986) concepts, notions of social and cultural capital are expanded and critiqued, by drawing upon the work of scholars working in the field of race, ethnicity and education, including Solorzano (1997, 1998) and Yosso (2005). These Critical Race Theorists have asked searching questions about the implicit racialisation of the concepts of capital and have shown how students of colour have drawn upon their own forms of cultural capital.

6.2 Social/Cultural Capital

Over the past two decades the work of social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has been influential in analysis of social reproduction and education (Bourdieu, 1986). In particular, educational researchers have used the key concepts of social/cultural capital, habitus and field to explore perennial questions of structure and agency as lived out in the 'classed' worlds of formal education. Social capital refers to a network of lasting relationships within an individual

group's sphere of contacts (Grenfell and James, 1998: 20). Cultural capital was defined by Bourdieu's (1986) as:

‘.....capital derived from education and is connected to an individual through their educational characteristics, for example, accent, disposition and learning.... it is connected to objects such as books and qualifications and institutions such as places of learning, universities and libraries’.

(Bourdieu, 1986: 21)

Grenfell and James (1998) argued that some of the key elements of students' cultural (and social) capital included the availability of time (particularly by mothers), material resources, educational knowledge and information about the education system. Hence, families with cultural characteristics (cultural capital) that are not valued by school are devalued and disadvantaged (Cork, 2005: 17). According to Bourdieu (1986), school as an institution is able to convert resources from a specific 'habitus', that is, a way of thinking, behaviour and attitude, into capital to acquire educational, social and material benefits for those sharing the same cultural values. Cultural capital is not only produced through schooling; it is also reproduced within families. Middle-class children's cultural capital is reinforced through family and education.

Critics such as, Solorzano (1997, 1998) and Yosso (2005) have argued that researchers need to be cautious when extending Bourdieu's (1986) theories to the experiences of black pupils. Bourdieu's work, being concerned with the reproduction of social class in education offers little consideration of race and racism or how black pupils are positioned by intersections

between race and class. For example, African-Caribbean people, who are considered by schools to be in crude terms working-class, might be seen as starting from a disadvantaged class position in terms of schooling. However, Cork (2005: 17) argued that the significance or otherwise of social class as applied to black families, needs to be addressed in the light of the findings of Gillborn and Mirza (2000) which revealed, that social class did not operate in the same way for African-Caribbean children as it did for white children. Middle-class black children did not outperform working-class black children to the extent consistently apparent among their white British peers (DfES, 2006a; Archer and Francis, 2007).

In short, middle-class black children appeared still to pay an 'ethnic penalty'. Within the school system middle-class black children are not treated as white middle-class children with regards to privileges and affirmation of the social and cultural capital they possess. Consequently, the social and cultural capital, that they bring into school are not fully appreciated and utilised by school staff. It seems as though their social and cultural capital are not transformed by school into academic success as is the case with white middle-class children. This begs questions about the supposed race-neutrality of Bourdieu's theory (Solorzano, 1997, 1998). Are Bourdieu's theories of capital actually theories of 'white' capital? Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital and deficit has been contested by critical race theorists such as Solorzano (1997, 1998) and Yosso (2005) on the basis that it was primarily based on conceptualisations of (white) social class and family backgrounds, without acknowledgment of its implicitly racialised categories.

6.3 Social/cultural capital and CRT

There is a long history of pathologising black parenting, cultural values and attitudes to

education, in order to portray black pupils' subcultural practices as responsible for school failure (Rhamie and Hallam, 2002; Wright *et al.*, 2010). Has cultural capital theory become another 'softer' means of implying that the lower academic and social attainment of African-Caribbean pupils occurs as a result of a deficiency of cultural capital within the African-Caribbean families and communities (Cork, 2005)? Yosso (2005) challenged the conventional interpretation of Bourdieu's theory, by applying concepts, drawn from Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CRT is a theoretical and analytical framework that aims to challenge the presence of racism in education, law and other social institutions (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). It originated in the United States of America, emerging from the work of critical legal, scholars such as Bell (1992) and Delgado and Stefancic (2001), who questioned the role of the legal system in legitimatising oppressive social structures. According to Solorzano (1997, 1998), CRT challenges dominant ideologies and the claims that institutions make about their racial impartiality and neutrality. An important aspect of CRT in education has been to expose the deficit model underpinning research that silences, disregards, ignores and misrepresents the histories and narratives of black people (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Ladson Billings, 2000). Yosso (2005) claimed that deficit thinking was one of the most prevalent forms of racism in contemporary US schools. She outlined that deficit thinking took the position that minority ethnic students and their families were at fault for their poor performances in school. Deficit models assume that black children enter the classroom without the normative cultural knowledge and skills, which schools value as a prerequisite for educational advancement, and their parents neither value nor support their child's education. As Garcia and Guerra (2004) commented:

‘The deficit approach to schooling, begins with overgeneralization about family background and are exacerbated by a limited framework to interpret how individuals views about educational success are shaped by personal ‘social culture and linguistic experiences and assumptions about appropriate cultural outcomes’.

(Garcia and Guerra, 2004: 75)

CRT challenges the deficit model by adding legitimacy and spaces for the lived experiences of black people by including their biographies and narratives in research on race and critical race discourses. According to Yosso (2005):

CRT shifts the research lens away from the deficit view of black communities and homes as places of cultural poverty and disadvantage – it focuses on and learns from these communities’ cultural wealth and assets..... It draws on specific forms of capital that students bring with them from their home and communities into the classroom.

(Yosso, 2005: 82)

Yosso (2005) critiqued the assumption that black students come into the classroom with cultural deficiencies and challenged Bourdieu’s traditional notion of cultural capital and identifies alternative forms of capital which exist in the black community that have often gone unacknowledged and unrecognized within the school community. Yosso’s (2005) view is that black children bring to school some unvalued assets which they acquire from their homes and communities. She claimed that these alternative forms of capital that they bring to school can

be utilised to help raise their academic performance. Concerning the transferability of CRT to the UK, Gillborn (2008) suggests that fundamental notions of CRT can be successfully transferred to the UK and other similar countries. Warmington's (2012) view is that CRT is emerging as a valid and critical framework for studying racism in education in the UK. It looks at educational structures and institutions through the eyes of the marginalised group and relies on their lived experiences and past histories as well as the resources which they have accumulated within their communities. It provides a space for the consideration and discussion of alternative forms of social and cultural capital found within the black communities which too often goes unacknowledged and unrecognised by educational institutions.

6.4 'Whiteness', property and exclusion

The discussion above, however, raises the following questions, firstly, what forms of social and cultural capital do African-Caribbean pupils lack and, secondly, if they possess other forms of capital, what are they and why are they being overlooked? I believe that the answer to these questions might well be found through further inspection of the CRT discourse.

According to the CRT discourse, black people lack the privileges and advantages accrued by 'whiteness' (Fine, 1997). These advantages may involve benefiting from a system of favours, courtesies and exchanges from which non-whites are excluded, for example hiring one's neighbour's son for a job in favour of other more qualified or suitable applicants. White privileging involves whites helping one another and oppressing non-whites on the grounds of their colour (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001).

At this point we must be careful to distinguish between white people and 'whiteness' as an

ideological property (Crenshaw *et al.*, 1995). Leonardo (2002) claims that there is a distinct difference between 'whiteness' as a skin colour and its social construction which constantly reinforces the power of white identifications and interests. According to Frankenberg (1993), whiteness is an invisible norm among all white people. 'Others' disadvantages are seen as a social problem because of their race and 'whiteness' remains uninspected and potent.

According to Gillborn (2008), whiteness manifests itself as kinds of 'unthinking' attitudes and actions performed daily which subjugates, discriminates and disadvantages people of colour. It is possible for white people to take an active part in the construction of 'whiteness' without being aware of the personal role they play in sustaining and playing out inequalities it produces. He highlights that this is implicit in MacPherson's definition of institutional racism in which the term inadvertent racism implies non-intentionality and unconsciousness on the part of white people, particularly those in power, which produce racist outcomes.

There is a growing body of work in the field of critical whiteness studies. It includes the work in the USA of Ruth Frankenberg (1993) and Zeus Leonardo (2002) and more recently, in the UK, the writing of Steve Gardner (2007) and John Preston (2007). Some authors in the field of critical whiteness studies have presented examples of whiteness operating as forms of exclusionary power in education. In the UK, this can be seen in the continuation of policies and practices that disadvantage black pupils. In Chapter 2, I discussed government policies, and school practices that have had a negative effect on the academic outcome of African-Caribbean pupils in UK secondary schools. According to Preston (2007), it is important to study the notion of 'whiteness' because it helps in the examination of how power is implicit in maintaining white privileging. It moves away from the view that differential academic outcomes among racial groups occurs as a result of cultural differences and places more

emphasis on institutional racism and the ways in which schools perform 'white racial privileging' by exclusive practices and policies .

6.5 Education, status and 'acting white'

So in the analyses offered by CRT, whiteness is regarded as a form of property in education, and as a necessary predicate of educational status and success. This conceptualising of whiteness as property might arguably also be applied to debates over black educational success and 'acting white'. There has been disagreement among researchers over the extent to which the development of successful school identities requires black students to 'act white'. Several researchers have, in their ethnographic studies, explored black students' accusations that some of their successful peers gain status and advancement at school by 'acting white' (Ogbu, 2004; Gillborn, 2008).

Desmond, a sixth form student from Highbury Secondary School referred to some of his high achieving peers as 'Uncle Toms'. This is a derogatory term use to describe a black person who behaves in a subservient manner to white people or perceived to be a participant in the oppression of their own group in order to receive favour.

Desmond: 'Then you have the student who adheres to society, always has a smile on his face, and looks to please the teacher all the time, even though it's fundamentally wrong against him but he accepts it because he is looking to please the teacher all the time. They think this will help them to get far. But you are like an Uncle Tom in my opinion. You should know when someone is against you and hurting you'.

Desmond's comment also links to the view of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) that some black students tend to view education as a system governed by their white oppressors and school is not an appropriate space for proper black identity. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, Shaq and Kim dismissed the accusations. For them, it was possible to have a black identity (not act white) and be educationally successful at the same time.

Conversely, for many African-Caribbean students 'acting black' entails the overt displaying of black symbolic behaviours, such as dressing in baggy clothing (more recently, sagging trousers) caps, hoodies, speaking West Indian patois and street lingo and listening to the music and mimicking the mannerism of, black American and Caribbean rap and reggae artists. These features often exaggerated by black resistive sub-culture within school are believed to be responsible for much of the conflicts and confrontations with teachers leading to disciplinary action.

6.6 Black youth subculture and identity

Semark (2014) in her study of black youth subcultures in the US suggested that school regimes of discipline often suppresses the identities of black youths. She claimed that popular discourses on issues such as the so-called 'achievement gap' which have situated black people and their communities as deviant and deprived have caused a moral panic. This has been used to legitimise a disproportionate amount of monitoring and policing of black youths in schools. Hall *et al.* (1978) calls this culture of control in schools the 'racially specific mechanism' of the capitalist state which reels its power through domination, consent, the reinforcing of racial and classed hierarchies and reproduces a dominant 'all-American/British' culture rooted in the ideology of 'whiteness'. Semark (2014) argues that it is often necessary for black youths to

resist and refuse the culture of control in order to form black identities which display a host of stylistic expressions (such as sagging pants, hoodies).

Based on Semark's (2014) analysis it can be argued that the adoption of 'culturally symbolic' behaviours and stylistic expressions by the black youth subculture is an important part of their identity construction and a necessary response to being over-monitored and over-disciplined by schools' culture of control. These black subcultural expressions are often considered by teachers to fall out of the norms of school success and its institutional values and are often interpreted as being threatening, aggressive and educational abrasive (Majors, 2001). Mrs. Lewis a teacher from Broadfield Secondary School in an individual interview commented on white teachers:

Mrs. Lewis: 'They don't understand them. Yes they can be boisterous but they need to understand that they are not necessarily being bad behaved, they are just expressing themselves. Unless you understand how they are, you will just think that they are being rude and insolent, and it just carries on from there'.

