The Experience of Black Caribbean Pupils in School Exclusion in England

Feyisa Demie[1]

Abstract

The disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean pupils has gained attention among policy makers and parents, but little research has been undertaken to understand the causes behind overrepresentation. Black