Abi, a year 10 student at Angelo Supplementary School commented:

Abi: 'Because teachers in school see black children as bad and that they are the ones that are going to fail because of the way we look and behave. Teachers look at students' dress code, and behaviour out of lesson and they think that's how you are going to act in lessons. Teachers will take account of this and use these things against them'.

The teachers and students in this study said that they thought white teachers lacked an understanding of the ‘culturally specific’ behaviours of black pupils. They misinterpreted these kinds of behavior, perceiving them as anti-school and rebellious.

Some of the cultural practices and attitudes that are considered ‘black’ rather than ‘white’ might include listening to rap, hip hop and reggae music as opposed, to pop, rock and jazz music, playing sports such as football and basketball, as opposed to golf, cricket and rugby, speaking black English vernacular and street language as opposed to speaking standard English, dressing in baggy clothes and caps rather than conventional and traditional dress codes (Tatum, 1997; Barnett, 2001). These ‘white’ characteristics are also considered to be associated with the white middle-class in America and the UK. These forms of class-based bicultural expressions are often used to distinguish between the identity of the standardised norms of the white middle-class and the ‘pathological’ forms of a distinctly black cultural way of life. It could be in this sense that, African-Caribbean pupils are perceived by schools as not having the normative forms of cultural capital required for academic success as their habits and dispositions do not equate to the norms of white middle-class school values. This can lead to devaluing and underestimating forms of social and cultural capital that African-Caribbean pupils bring into school.

6.7 Cultural capital of the black middle-class

In Chapter 4 of this research I highlighted that many high-achieving African-Caribbean students in this study came from homes that were black middle-class in terms of affluence, financial resources and parental occupation (Rollock *et al.*, 2012). They were involved in similar practices as the white middle-class. Based on their ‘middle-class’ circumstances one

would expect children in these families to naturally thrive in educational institutions and go on to achieve educational success without dilemma. However, being middle-class does not necessarily have the same degree of impact for African-Caribbean children in relation to academic outcomes as some of the other ethnic groups. Archer (2010) found that middle-class black pupils were not treated like middle-class white pupils. Middle-class black pupils felt excluded in school and were victims of popular stereotypes and racism. Her research found that black middle-class families expended immense effort to give additional support to their children, explicitly warning them about the barriers that racism presents and the need to work disproportionately hard to gain educational and economic parity with their white counterparts. Black middle-class parents did not trust the education system with the education of their children and drew from the wealth of social and cultural capital within the black community.

6.8 Bonding capital

A distinctive form of black social capital which exists in the African-Caribbean community is 'bonding' capital (Kim, Subramanian and Kawachi, 2006). Bonding social capital refers to the type of social capital that comes from relationships between similar persons. These persons may be similar in terms of race, socio-demographics and socioeconomic status. Bonding social capital operates as a device which is based on affective support and mutual respect. In bonding capital shared characteristics between individuals act as a motivator of behavioural change, solidarity and/or support. A person who draws from bonding social capital is more likely to transform their behaviour by modeling the behaviour of others whom they perceives as similar and can identify with them as role models (Kim, Subramanian and Kawachi, 2006). Bonding social capital provides strong networks of social relations where practical and informal knowledge are shared. According to Reynolds (2004):

‘African-Caribbean young people draw upon family and community networks to create relationships and ties of trust and reciprocity that are based on ethnic solidarity within their local community and across national borders’.

(Reynolds, 2004: 4)

Bonding social capital amongst African-Caribbean students in this research is related to students’ affirmation of support from teachers, mentors and role models (Morrow, 2004).

Holland *et al.* (2007) commented that young people valued bonding social capital, particularly at a transition stage in their lives and careers, as an important means of bridging across new networks and opportunities. Some of the places where these students found support, solidarity and a sense of belonging were their homes, their local communities, in school with other African-Caribbean high achievers, black youth groups, supplementary schools and churches. Bonding social capital existed among high achieving African-Caribbean who formed strong bonds of friendship within friendship groups.

Some students in this study also had access to bonding social capital through their involvement with youth groups within the community. Shanique and Charmaine spoke in individual interviews about attending places like the Drum. The Drum is a national centre for black British arts and culture aimed at involving people from every section of the community in cultural activities that educate, inform, entertain, challenge and delight them. It covers artistic programmes such as spoken word, film, DJ/club nights, dance, multimedia training, jazz, comedy, theatre, visual arts, music and workshops. Shanique, in Chapter 5 spoke about the many benefits of going to the DRUM.

The high achieving African-Caribbean participants and their families were fully embedded in their local community and had access to material and symbolic cultural resources via involvement in cultural workshops and performing arts. This bonding social capital not only gave students a sense of solidarity and belonging but was also the impetus for individual change and personal development.

6.9 Black role models and mentors

Another key feature within African-Caribbean homes and communities that provides black social and cultural capital is the access to positive black role models and mentors. Role models might include parents, older siblings, other family members and other black community members. Members from the African-Caribbean community who have close links with a particular family are considered as part of an extended family (kin). It was a common practice in the African-Caribbean family for young children to call adult male and female close family friends, 'uncle' and 'auntie' respectively (Schneider, 1984). However, Schneider's study is now thirty years old and highlights a practice that has arguably become archaic within the African-Caribbean community in the UK. Yet more recent studies, such as Wright *et al* (2010) have suggested that extended family relationships remain important in the lives of many young African-Caribbean people, particularly in supporting their educational ambitions. In the present study participants made reference to family members as educational role models. Charlotte and Susanne spoke about being inspired and motivated by Keith's brother, who attended Oxford University. Other studies in the UK have found that exposing African-Caribbean pupils to positive black role models has a positive effect on their academic outcome (Majors, 2001).

The government's first role model programme for black young boys and men was the REACH programme. The programme recruited a group of successful black males including Tim Campbell, the first winner of the popular BBC television show, *The Apprentice*, to offer their experiences and expertise to marginalised black young men. Its aim was to make black role models in British society more visible, raise the aspirations and achievement of black young men. However, Sewell (2009) commented that the REACH programme only resulted in the role models being idolised from a distance. They did not actively engage or connect with youths on an interpersonal and 'real' level.

This kind of connection and real engagement with a role model was exemplified in the relationship that sixth-form students from Highbury Secondary School had with Keith's brother (Chapter 5.4). Keith's brother provided what Yosso (2005) calls navigational capital since he supplied students with the knowledge required to manoeuvre through institutions which possess discriminatory practices. As discussed in Chapter 4, institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge were found to be discriminatory regarding the intake of African-Caribbean students (see Appendix 2). As HESA statistics reveal, there are seven times fewer black or Black British Caribbean students at Oxford on average than at other universities (HESA, 2009/2010).

As discussed in Chapter 5, despite the positive impact of formal mentoring programmes on the lives of some young African-Caribbean students, policy approaches have been criticised for often being based upon deficit assumptions (Colley, 2006; Freedman, 1999). In addition, Colley (2003) has argued that mentoring initiatives are flawed insofar as they are based on the assumption that forms of informal mentoring seen within communities can be replicated in a

planned and institutional context. For Colley (2003), it is important to recognise that young people are not just passive recipients of intervention; they are able to exercise resilience and agency. It is in this respect that authors in the field of mentoring have concurred that transforming young people's values, attitudes and beliefs through mentoring (interpersonal engagement) is not only unrealistic but also brings to question issues of social justice. In pragmatic terms the mentoring process is, it would seem, most effective when black youths were matched with mentors and role models in the school and in the community whom they feel at ease with. They feel more empowered when able to find their own means of support within their surroundings.

6.10 Parent and discipline.

The parenting practices adopted by the African-Caribbean parents which involves remnants of a traditional approach to discipline and school has contributed to black cultural capital. According to Johnson and Stanford (2002), traditional discipline is even more essential for black children, who will have to hurdle the additional barriers set up by a society that discriminates against them in both blatant and subtle ways. The tendency of some African-Caribbean parents' to favour strict disciplinarian principles might have stemmed from their upbringing which was based on an authoritarian schooling model in the West Indies (Harber, 2004). The characteristics of colonial schooling consisted of didactic teaching that involved the obeying of rules and regulations, character development (having manners), monotonous drills and the inculcation of norms such as cleanliness, neatness and harsh discipline (Harber, 2004). Harber (2004) argues that (post)colonial schooling was one of the sites in which practices such as corporal punishment persisted even after they were ended in the 'mother country'. In 2012, following inner-city riots across England, Tottenham MP David Lammy

suggested, somewhat controversially, that there is still support for corporal punishment in parts of the UK's African-Caribbean community (Lammy, 2012).

Instilling discipline is one of the areas upon which black supplementary schools appear to focus on, responding to a belief among black communities that discipline is missing in British secondary schools. Mrs. James, a Caribbean-born teacher at Angelo Supplementary School spoke in an individual interview:

Mrs. James: 'We don't tolerate bad behaviour here. Sometimes they think we are a bit harsh but we have the support of our parents to discipline them. I also talk to other black parents about what they can do to help their children... a lot of African Caribbean parents don't have boundaries for their children especially the younger ones who were born in England'.

At Angelo Supplementary School the teachers were given permission by parents to use a strict West Indian approach to discipline, without using smacking. The teachers at Angelo commented that this approach to discipline was diminishing among English born African-Caribbean parents. Clive and Chantelle spoke about their parents' approach to parenting in individual interviews.

Clive: 'My parents are kind of strict. They tell me to revise and to do a certain amount. I have a lot of support from them. My mom is a teacher so she knows what I am doing and what I need to do in school so I can't hide anything from my mom.'

Chantelle: 'I get a lot of support from my Mom and Dad especially my Mom-she is strict and has been in the school environment. She used to be an English teacher so she knows what it's about; she knows how the system works and what you need to excel'.

Clive's and Chantelle's use of the word 'strict' seemed to be linked with a traditional approach to discipline.

There have been studies carried out in the Caribbean which provide further insights into traditional parental approaches which Caribbean parents adopt in order to help their children develop independence, resilience and educational successful (McAdoo, 1985; Benjamin, 1996). These studies suggest that Caribbean parents have traditionally tended to use strict authoritarian type discipline including corporal punishment. Children are expected to obey parents' commands immediately and not question their authority. This approach is usually adopted before and at primary school age. As the child grows into adolescence parents begin to interact more with their children by finding time to discuss negative and positive feelings openly, and nurturing them through verbal praise. Consequently, the child grows up assertive, independent and with a positive sense of self. This kind of support, combining strict discipline, nurture and dialogue, is deemed crucial to children's later academic success (McAdoo, 1995). Benjamin (1996) discusses how this traditional approach is seen by black parents as necessary to their children's survival as they have to learn quickly to face harsh realities of life such as racism. Thus their approach can be considered black capital as it is intended to develop in children the skills and knowledge that will enable them to fight against

discrimination and oppression and to maintain hope and dreams of success despite racial justices and inequalities (Yosso, 2005).

Conversely, research on different parental approaches to discipline has claimed that an *authoritative* rather than an *authoritarian* approach tend to have a greater impact on children's social competence and academic success (Maccoby and Martin, 1983). The distinction made by Maccoby and Martin (1983) is important. In their definition authoritative parenting is not an all-or-nothing authoritarian approach but occupies a sort of middle ground between granting too much freedom and being too strict. While the authoritative approach emphasises parental seniority, experience and wisdom, it implies a moderate approach that emphasises setting high standards and at the same time it is nurturing, responsive, and shows respect for children as independent and rational beings. The authoritative parent expects maturity and cooperation but offers children lots of emotional support (Baumrind, 1991). Benjamin (1996) suggests that the traditional Caribbean approach to discipline favoured an authoritarian approach when their children were at pre-secondary school age and an authoritative approach when they were at secondary school age.

In the present study Keith, a sixth-form student, and Jada, a first year university student, gave accounts of their parents' parenting approach.

Keith: 'My family have helped because they keep reminding me of who I am and what I am here for. To keep trying, I don't have to do this or that. They say it is important to go to school because obviously you are here now and if you can't get a job you are not

going to make any money. Do what you need to do first and when you are at a level when you can step out then step out. They see that I have potential and it's nice to know that they appreciate me. My parents have made the most impact'.

Jada: 'I have always liked school. My mother never had to pester me to do homework. She didn't have to help me that often, but if I needed help she would be there. I just got on with things. My mother always encouraged me and attended all the parents evening and pushed me. I studied hard not just to please my parents as some do. Some students think that if they don't do well there parents will punish them. It's a punishment to me if I don't get the grades that I want'.

Clive and Chantelle's use of the word 'strict' at first glance seemed to be linked with a traditional authoritarian approach to discipline. However, on further inspection, their parents appear to be strict not in an authoritarian sense but in an authoritative sense. They described their parents as supportive, as offering guidance and allowing their children a measure of autonomy for their own education. According to Baumrind (1991) children raised by authoritative parents are more likely to become independent, self-reliant, socially accepted, academically successful, and well-behaved. The parents of Keith and Jada seem to be applying positive parenting by combining aspects of different parenting styles as well as incorporating support, affection, love and discipline into a model tailored to their children's age group and personality (Walton, 2012).

Some parents and teachers at the supplementary school seemed to be more in favour of an authoritarian approach to discipline in the home and in secondary schools. In contrast, the majority of the parents and pupils in this study reported a preference for a balance between authoritarian parenting and a warm authoritative and responsive approach.

Some African-Caribbean parents encouraged their children to avoid aggressive and confrontational responses when dealing with perceived unfair treatment and racism by teachers so that they could avoid the school's disciplinary system. This issue was discussed in Chapter 5. Parents at Angelo Supplementary School discussed this issue in a focus group:

Ms. Peters: 'I try to encourage my child to try and ignore the unfair treatment and not to talk back at teachers. It just makes things worse. Come home and talk to me about it'.

Ms. Jameson: 'I always encourage him not to get into any arguments and even when he is right and he is told that he is wrong, just be calm come and discuss it with me and we would try and find a solution'.

Although some parents encouraged their children to come home and talk to them when they faced alleged unfair treatment, there were times when parents challenged the alleged injustices handed out to their children by going into their children's school to discuss and resolve the matter with teachers. According to Mrs Hunt a parent from Angelo supplementary school in a focus group interview:

Mrs Hunt: 'My daughter had a lot of problems with teachers. She came home saying that the teacher picks on her. I decided to go into the school and meet with her teachers. After this things suddenly changed. Something must have been wrong if things changed that suddenly'.

Ms Marshall: 'My son had problems with teachers and pupils at school. He came home complaining that other children were trying to get him in trouble and the teacher always believes them. He said that when he talks to the teacher they don't believe him and then he gets frustrated and talk back at the teacher. This leads to more trouble. I was not happy about that and went in to speak to the Head'.

The insistence by parents that their children should avoid confrontations with teachers in response to perceived unfair treatment was part of their resilience-building strategies. The experience of Latoya, a year 11 student at Angelo Supplementary School, demonstrates how direct confrontation can potentially lead to exclusion from school.

Latoya: I was kicked out of school because I had a conflict with a teacher. I ended up sitting in the wrong form because I didn't know where my form was. The teacher came in and saw me and started shouting at me to get out of the class. I shouted back at her and told her to shut up. She asked me what I said and I said I told her to shut up. She reported me to one of the managers and I was put in isolation. I am a bit claustrophobic. They ask me to go home. I said that I couldn't get into the house because my sister had the keys so I refuse to go home. They put me outside and a man held on to my hand. In the struggle I ended up punching the man and his assistance. It

stopped me from doing drama which is my favourite subject. I was excluded for 5 days. My Mom wasn't happy with me but she also wasn't happy with the way I was treated.

In contrast to Latoya's approach, many of the students in the current study exercised restraint in order to avoid acting in ways that might elicit serious punishment. However, there were times when they exercised individual agency by going against their parents' instructions. On occasions they resisted unfair treatment from teachers by responding with adversarial comments and deportments (see students' comments in Chapter 4, p111-112). They exhibited just enough adversarial behavior to get the teachers' attention while at the same time eluded serious reprimands.

6.11 Black social/capital and black supplementary schools

As discussed in Chapter 2, black supplementary schools have consistently provided the black community with invaluable forms of social and cultural capital. They started more than fifty years ago following the 'Windrush' period with the aim of making up for the difficult features encountered in mainstream schooling's basic delivery, which they felt was responsible for their children's continuing failure (Reay and Mirza, 1997). Since their inception black supplementary schools have taken different forms, aims and motives. For example, Reay and Mirza (1997) found that these schools had complex and contradictory pedagogic practices. Sewell (1996) commented that their features were heterogeneous. Some schools focus mainly on teaching children about their own cultural heritage and language while others specifically concentrate on helping students to improve in subjects such as Mathematics and Science. In chapter 5, I highlighted

students' comments on how supplementary school helped them with their school work. Mrs Worrell a teacher at Angelo Supplementary School, in an individual interview commented.

Mrs. Worrell: 'We deliver the curriculum in Science and Maths based on what the children need. They are interviewed at the start of the term asking them what areas they are weak in. We plan a unit of work based on the topics that most students are having problems with. We find out from them which examination board they were taking and we look at the schools' scheme of work. We teach the topic before so that they are always ahead. If they have a test in school they can request to have a revision lesson so it's tailored to their needs'.

Black supplementary schools are faced with the reality that their students have to meet the necessary national examination requirements (GCSE exams). They invariably have to balance tensions between independent black agendas and the state's credential/qualifications system.

Other black supplementary schools focus mainly on the teachings of culture heritage and history which they believe counters a Eurocentric curriculum which African-Caribbean children are exposed to in mainstream schools (Reay and Mirza, 1997). Kim, and Charmaine, sixth form students at Highbury Secondary School in a focus group commented:

Kim: 'Black history month have stuff about all the different races and religion and they only did a little bit on African history. It wasn't even publicised'.

Charmaine: 'They want to change it into like' culture month' - it's not culture month, its black history month'.

Kim and Charmaine expressed their displeasure about the failure of their schools to adequately celebrate black history month.

In an individual interview, a teacher from Broadfield Secondary School also felt that the national curriculum was not culturally relevant enough for African-Caribbean pupils.

Ms. Jackson: 'The teaching materials need to be relevant to them so they can feel part of it- that they are learning things that are relevant. In English some of the stuff they are doing like Shakespeare. They need to find other up to date topics. Interest them and they will want to learn. Trying to get them to rewrite old English is like trying to teach them another language - and it's quite hard'.

The manager of Angelo Supplementary School in an individual interview explained the school's delivery of a culturally relevant curriculum.

Mrs. James: We have history courses so that students understand West Indian and African history and they are able to discuss how their own history interacted with others'.

Angelo supplementary schools also provide students with teachers who understand their culture. Miss Jackson from Broadfield Secondary school commented in an individual

interview that sometimes white teachers' lack understanding of African-Caribbean pupils' cultural specific behaviour which can lead to confrontations and reprimands.

Miss Jackson: 'Because it's a different culture it is very difficult for teachers to adapt to it and follow the culture. When I was on one of the courses I was doing, this sort of thing came up in a discussion, and what was identified was that some African-Caribbean students were finding it difficult to make eye contact and some white people find this quite offensive and think that he or she is rude or whatever when really they are only doing it because they are used to it. Because they don't know about the lifestyle and the culture, this causes a clash'.

Mrs James from Angelo Supplementary School commented:

Mrs James: 'We have teachers they can culturally associate with and teachers from different races, so they learn their own and other cultures'.

At Angelo supplementary schools children were taught by teachers who understand their culture and who did not view black academic success as unusual or exceptional.

The main pedagogic approach at Angelo Supplementary School was centred on students' preferred learning style. This idea of learning style originated from the work of Howard Gardner around multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999). Learning styles mean having different approaches or ways of learning. According to Gardner (1999), if a child knows their learning

style it enhances their learning and progress. The three types commonly used in UK schools are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Mrs James commented:

Mrs. James: 'They need to know their preferred learning style. We had a girl here who they said had learning difficulties at her school. As soon as her mother brought her here we assessed that she was a kinesthetic learner so we used activity based learning with her. This girl began to make so much progress that she began to supersede the children at her school. Then they took her off the SEN register. Why was she on the register in the first place?'

Mrs. James identified the student's learning style as kinesthetic. This student was given the opportunity to engage in activities which involved a hands-on approach and an exploration of the physical world. Mrs James claimed that this learning style was predominant among African-Caribbean children.

There have been studies conducted in the US which have investigated the effects that kinesthetic learning opportunities within the school's content curricula, have on the cognitive performances of young children. The researchers concluded, perhaps contentiously, that students from different ethnic groups have different patterns of preferred learning styles (Boykin and Cunningham, 2001; Allen and Butler, 1996). The research, however, was able to show that the use of a highly kinesthetic context over the use of low kinesthetic context improved the cognitive performances of the African American students in their study. In contrast, white students performed better after low movement experiences; both of these results lend support to the theory that students from different ethnic group perform best under

diverse and culturally compatible learning contexts. The authors suggested that the positive effects of this culturally compatible learning context could be generalized to other school context.

Research on race, education and school experiences suggest that teachers have, in broad terms, held two conflicting perspectives on the role of students' ethnic cultures in learning and teaching. One perspective is that students' cultures (meaning the beliefs and practices developed outside school, shaped by ethnicity, language, faith and so forth) necessarily impact on their educational values and their learning styles (Allen & Butler, 1996). Consequently, in order to support pupils' educational development, teachers and schools must develop a nuanced understanding of students' cultural backgrounds because 'matching' the contextual conditions for learning to the cultural experiences of the learner increases task engagement and hence increases task performance (Allen and Butler, 1996). This approach does not regard pupils' cultural backgrounds as 'outside' of schooling.

The other perspective, however, makes sharp distinction between practices that belong 'within school' and those that belong 'outside school'. This approach suggests that effective teaching and learning is shaped by academic goals and that effective pedagogy transcends cultural differences. In short, its view is that 'good teaching is good teaching'. It claims that the methods, strategies, and techniques that good teachers learn and master are equally valuable for students from a range of cultures. Therefore, no special knowledge and skills other than the knowledge and practice bases of teacher education are needed to train teachers for multiracial, multicultural classrooms (Smith, 1998). In fact, the adoption of 'multicultural' educational approaches may only contribute to the perpetuation of stereotyped categories and

labels, and may contribute to low expectations about the educational potential of BME children (Sewell, 1997, Birbalsingh, 2010).

However, other approaches to learning and teaching in multicultural contexts (including those that take a Bourdieuan perspective) emphasise that schooling and pedagogy are never culturally neutral. The view that schooling is culturally specific (in terms of class and gender, as well as in terms of race) has long been argued by critical educators, including such diverse figures as Paolo Freire, Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu, June Jordan, Brian Simon and Stephen Ball. Their critical analyses of schooling are varied (Freire, 1970; Bernstein, 2000; Ball, 2003) but all argue that schools must acknowledge their culturally-specific biases, values and practices (masculinist, middle-class, white, capitalist) and that producing more equal outcomes necessarily involves acknowledging pupils and communities' diverse, contested relationships with the institutions of education.

In addition, as well as strong theoretical arguments about cultural diversity, there is also what we might regard as practitioners' arguments in favour of pluralistic approaches to education. According to Frisby (1993) in various teacher training textbooks and programmes, one of the characteristics of an excellent teacher is, knowing his/her students. Knowing the cultures and backgrounds, of students individually and collectively, is an important part of the teaching and ultimately, the most effective. Hence, it is important that teachers use their knowledge of students' culture and background to influence their planning and delivery just like any good teacher who differentiates a classroom based on multiple intelligences or different learning modalities.

The issue is a complex one which entertains a range of perspectives from teachers and educators. The degree to which culturally sensitive teaching and learning approaches should be a part of school structures and practices is a difficult question that teachers and teacher training providers must continue to explore. Their reflections should, however, include considerations of how best to encourage pupils' resilience and should prioritise race equality as an educational aim.

6.12 Black social/cultural capital and black churches

As well as supplementary school, black churches have made a significant contribution towards providing social and cultural capital to the black communities in the UK. In Chapter 5, students remarked that attending church contributed immensely to their educational success. The students that attended church and Sunday school, claimed that the religious principles learnt, taught them self-discipline, inter-personal skills and the importance of striving for success. As Rhamie and Hallam (2002) commented that black church instills in black students principles such as ethics, morality and the achievement of goals. In order to gain a greater insight into the contribution that black churches have made to the black community it is useful to inspect how they have operated within the US. In the US black churches have a history of providing black communities with important and vital sources of social and cultural capital.

Black churches have played a vital role in the social, political, economic and political emancipation of African-American people in the US. It has not just been a communal place where black people come together to worship but serves as an arena for social, political, civic and philanthropic action. According to Francis (2003):

‘Black churches (in the US) were a hub for the black community where people were affirm as human beings.....it served as a surrogate world, providing social participation and a buffer against cruelties and racism’.

(Francis, 2003: 3)

In the US black churches have worked in close partnership with the education community and have raised funds to set up and support black colleges and universities. However, the general mission of many black churches in America was to take a holistic approach to their ministry. They not only focused on the basic needs of people but also on human rights activism in order to achieve economic empowerment and equity with regards to health and education for the black communities (Duran, 2001).

Likewise, UK black churches have made strides in providing supportive networks to their black communities (Channer, 1995; Rhamie and Hallam, 2002). They have shared their facilities to accommodate Saturday schools (supplementary schools), have raised funds to provide the basic needs of the community such as food and clothing and have been a continued source of moral and educational guidance to young people in the community. Community schools which took place on Saturdays, known as Saturday schools went on to be officially called supplementary schools. It serves as a space which fosters the development of resilience. In individual interviews with students, Charlotte, Becky and Shanique all spoke about how the church helped them to achieve educational success (Chapter 5.7).

6.13 Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on accounts offered by pupils, teachers and parents who participated in this current study which affirms that African-Caribbean families and communities possess specific forms of social and cultural capital that their children use to develop resilience, resistance and successful school identities. These forms of black capital are usually underestimated and undervalued by teachers and administrators in schools who have a tendency to favour dominant forms of capital possessed by the white middle-class (Carter, 2005). Bourdieu's claim about the legitimacy of forms of social and cultural capital (valued by schools) was refuted by Yosso (2005) who drew upon CRT to identify specific forms of black social and cultural capital that enhanced the academic outcomes of ethnic minority groups. It is interesting to note that the students in this study who were middle-class did not have the same privileges as the white middle-class, with regards to the legitimacy of their capital. They lacked 'whiteness' and its privileges and reported having similar negative experiences in school, as other African-Caribbean students. In the future I may consider conducting ethnographic research with an added emphasis on observation in order to capture more evidence of student privileging along racial lines.

In addition, there is no doubt that, students from other ethnic groups might benefit from the social and cultural capital within their own culture and communities. Other minority ethnic community groups such as Jews, Sikhs and Muslims have supplementary school, high aspirations for their children and employ parenting approaches to help their children to succeed academically. This chapter, however, explored the forms of social and cultural capital that are unique to African-Caribbean families and their communities in the UK. As McLean (2002) suggested, different ethnic groups develop specific forms of social/cultural capital in

diverse ways. African-Caribbean people have a unique history, different narratives, and school experiences from other ethnic groups. Both Yosso and Solorzano have credible arguments about black cultural/social capital. In actuality, it is not always easy to distinguish 'black' social/cultural capital because real student practices/experiences are complex, messy and intersects within different social and cultural domains, but it is possible to identify some features of successful black pupils' practices and experiences that do constitute a distinctive form of social and cultural capital which have contributed hugely to their academic success. The next chapter presents the findings and significance of this thesis.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter commences with a discussion of the findings and significance of my research. This is followed by a discussion on its originality and contribution to research in the field of race and education; particularly in relation to African-Caribbean educational achievement. This chapter will continue with a reflection on the limitations of my research and will make suggestions for possible future research which can be built upon my current research project. I will conclude this chapter with a brief synopsis of my personal learning/journey.

The originality of my research lies in its complex portrayal of hard-won educational success. The students who participated in this study were not free of the antagonisms that have marked the school experiences of young African-Caribbean pupils in the UK. They were acutely aware of their vulnerability to, on the one hand, draining friendships and on the other, school disciplinary sanctions. They were also acutely aware of the need to build social capital and, degrees of instrumentalism notwithstanding, the need to be guided by what they termed self-awareness. And perhaps we should not be too dismissive of their educational instrumentalism, in the way that academics often are. After all, these black students came from backgrounds in which the value of educational gains was linked to security and social mobility. Their backgrounds were, relatively speaking, economically vulnerable and vulnerable to racist undermining; therefore, it is unsurprising that many sought solid material gain from education.

In Chapter 1, I discussed my motivation for embarking on this research project. I explained that the disparities in educational outcomes between ethnic groups in British secondary schools and the relatively poor performance of African-Caribbean students, was a new phenomenon to me. In Trinidad and Tobago where I attended secondary school, there was little discrepancy in relative academic attainment of students along racial lines. As an African-Caribbean teacher/researcher, I felt personally, morally and civically obliged to find out what was going wrong with these pupils. During the early stages of my enquiry, I observed that African-Caribbean learners were negatively stereotyped by teachers and that many educational structures and policies appeared to disadvantage them educationally. The prevalent discourse among teachers, researchers and policy makers was that African-Caribbean students were performing poorly in school because of cultural deficiencies caused by their poor socio-economic background. Also, quantitative research and statistical data on a national level continued to reinforce the deficit model regarding African-Caribbean underachievement despite research evidence which suggested otherwise. Despite the deficit model, negative perceptions and the continual poor performances of many African-Caribbean pupils in British schools, there remained a resilient group of African-Caribbean students who continued to defy the odds and manage to achieve high academic/educational outcomes. My original research drew from their accounts of their school experiences, analyzing their narratives in order to discover the factors which enabled these students to achieve educational success.

The thesis addresses my first research question: that is, how do African-Caribbean pupils define educational success? A key finding of this research is that students' definitions of educational success are not homogeneous. The majority of students offered instrumentalist

definitions of success linked to ‘conventional’ notions of academic (and career) success. Other students went beyond instrumentalism and defined educational success in terms of having self-knowledge or self-awareness (Chapter 4.7). Other students defined educational success in terms of having self-discipline, which enabled them to avoid the school’s disciplinary system. They also managed friendships with their peers by only associating themselves with friends who were committed to education and dissociating with those who were not dedicated to education.

The second research question concerns how African-Caribbean pupils produce and describe ‘successful’ school identities? Students’ definitions of educational success/achievement in this study provided insights into their conceptions of what constituted educational success which in turn informed their successful school identities (Wexler, 1992). In this study students’ successful school identities were developed dynamically and diversely, as a result of their relationships with their peers, teachers, parents and the wider community beyond school. By displaying complex ‘balancing acts’ in their social relationships with other African-Caribbean pupils and teachers, they were able to articulate their own versions of a successful school identity based on self-knowledge; a redefined knowledge of ‘being’ educationally successful African-Caribbean students drawing from distinctive and under-valued forms of black social and cultural capital. The awareness in my research of the complexity and demands involved in their balancing acts, their managing of friendships and negotiation of the school disciplinary system provides, I believe, nuanced insights into the instability and tenacity underlying African-Caribbean students’ academic success. It was, indeed, hard-won success.

7.2 Research and Policy

As I highlighted in Chapter 1, the vast majority of research to date, have focussed almost entirely on African-Caribbean underachieving pupils (Rhamie, 2007). As a result, few studies have been conducted with the aim of investigating the factors which support African-Caribbean school success. Significantly, this research has adopted a counter approach by conducting research on successful African-Caribbean students with the aim of discovering the factors which support their academic success.

In recent years there have been few studies conducted on issues around high-achieving African-Caribbean pupils. For example, Rhamie's (2007) study on African-Caribbean high achievers, Rollock's (2007a/2007b) and Rollock *et al.*'s (2012) research on black middle-class identity and Archer's (2010) study of the educational practices of minority ethnic middle-class. Despite these studies, research which explores the views, identities and educational experiences of African-Caribbean high achievers remains an under-researched area. Thus, my research is significant because it broadens the landscape of inquiry on African-Caribbean educational achievement by investigating pupils' own accounts of the factors underpinning their 'success'.

7.3 Emerging conclusions

The next sections of the thesis draws together the emerging conclusions or 'findings' of the research. These comprise its main theoretical contributions to research on race and education. A key emerging finding of this research was that students' definitions of educational success were not homogeneous but diverse. They defined educational success in terms of instrumentalism, self-knowledge/awareness and self-discipline.

7.3.1 Instrumentalism

The majority offered instrumentalist definitions of success linked to ‘conventional’ notions of academic (and career) success; their definitions involved getting good GCSE and A-Level grades and being well qualified in order to get a career that offered social status, professional opportunities and personal satisfaction. This conventional notion of instrumentalism links to British 21st Century neo-liberal educational discourse in which education is subordinate to the immediate demands of the economy.

7.3.2 Pupils’ self-knowledge

Other students went beyond an instrumental definition and defined educational success in terms of having self-knowledge/awareness (Chapter 4.7). Their self-knowledge/awareness, however, seem to encompass a critical ambivalent participation in education. This critical ambivalent participation in education does not compare to Brown’s (1990) definition of alienated instrumentalism discussed in Chapter 4 (4.2), because of its racialised outlook. Students tended to believe in the potential of education to enhance career prospects and in most instances held a residual Caribbean belief in the intrinsic value of education. This Caribbean belief in the fundamental value of education was discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2. These students were clearly pro-education but lacked trust in, and felt alienated from their teachers who they alleged treated them unfairly and stereotyped them as underachievers and badly behaved. They felt excluded from school’s definition of the ‘ideal’ student which might arguably account for their ambivalence towards their teachers. This was also part of their ‘self-knowledge’, the critical engagement in education, wherein they believed in participating in education but were still critical of what they perceived as schools’ racism and over conformity.

As well as defining educational success in instrumental terms and having self-knowledge, some students defined educational success in terms of having self-discipline. Having self-discipline involved the adoption of two major strategies. Firstly, the avoidance the school's disciplinary system and secondly, managing friendships within their peer group.

7.3.3 Avoiding confrontation

In order to avoid the school's disciplinary system, high achieving African-Caribbean students avoided aggressive and confrontational responses to presumed unfair treatment and racism by teachers, as it would bring about reprimands, which would have an adverse effect on their education. African-Caribbean parents also advised their children to avoid hasty reactions in response to presumed unfair treatment by teachers even when they thought they were in the right. They were encouraged to come home and discuss the matter.

Another way in which students avoided schools' disciplinary system was by not being drawn into anti-school subcultures. They thought that they were already perceived by teachers as anti-school and rebellious and did not want to reinforce this stereotype. They did not want to be influenced by bad company, so they distanced themselves from students who were not committed to education and formed bonds of friendship with high achieving pupils whose actions, avoided serious reprimands. Despite being pro-school these high achieving African-Caribbean students were not conformist, in the sense that they were ambivalent towards teachers.

7.3.4 Managing friendships

The managing of friendship exhibited by these high achieving African-Caribbean students,

involved forming groups of like-minded individuals, who studied and socialised together and visited each other's homes. The strong supportive network they formed gave them a sense of solidarity and enabled them to help and encourage each other to succeed. This economy of friendship and group 'habitus' which I discussed in Chapter 5.1, demonstrates bonding capital which is a distinct form of black social capital (discussed in Chapter 6) prevalent within the black community. Bonding capital not only gave these students a sense of solidarity and belonging but enabled them to attain and sustain increased measures of individual and collective educational progression.

This economy of friendship however presented students with some challenges. They were sometimes criticised for their academic assertiveness and the exclusion of others. They were often accused of 'acting white' by their black peers, whose description of 'acting white' seemed at times to be more in keeping with behaviours they associated with 'not acting black'. For example, not talking in Jamaican patios and not acting and dressing like a gangster was perceived as not acting black enough. Although the students were uncomfortable with such criticisms, they demonstrated resilience by ignoring their accusers. Interestingly, whilst exercising an economy of friendship, some students made an effort to maintain links with past friends who underachieved in school and offered them encouragement to re-engage in purposeful endeavours (see Chapter 5, Sec 5.3). They seemed to want to maintain contact with the black community.

7.3.5 Balancing act

Another key emerging finding in the analysis of this thesis is that high achieving African-Caribbean participants in this research orchestrated complex balancing acts which enabled

them to navigate school successfully and find viable ways of being high achievers. This involved balancing two positions of socialisation: between contemporary educational instrumentalism and traditional Caribbean intrinsic values of education, as well as between distancing themselves from those who were not committed to education and retaining contact with and acceptance within the black peer group and community. They believed in school and its role in providing them with academic qualification but exhibited a critical ambivalent participation in education. For instance, they criticised teachers for not going out of their way to form closer relationships with them and not giving them personal help and support, but were reluctant to exhibit reciprocity in the process. They may have lacked trust in their teachers due to alleged unfair treatment and low expectation of them academically. Through these ‘balancing acts’ the students in this study can be considered critical appropriators of the resources that they and others produce. Being faced with racialised conflicts, discourses and experiences which presented barriers to their academic success and which positioned them as ‘undesirable learners and non-academic’, they were coerced to improvise. They improvised by presenting different discourses of their own experiences (definitions of success) and devised unique, complex and innovative strategies (balancing acts) in order to construct their successful school identities. They demonstrated resilience in their performance of these complex ‘balancing acts’ which enabled them to negotiate schooling successfully by create their own versions of a ‘successful’ school identity.

7.4 Class, family and educational aspirations

In the analysis of my interview data, most of the student participants believed that structures within their homes and relationships with their parents had the greatest impact on their educational success. The next section discusses some of the features within the homes and

communities of high achieving African-Caribbean students which they have consistently drawn upon to build their resilience and develop successful school identities.

The majority of students in this study came from families that had high aspirations and students had their sights set on attending the most elite universities in the UK. I identified these families as black middle-class however, they were often critical of the education system and felt that schools were not giving their children the best chances to achieve their academic potential. They felt that they had to pay extra attention to their children's educational progress, provide them with extra academic help as well as supplement their education. They did not want to leave it up to the school system. They stressed to their children the importance of having to work much harder than their white counterparts in order to achieve educational and economic parity. In spite of this, students from some of these families commented that they receive little parental pressure to succeed.

This study also identified African-Caribbean high achieving students who came from families that can be classified in crude terms as working-class. Children from these families were 'pushed' to succeed academically and were in some cases the first in their family to attend university. Parents had some 'hot knowledge' of the education system, however, they made efforts to increase their knowledge of the curriculum and pathways to higher education in order to closely monitor their children's academic progress and provide the necessary support and guidance with further educational choices. These students also had high aspirations to attend elite universities and felt immense parental pressure to succeed academically. They were from working-class families with middle-class ambitions.

This study has identified that African-Caribbean children from both types of families were highly motivated to succeed academically and had higher educational aspirations for themselves than teachers. These African-Caribbean people placed a high value on education and although some were in basic terms working-class, they were involved in similar practices as the white middle-class regarding the education of their children. Unfortunately, they felt that their high educational verve and aspiration were often undermined, overlooked and dashed as unrealistic by school staff. The students in this study generally felt that they were unfairly treated and labeled as rebellious and anti-school by teachers who often underestimated their academic ability. They were neither expected to get the highest grades and average grades were considered 'good enough'. This was in contrast to the way teachers viewed Chinese and Indian pupils who were seen as 'ideal pupils' and 'model minorities'.

In this research half of the student participants were identified as working-class. However, students from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds gave similar accounts in individual interviews and focus group of unjust treatment and racism in school. They both claimed that they were stereotyped as aggressive and badly behaved by teachers and carried a label which caused them to receive unfair treatment and differential discipline from teachers (Wright, 1987; Sewell, 1997; Richardson and Wood, 1999; Majors, 2001; Gillborn, 2002, 2008; Richardson, 2005; Youdell, 2006). See Chapter 4, Sect 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7. They embellished the help of non-teaching staff, pastoral school staff and role models in their schools and drew on valuable forms of black social and cultural capital in their homes, communities, supplementary schools and churches. They acted different to the black anti-school subculture which tended to display more overt acts of rebellion in their responses to alleged unfair treatment. However, there were incidences when students said they would challenge allege

unfair treatment and racism by acts of defiance (see Chapter 4, Sec 4.6), but generally students said they would consult with their parents who tended to encourage them to avoid confrontations with school staff (not talking back) or would go into school to resolve the problem with teachers.

7.5 Black social and cultural capital

The parents of the high achievers in this research were vigilant in ensuring that their children were exposed to specific forms of black social and cultural capital through their distinct parenting strategies/practices as well as ensuring that their children participated in a range of extra-curricular activities in places and spaces rich in black cultural and social capital such as supplementary school, community groups/organisations and church.

7.5.1 Black supplementary school

This thesis has highlighted and explored the important role of black supplementary schools in fostering and enhancing the resilience of the African-Caribbean students. The vast majority of student participants in this study said that they benefited from the teaching approach which tended to be more informal, and activity based than in the mainstream school setting. They said they benefitted from supplementary schools as they were homely places with smaller class sizes and where teachers afforded them more time and attention than in secondary schools. Although these supplementary schools had strict regimes regarding behaviour, students could exhibit black symbolic behavior (act black) without reproach (they could be themselves). They were able to meet and communicate with other black students and had contact with positive role models.

At the supplementary school students gave accounts of receiving a combination of academic help which focused on their preferred learning styles. This helped to enhance their academic confidence and academic knowledge when they returned to their respective schools. One of the high points of their learning experience was learning about their own black cultural heritage which gave them a sense of cultural pride and raised their awareness of black achievement and success which did not occur at their secondary schools. At the supplementary school they gained resilience by acquiring knowledge and skills which enabled them to challenge inequality in school and in society. Students were defiant to accusation of 'acting white' by their peers and some expressed a Pan-African perspective of education. Supplementary school has helped these students to maintain, a sense of black cultural identity, whilst also achieving educational success. Clive who attended two supplementary schools over a period of time demonstrated resilience by defying the criticism of 'acting white'. He was comfortable with being black and successful, having received early exposure to notions of black success and hearing accounts and biographies of successful black people, such as black inventors.

7.5.2 Black churches

I have discussed in Chapter 6 how black churches have played a crucial role in providing a rich source of black social and cultural capital to the black community both in the US and the UK. Like black supplementary schools, students' church involvement was an important factor that contributed to their educational success. The biblical principles that they were taught helped them to improve their work ethic and avoid arguments and confrontations with people. They were also taught biblical precepts which advised them to choose their company wisely (walk in the council of the Godly) which involved limiting their circle of friends. I believe

that this might have some bearing on students' management of friendship. They also received encouragement to pursue educational goals from their Sunday school teachers who were both good role models and mentors. They said that they benefited from taking the lead in activities and being complimented; an experience which they seldom experience in mainstream school. The feeling of what it was like to be successful was a trait which they carried into the secondary school setting. They commented that their self-confidence and self-worth were improved which equipped them with the resilience to face the impending challenges and barriers when they returned to their respective secondary schools.

7.5.3 Extra-curricular and community activities

As well as involvement with supplementary school and church, students' participation in extra-curricular activities such as music and drama enhanced their academic success. This improved their self-confidence and their drive to succeed. They were given the opportunity to participate in creative and meaningful practical based activities and were able to meet with positive role models. They were also able to form bonds and networks of friendship with other African-Caribbean youths with similar aspirations. These community and group activities provided an important source of black social and cultural capital for these children.

7.6 Limitations

My research was small scale, relying on a small number of participants and types of schools in one part of the country. As a result there is a limit to which its findings may be generalized to other similar schools and contexts (Silverman, 2011). The relative brevity of the research meant that I did not work with the schools and pupils over an extended period which may have offered further insights into processes and patterns of social change over time (Bryman,

2004). The sample I used were purposive/opportunistic and relied on a fairly small number of pupils, parents and teachers, some of whom were people with whom I already had contact, hence, interpretation of results was limited to the population under study.

I would have liked to gain access to another supplementary school. However, there were few of these schools and they were difficult to gain access to. Angelo initially posed access problems as they had recently accommodated a group of university researchers. The manager told me researchers took up too much teaching and learning time. On the other hand, she might have allowed me access because she felt that my research could help to highlight the aims, nature of provision and promote the good practice within the supplementary school. This could also be a means by which the supplementary school might gain funding in the future

To be valid over a greater population or to form the basis for a theory, the study may be repeated for confirmation in a different population, still using a similar non-probability method (Bernard 2002). Another disadvantage of purposive sampling method is that the researcher makes judgment on the informant's reliability. I had to be alert to possible biases on the part of the respondents (So idler, 1974). By using triangulation and validation methods, I was able to cross-check and verify certain ideas and concepts that were emerging from students' accounts. Despite its inherent bias, purposive sampling can provide reliable and robust data (Bernard 2002).

My goal was to have equitable representation and participation of girls and boys (Leduc, 2009); however, I was unable to achieve this and had to settle for an imbalance of girls and boys (8 boys and 18 girls) as a matter of convenience. Also the teachers and parents consisted

of a disproportionately high number of females. This concurs with government statistics which show that girls outperform boys at GCSE and A-level and that the majority of teachers in the UK were female (DfE, 2011, Paton, 2013). As this research is not primarily concerned with gender differences in educational attainment, I allowed the issue of gender balance to natural surface. As well as gender, socio-economic class was an initial consideration when selecting my sample. However, for similar reasons (convenience sampling), the balance of middle-class and working class respondents was allowed to naturally surface. Interestingly, it consisted of an equal amount of working class and middle class pupils which concurs with my introductory discussion about the lack of salience of socio-economic class measures in predicting academic success.

As my sample only consisted of high achieving pupils and their parents, I had a limited opportunity to compare successful students with those who were less successful or who resisted schooling. Being able to make such comparison, may have enhanced understandings of how high and low achievers differ in terms of attitudes towards school and teachers as well as goal-valuation, motivation and academic self-concept (Coach and Siegle, 2001). I also had limited opportunity to compare differences in parents' views, attitudes and practices.

My research relied on interview accounts and not on observation which might have allowed me to gather first-hand information about the social processes and experiences of pupils in a 'naturally occurring' context. Hence, it might have provided me with more detailed and precise evidence than other data sources which I used (Silverman, 2000). I also had limited access to data on participants' actual achievement.

Being an insider-researcher, I had a greater understanding of the student and school culture being studied. I also had a good relationship with most of the pupils and staff at Broadfield Secondary School which helped all social interactions to naturally flow and promoted both the telling and the judging of truth (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Although being an insider-researcher has its advantages there may be disadvantages associated with greater familiarity which can lead to reduced objectivity. As a result I might unconsciously make wrong assumptions about the research process based on my prior knowledge which can be considered a bias (Hewitt-Taylor, 2002). To improve the credibility of my research it was important that I had an explicit awareness of the possible effects of perceived bias on data collection and analysis, respect the ethical issues related to the anonymity of the organizations and individual participants and considered and address the issues about how my role as an insider-researcher might influence the coercion, compliance and access to privileged information at each and every stage of the research (Smyth and Holian, 2008). I also had to address my dual role as teacher and researcher. I informed teachers and pupils about the nature of my study so that they perceived me in a dual role and not just as a teacher (Herrmann, 1989).

Another potential limitation was that students, teachers and parents interviewed were African-Caribbean and felt they had a vested interest my research. Some were well informed and enthusiastic about issues around African-Caribbean achievement and I felt that in some cases they were saying what they thought I wanted to hear. I had to guard against their subjectivity as well as my own being African-Caribbean myself, to ensure that my data was as reliable as possible. It would have also been useful to interview some white teachers to get their definitions and understandings of African-Caribbean educational success. Hearing their perspectives and side of the argument might have introduced more balance to discussions and understandings of their interactions and conflicts with African-Caribbean pupils.

Nonetheless, the value of my research relies on the richness of the interview data and the insights it gave into the perceptions and experiences of a small group of pupils, parents and teachers. Thus my research is not generalizable in conventional or numerical terms but my interview data were sufficiently rich to enable me the potential for a kind of ‘analytic generalizability’. That is, it enabled me to make claims about educational identities, values and resilience which, if added to previous and other research on (successful) African-Caribbean pupils can add nuance to our understanding of their school experiences.

7.7 Future research

This research could be extended by gaining a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the formation and maintenance of high achieving African-Caribbean students’ symbiotic group identity. What discourses are they engaged in? Also, at what stages in students’ secondary school lives are they likely to form these sub-groups and which experiences, situations and encounters initiates their formation? There is scope for employing an ethnographic approach which is characterised by charting the realities of the day to day life of institutions. Classroom observations of pupils and staff can be documented through note taking, tape recordings, and verbatim descriptions of events. Interviews and focus groups may be conducted with African-Caribbean students who were observed as well as teachers from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The same methodology which I used in this study can be employed in three or more school settings over a longer period of time. This methodological approach involves intense observation and interviews and is very effective in eliciting the views of students, teachers, and parents on a wide range of issues relating to school (Wright, 1987; Mac an Ghaill, 1988/1996).

Cross’s (1991) five stages of identity development model, appears to be a useful theoretical

and analytical framework from which to base further inquiry into black resilience and identity formation. It might help in finding out the stage of identity development when African-Caribbean children encounter racialised conflicts and contradictions which can affect school progress. Several studies have identified that African-Caribbean pupil's experience a drastic dip in their academic effort and performance as they move through secondary school (Sewell, 1997; Archer and Francis, 2007; Gillborn, 2008).

The period at which this apparent decline appears to occur among African-Caribbean students in secondary school seems to correspond with the 'awakening stage' of Cross's (1991) study which identifies that around age 12 to 15, children explore the majority culture and their heritage culture, rejecting, accepting and acknowledging differences and similarities. Conducting ethnographic research with high achieving African-Caribbean students from year 8 to year 10 might offer a nuanced understanding of how these students make sense of and respond to racialised social and personal conflicts and contradictions as well as ways in which they develop strategies to succeed in school. The knowledge gained from this enquiry might be helpful to all those working with African-Caribbean children as they would have a greater understanding of the personal, psychological and social processes occurring during the stages of black identity development.

7.8 Suggestions for improvements in policy and practice

7.8.1 Valuing the role of non-teaching staff

Pupils' accounts of their educational experiences often pointed towards the importance of non-teaching staff in schools. Pupils' interviews suggested that non-teaching staff were

important to them because they took a special interest in them, offered them advice and support to help them find their way in the school environment. They claimed that the positive social interaction they had with non-teaching staff helped to improve their self- confidence, self- efficacy, independence and academic success. These people were entrusted elder who provided support for personal development and general guidance over a period of time; from primary to secondary school and secondary school to university. This suggests that schools might do more to recognize the supportive role of non-teaching staff and perhaps provide more opportunities for them to have input into provision and to have greater contact with pupils. While the issue of mentoring *per se* is beyond the scope of this thesis, schools might recognize the potential of non-teaching staff in providing informal mentoring and, moreover, in building pupils' resilience and social capital.'

7.8.2 Teachers/schools need to understand and accommodate black cultural/social capital

There is a need for more recognition by school staff of the wealth of resources which exist in black families and community organizations, such as black parents, black supplementary schools and churches and the significant contributions they have made towards enhancing black school resilience and success. Schools will benefit from being more accommodating to pupil lead cultural activities. The comments made by pupils and teachers in Chapter 6, Sect.6.6.7 suggests that at Angelo Supplementary School, students benefit academically from receiving a culturally relevant and enriched curriculum. This helped them to restore cultural pride and develop resilience. Not only should these students be able to share in cultural enrichment activities, they should also be given the opportunity to privately gather for religious purposes (prayers) as is the case in many faith schools around the country. This will

invite forms of black social and cultural capital into schools which would have a positive effect on the educational achievement of African-Caribbean pupils and improve the standard of the schools' educational provision.

Teachers' stereotyping of African-Caribbean students as anti-school, badly behaved and low achievers needs to be challenged. As discussed in Chapter 4, much of the misunderstandings which occurs between African-Caribbean students and white teaching staff stem from teachers not having a sufficient cultural awareness. In my literature review I discussed the notion of racism being inadvertent, but nonetheless having a tendency of produce unfair outcomes, hence the notion of 'whiteness' and its privileging would be a useful and liberating theoretical consideration for discussion among teaching staff. Time should be allocated for teachers and pupils to discuss issues around cultural diversity and racism in schools. This could take the form of group discussions, work-shops and role play in which both students' and teachers' points of views are elicited. This will help teachers to reflect on and be more critical of their current practices regarding the education of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. This may cause them to re-conceptualize some commonly held stereotypes and misconceptions about African-Caribbean pupils. Teacher training days on issues pertaining to ethnic diversity could provide the ideal opportunity for teachers to discuss and address these issues.

As well as being positive role models, African-Caribbean teachers should be given the opportunity to contribute to sessions on African-Caribbean culture on training days, as they are themselves resilient and successful African-Caribbean people. It is unfortunate that Africa-Caribbean teachers in the UK rarely have this opportunity as a result of school agendas

and as current research suggests, they are less likely than their white counterpart to gain management positions in British schools (Maylor *et al.*, 2006). As a consequence, they tend to have a limited impact on training days and consequently on adding to understandings of ethnic diversity in schools. Their views and cultural assets are often undervalued and underutilised in schools and they have been known to leave the profession because of poor prospects of promotion.

Initial teacher training would benefit from including modules on teaching approaches that facilitate the learning of an ethnically diverse student population. Studies conducted by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) have found that newly qualified teachers in England are known to feel inadequately prepared to teach ethnic minority children (TDA, 2005, 2007). Pre-service teachers have also indicated that their course left them anxious and unprepared to teach black children in school (Maylor, 2014). According to Maylor, in 2013 little seems to have changed. Maylor suggests that it is thus important that teachers are sufficiently prepared in order to help black children to achieve academic success (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Darling and Hammonds, 2006). Consequently, they often fail to challenge stereotypical views about African-Caribbean pupils and other minority ethnic groups which they enter the profession with. Trainee teachers could be required to undertake several weeks school placement in a multi-ethnic school or attend work placement in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood. This may help them to gain a better understanding of the cultural specific norms and values as well as the socio-economic context of different minority ethnic groups.

7.8.3 Improvements in curriculum

Areas of the school curriculum need to be amended to ensure more relevance to the ethnically diverse school population. Schools should make more than a once a year reference to contributions made by black people and their successes. Student participant commented that some secondary schools do not celebrate black history month, and those that do, do so superficially. There needs to be a comprehensive account of black accomplishments, both past and present, in the context of British society. For example, in history, a detailed account of the part West Indian soldiers played in the World Wars would be both relevant and in context. Music from as UK pop, rap and reggae artists can be an innovative and up to date inclusion in the music and English curriculum. Unfortunately, the new government's history curriculum seems to be moving away from a multiculturalist perspective which suggests that the present curriculum is unlikely to invite such changes in the near future (Cameron, 2011).

7.9 Shift in research interest/government policy

In recent times, there has been a shift of interest both in the media and the political arena towards the educational and economic achievement of the white working-class. They are presented as falling behind the other ethnic groups (Sveinsson, 2009; Paton, 2010; Cook, 2011). This view implies that African-Caribbean students are no longer the major under-achieving group; they are experiencing less racism in school and society, therefore it is no longer imperative to focus on racial inequality in educational on a local and governmental level. According to Berkeley (2012), the coalition government has declared that equality is no longer their priority by cutting the funding of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) by about 60% (70M to 17M). According to Rob Berkeley this move reduces the power of the EHRC to ensure that public organisations act to prevent discrimination. In his

words ‘race inequality is as sharp as ever, yet efforts to tackle it have been undermined by the coalition’ (Berkeley, 2012). Without a measure to monitor the effectiveness of educational policies, new assessments such as the EBac may continue to be instituted. Recent analysis of students gaining the EBac by ethnicity found that African-Caribbean pupils (6.8%) are less likely to achieve the grades compared to White British pupils (15.4%) (DfE, 2010; Gillborn, 2011).

The current government has also failed to identify until recently, the discriminatory practices in the admissions process of its most elite university (Berkeley (2010). Mr. Cameron only recently commented on the despairingly low intake of black students into Oxford University. He called it ‘disgraceful’ and claimed ‘we have got to do better than that’ (Vasager, 2011). Since then Mr. Cameron has not taken any further steps to address this situation (Gillborn, 2011). Gillborn (2011) argues that this reaction is typical of the government’s approach to dealing with race equality; blatant and serious injustices plague the education system and the present Tory policies are making things worse. In the meanwhile, the gap between the GCSE results of African-Caribbean students and white students, as well as the other ethnic groups, continues to widen.

Government intervention under New Labour have done precious little to address the attainment gap between African-Caribbean students and their white peers and the new Tory administration, despite promising to cater for ethnic diversity, have by and large ignored the issue. According to Gillborn (2011), there are no safeguards to prevent the damage that new assessments such as the EBac, is already doing to the academic outcome of African-Caribbean pupils. He concluded that we have not moved on much (Gillborn, 2011).

This regression seems apparent in the government's dilution of a key policy that was aimed at improving racial equality. Mrs. Doreen Lawrence has expressed her concerns about the government reducing the rigor of its stance on the equality assessment impact policy. The Equality Impact Assessment was introduced in the 2010 Equality Act and involved assessing the likely and actual effect of policies or services on people in respect to disability and race equality. Her complaint was that the government was backtracking on their commitment to race equality and improvements in equality prompted by the Macpherson inquiry was being rescinded and race appeared to be no longer on the government's agenda (Muir, 2012).

7.10 Conclusion

My research journey has led me to an appreciation of the resilience and the sheer socio-educational skill and determination shown by high achieving African-Caribbean students and their families, who have managed to achieve success against the odds. These students have parents that are very supportive and value education highly, not least as a route to social mobility and socio-economic (and psychic) security. The students usually come into secondary school highly motivated to learn, with high educational aspirations and a wealth of social and cultural capital. However, in school they are (as they are fully aware) at risk of being framed and stereotyped as intellectually inferior and troublemakers, due to presumed cultural deficit in their homes and communities. Furthermore, they are often exposed to discriminatory disciplinary policies, practices and a racially biased curriculum, which present barriers to their academic progress and success. In addition, they are also faced with limited future prospect of attending the most elite educational institutions in the country despite having the prerequisite examination grades. These high achieving African-Caribbean students, through acts of resilience (defiance) have actively and dynamically struggled against these

adversities and have deliberately found solutions by drawing on forms black social and cultural capital.

These high-achieving African-Caribbean students, in the face of significant barriers, have had to exercise resilience in order to construct or invent their own versions of successful school identities. They were critical appropriators of their social circumstances and understood that their resilience had to be rooted in opposition to threats from outside their communities and within it. They capitalised on the invaluable wealth of social and cultural capital available in their homes and local communities. These distinct forms of capital are often undervalued and under-utilised in the school environment but are the very basis by which African-Caribbean parents and communities build resilient identities in their children. These alternative and distinctive forms of black social and cultural capital have helped them to cope with a discriminatory education system. In order to find viable ways of becoming high achievers these high-achieving African-Caribbean students orchestrated complex 'balancing acts' in order to negotiate their social world and emerge educationally successful. They improvised by their own narratives of success; they devised complex and innovative strategies in order to construct their successful school identities. The strategies they employed consisted of engaging in productive relationships with their peers and non-teaching staff at their schools and in their communities and avoiding the school disciplinary system by acting in ways that prevented confrontations with school staff. They could not be considered conformist since their self-knowledge/awareness guided their critical ambivalent participation in education.

It is my view that teachers, educators and policy makers need an increased awareness and understanding of black youths' resilience, the range of strategies they use to succeed in school

as well as the value and impact that forms of black social and cultural capital continue to have on the educational experiences and outcomes of African-Caribbean pupils, and, importantly, that students' balancing acts are rooted in a commitment to education, not ambivalence about it. Truly critical research on race and education is crucial in exploring how African-Caribbean students make sense of and act in a white dominated society, wherein, as Bell (1992) puts it, racism is integral, powerful and indestructible (Bell, 1992).

The limitations of this study as a piece of small-scale, cross-sectional research have been discussed in 7.6. However, I restate that the insights afforded by its rich interview data (derived from interviews with pupils, parents and teachers) may illuminate our understanding of second and third generation African-Caribbean pupils in other English school settings.

The interview account of African-Caribbean students in this research contributes to nuanced understandings of African-Caribbean pupils' educational identities, their resilience and to the social and cultural capital upon which they draw. The claims made about high achieving black pupils' school experiences in this thesis are not definitive but may contribute to on-going research on race and education in the UK, in relation to achievement, pathways in compulsory and post-compulsory education, support and guidance, and supplementary schooling. As such, they form a kind of working hypothesis.

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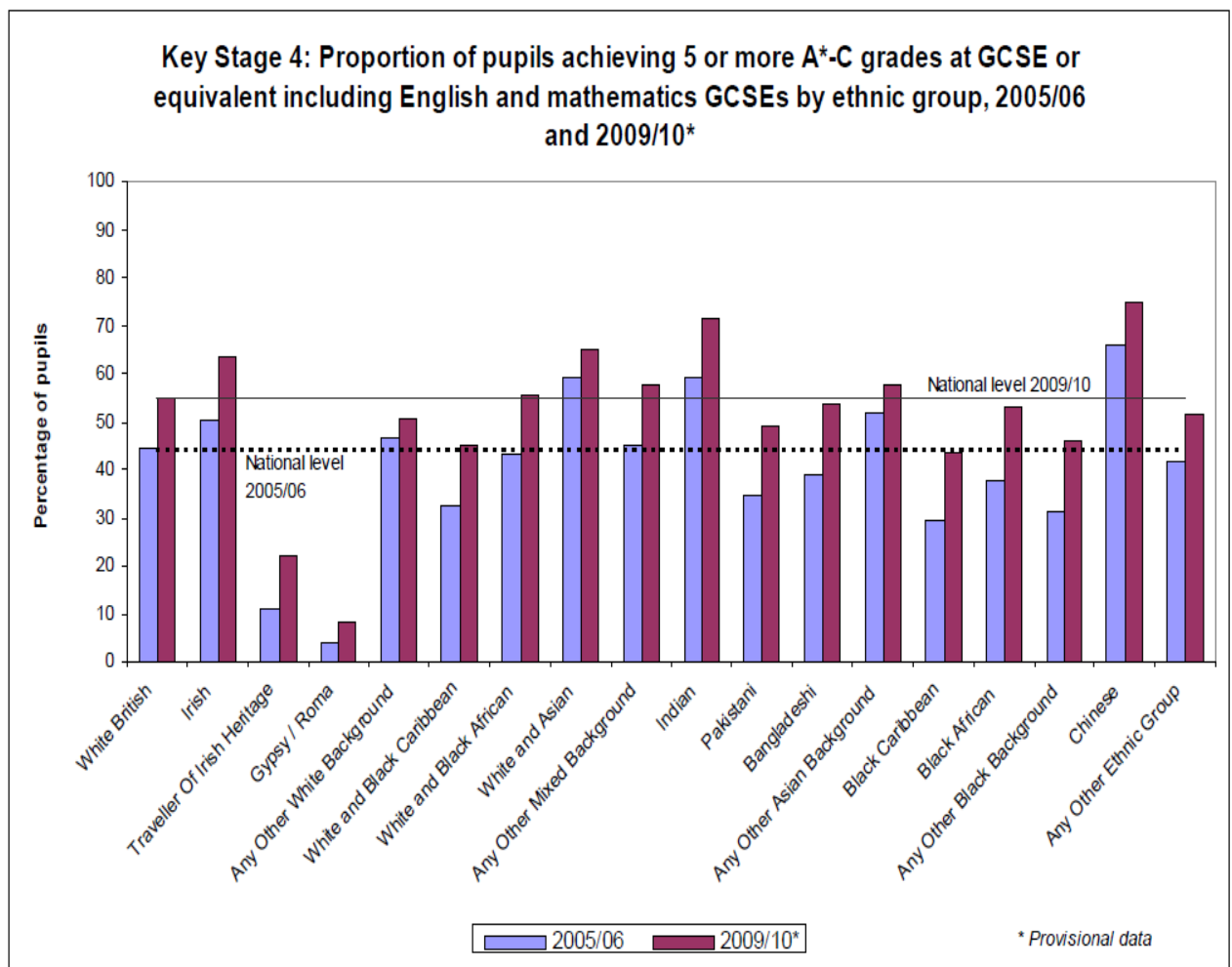
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APPENDIX 1

GCSE AND EQUIVALENT ATTAINMENT BY **ETHNICITY IN ENGLAND, 2009/10**

This table shows that pupils of any Black background achieved below the national level – a gap of 5.9 percentage points – with 48.9 per cent of Black pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and mathematics GCSEs compared with the national level of 54.8 per cent. This gap has remained relatively stable from 2008/09 but has narrowed by 4.5 percentage points compared to 2005/06 (DfE, 2010)



APPENDIX 2

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS APPLYING AND **ENTERING RUSSELL GROUP, OTHER OLD AND** **NEW UNIVERSITY.**

The table shows the sizeable social inequalities of access to higher status universities after entry qualifications have been taken into account.

	Russell Group	other Old	New
Social class origin			
Higher service class	61.7	60.9	61.1
Lower service class	52.1	55.1	70.5
Intermediate class	45.7	49.6	76.4
Manual class	37.4	43.9	82.0
Class unknown	29.8	37.0	77.3
School background			
Independent school	83.0	73.6	40.8
State school	58.4	62.6	72.4
FE college	35.9	41.5	82.5
School unknown	24.4	30.7	72.3
Ethnic group			
White	48.0	50.3	72.5
Black Caribbean/African	35.2	49.1	86.3
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	43.8	55.7	79.7
Indian	49.1	59.2	76.9
Chinese	57.4	56.7	66.4
Mixed/Other	46.5	55.7	71.0
Ethnicity unknown	24.0	29.9	73.4
All	45.8	49.7	73.3
N	59,551	59,551	59,551

Notes

Data are for the years 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006 combined.

Figures refer to the percentage of applicants making at least one application to a university of the type indicated.

Percentage applying to Russell Group, other old and new universities

Percentage entering Russell Group, other old and new universities

	Russell Group	other Old	New
Social class origin			
Higher service class	35.0	24.4	40.6
Lower service class	25.9	22.9	51.2
Intermediate class	21.1	20.9	58.0
Manual	14.1	18.2	67.7
Class unknown	11.5	17.2	71.4
School background			
Independent school	51.7	26.3	22.0
State school	27.6	25.1	47.3
FE college	13.4	16.9	69.7
School unknown	10.8	17.1	72.2
Ethnic group			
White	24.3	21.5	54.2
Black Caribbean/African	6.6	17.3	76.2
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	12.1	23.1	64.8
Indian	17.7	20.8	61.5
Chinese	32.1	20.0	48.0
Mixed/Other	21.5	21.9	56.7
Ethnicity unknown	10.9	16.0	73.1
All	22.2	21.0	56.9

Notes

Data are for the years 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006 combined.

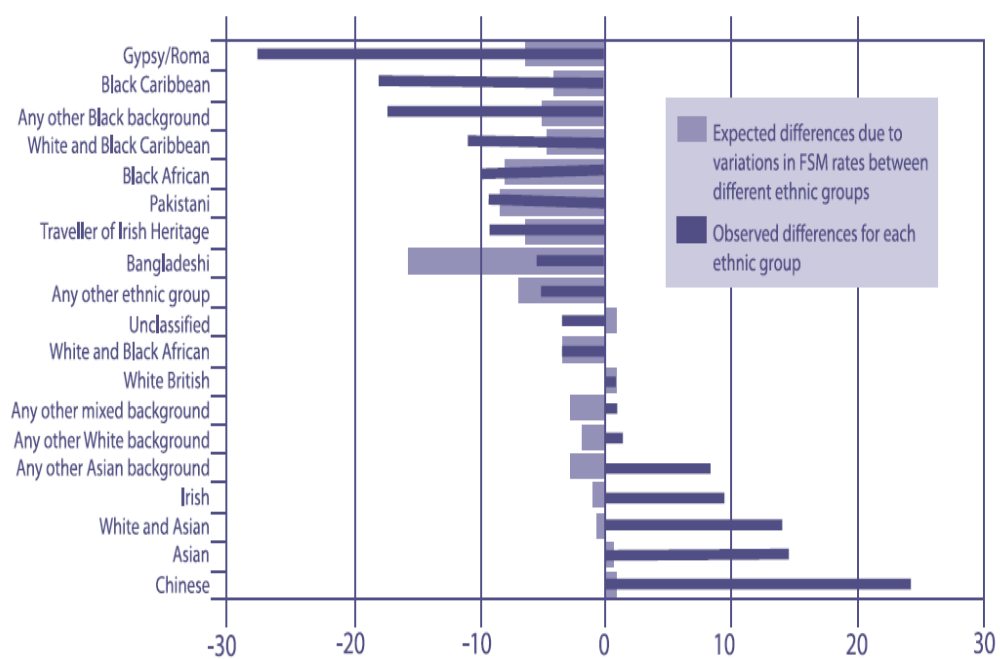
Figures refer to the percentage of entrants entering a university of the type indicated.

APPENDIX 3

EFFECT OF ETHNICITY AND DEPRIVATION ON **GCSE RESULTS**

This table underlines that Black Caribbean pupils' lower attainment is not wholly explained by deprivation factors.

Figure 6 Effect of Ethnicity and Deprivation on GCSE Results



APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

YEAR 11 AND SIXTH-FORM STUDENTS

- 1) How would you define educational success?
- 2) Do you think of yourself as 'educationally successful'?
Why?
- 3) What experiences in school do you think was most helpful in helping you to achieve educational success?
- 4) What kinds of support have you received to help you achieve success and make academic progress?
- 5) What kinds of things/experiences outside of school have been important to your progress?
- 6) Do you have experience of supplementary/Saturday school or any other outside school help?
- 7) Do you have friends whose advice or example you follow or others whose example you avoid?
- 8) Do you plan to go to university?

9) What course?

10) Which university?

11) Does any family/parents/friend attend university?

12) Why do you want to go to university?

13) What is its value or purpose?

14) Describe a typical university student?

15) What kinds of images are there in the media, TV, press of African-Caribbean pupils?

16) What images do you have?

17) Do you think a lot of these images associated African-Caribbean pupils with failure and under-achievement?

18) Government statistics show African-Caribbean pupils as achieving less well at GCSE and A-Level than some other pupils. What do you think about this? Why might this be?

19) If you had to give advice to a younger group of African-Caribbean pupils on how to

succeed at school and maybe go on to university what 2 or 3 things would you say to them?

20) Is there anything that you'd like to ask or talk about that we haven't covered?

21) Is there anything you will like to elaborate on?

Thanks

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW WITH SHANIGUE AND BECKY, YEAR 11 STUDENTS

- 1) Following earlier interview you identified some out of school factors which you believed had an influence on your school success. You mentioned going to the Drum and the other mentioned Sunday school.
- 2) In what way do you think involvement in these activities contributed to your positive approach to school?
- 3) How does the friendship group carry about itself operate within the school?

ANGELO SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

- 1) What secondary school do you attend?
- 2) What aspects of school do you enjoy?
- 3) Do you receive the help and support you need from teachers?
What help do you receive?
- 4) Do you think that you are achieving the best you can? Why?
- 5) Do you think of yourself as being educationally successful?
- 6) What sort of experiences in school do you think were most helpful in helping you to achieve educational success?
- 7) Do you enjoy coming to Angelo? Why or why not?
- 8) Why do you come to Angelo?
- 9) In what ways is it different from your normal school?
- 10) Does coming to Angelo help you when you go back to school?

11) Which subject do you learn here?

12) Are there other things that you learn here? What are they?

13) Do you plan to go to University?

14) Do you plan to go to University? What course?

15) Does any of your family/parent go to University or have any attended University?

16) Why do you want to go to University? What is its value or purpose?

17) What kinds of images are there in the media, TV, press of African-Caribbean pupils?

What images do you have? Do you think a lot of these images are associated with failure and underachievement?

18) Government statistics show that African-Caribbean pupils are achieving less well at GCSE and A-Level than some other pupils. What do you think about this? Why might this be?

19) If you had to give advice to a younger group of African-Caribbean pupils on how to succeed at school and maybe go on to university what 2 or 3 things would you say to them?

20) Is there anything that you'd like to ask or discuss further?

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

- 1) How would you define educational success?
- 2) What are your experiences and views of compulsory education?
- 3) Do you think it achieves its aims?
- 4) What are your views of African-Caribbean student and how they progress into sixth-form and University?
- 5) What experiences do have of supplementary/Saturday school?
- 6) What kinds of strategies are used in the school to help African-Caribbean students to achieve?
- 7) What kinds of behavior do you think is required for these students to achieve educational success?
- 8) Government statistics show that African-Caribbean pupils are achieving less well at GCSE and A-Level than some other pupils. What do you think about this? Why might this be?
- 9) What strategies do you think can be used to address the discrepancies in educational

outcomes in relation to ethnic minority achievement?

10) What experiences do have of supplementary/Saturday school?

11) Is there anything that you'd like to ask or discuss further?

ANGELO SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

1) How would you define educational success?

2) What are your experiences and views of compulsory education?

3) What experiences, life or academic, do you try to promote here at Angelo?

4) What kinds of strategies are used in this supplementary school to help African-Caribbean students to achieve?

5) What kinds of behaviour do you think is required for these students to achieve educational success?

6) What strategies do you think can be used to address the discrepancies in educational outcomes in relation to ethnic minority achievement?

FOCUS GROUP AT ANGELO SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENTS

- 1) What are your experiences and views of compulsory education?
- 2) Do you think it achieves its aims?
- 3) Why do you bring your children to supplementary school?
- 4) Have your children benefited from attending supplementary school?
In what way?

UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

- 1) What are you studying at university?
- 2) How would you define educational success?
- 3) Do you think of yourself as being educationally successful?
- 4) What was your primary school experience like?
- 5) What about your relationship with teachers?
- 6) Can you tell me what your secondary school experience was like?
- 7) Did you have friends whose advice or example you follow and others whose example and advice you avoid?
- 8) Tell me about your journey to university?
- 9) Why did you want to go to University?
- 10) What is its value or purpose?
- 11) What was the reason behind your choice of university?

12) Does any of your family/parent go to University or have any attended University?

13) Do you have experience of supplementary/Saturday school or any other outside school help?

14) What kinds of images are there in the media, TV, press of African-Caribbean pupils?

What images do you have? Do you think a lot of these images are associated with failure and underachievement?

15) Government statistics show that African-Caribbean pupils are achieving less well at GCSE and A-Level than some other pupils. What do you think about this? Why might this be?

16) What do you think can be done to ensure that more of African-Caribbean pupils succeed at school and maybe go on to University?

17) Is there anything that you'd like to ask or discuss further?

FOCUS GROUP WITH SIXTH-FORM STUDENTS FROM Highbury

SECONDARY SCHOOL

SCENARIOS 1

- a) A group of students are talking. The teacher wants the students to stop talking. They pick on you. Has this ever happened to you? How would you react?
- b) You have a misunderstanding or confrontation with a teacher and the teacher calls you stupid and or terms suggesting that you are not intelligent. How would you react?
- c) At what stage in your school life would you have given this response?

SCENARIO 2

- a) If another student or a group of students call you a 'sell out' or accuse you of 'acting white' because of your academic achievement (academic achievement being associated with being white), how would you deal with this?

SCENARIO 3

- a) The teacher is asking questions to the whole class. You put your hands up to answer questions only to be repeatedly ignored. Particular students get the opportunity to answer the questions and receive praise. How would you react to this situation?

PROBING QUESTIONS

- 1) How do you go about choosing your friends?
- 2) What about the ones who are not friends? What are your views on them and their lack of success?
- 3) How would you define educational success?
- 4) What factors in school helped you to achieve educational success?
- 5) What factors outside of school helped you to achieve educational success?
- 6) Why do you think African-Caribbean students are seen in a negative way by the media?
- 7) Why do you think they are perceived as non-academic and badly behaved in schools?
- 8) What do you think can be done to change people's negative perceptions?
- 9) What do you think can be done to address the underachievement of African-Caribbean students?

APPENDIX 5

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The research sample consisted of **26** students (8 boys and 18 girls), **9** teachers and **12** parents.

Interviewees from Broadfield Secondary School

Pupils (African-Caribbean)

2 year 11 girls, age 15/16.

-Becky.

-Shanique.

5 year 12 girls (sixth-form), age 16/17.

-Nicola.

-Tanika.

-Charlotte.

-Susanne.

-Chantelle.

Teachers (African-Caribbean and African)

5 teachers, age 30 – 45. The teachers comprised 4 females and 1 male.

-Mrs Lewis (Maths teacher) was born and educated in the Caribbean.

-Miss Jackson (Social Science) was born and educated in the Caribbean.

-Mr Brown (Learning Support) was born and educated in the Caribbean.

-Mrs Marshall is a Science teacher who was born and educated England.

-Miss Abua is a Science teacher who was born and raised in West Africa.

These teachers taught students at both compulsory ages and sixth-form.

Parents (African- Caribbean)

5 parents, age 30-50. The parents comprised 4 females and 1 male.

-Ms Spence is the mother of a year 11 participant. She was also a teacher.

-Ms Odom is the mother of a year 10 non-participant. She worked as a learning mentor in a school

-Ms Jacobs is the mother of a year 7 non-participant. She was a social worker.

-Ms Samuel was the mother of a year 11 participant.

-Mr Daniel was the father of year sixth-form participant. He owned a thriving business.

Most of these parents were born and educated in the Caribbean. Some came to England at an early age and completed their education in England. They were some of parents of the year 11 and sixth-form pupils interviewed.

Interviewees from Highbury Secondary School

Pupils (African-Caribbean)

5 year 13 boys (sixth-form), age 17/18.

-Clive.

-Shaq.

-Keith.

-Desmond.

-Tim.

2 year 13 girls (sixth-form), age 17/18.

-Charmaine.

-Kim.

Clive, Shaq, Charmaine, Desmond and Kim took part both interview and focus group.

Teachers (African-Caribbean)

1 teacher (female), age 30-50.

-Mrs Patterson taught Business studies at the sixth-form. She was born in the Caribbean but spent most of her adult life in England.

Parents (African-Caribbean)

1 parent (male), age 30-40.

-Mr Brown is a parent of one of the sixth-form students interviewed. He grew up in the Caribbean but spent most of his adult life in England. Mr Brown worked in Accountancy.

Interviewees from Kingsley Secondary School

1 year 12 girl, age 16/17.

-Coleen.

Interviewees from Angelo Supplementary School.

Pupils (African-Caribbean)

2 year 10 girls, age 15.

-Abi.

-Rianna.

3 year 11 boys, age 15/16.

-Steve.

-Kane.

-Akeem.

3 year 11 girls, age 15/16.

-Latoya.

-Simone.

-Carmel

These students attended multi-racial secondary schools in different locations in Birmingham.

Teachers (African-Caribbean)

3 teachers, age 35-50. Teachers comprised 3 females.

These teachers grew up and taught for a while in the Caribbean before coming to teach in England.

-Mrs Worrell is the manager of the supplementary school also mentored students in secondary schools.

-Mrs James taught mathematics and science in supplementary as well as mainstream school.

-Ms Lawrence is a mechanical engineer who taught mathematics and science at the supplementary as well as mainstream school. She also home-taught her children.

Parents (African-Caribbean)

1 parent (female), age 30-45.

-Ms Thompson was born in the Caribbean and was the parent of a year 8 student at the supplementary school.

Parent (Focus group participants)

5 parents (female), age between 35 and 55. Only one was born in England.

-Ms Peters is the mother of a year 9 student who attended Angelo.

-Ms Jameson is the mother of a year 8 student who attended Angelo. She worked a support worker in the community. She is also the mother of Keith whom I interviewed at Highbury

Secondary School.

-Mrs Hunt is the mother of a year 8 and year 10 student that attended Angelo.

-Ms Jeffrey is the mother of a year 10 student who attended Angelo. She was a teacher and the only parent in the group that was born and grew up in England.

-Ms Henderson was the mother of a year 8 student who attended Angelo.

Interviewees from University

Undergraduates (African-Caribbean)

1 university student (male), age 20.

John is a second year student from a London inner-city area who is studying Accountancy and Business at a Russell Group university in the Midlands.

2 university students (female) age 19.

Takira is in her first year and is studying a BA (Honours) in Business Studies at a non-Russell Group university in the West Midlands.

Jada is in her first year from an inner-city area in the West Midlands and is studying English and Creative Writing in a Russell Group university in the West Midlands.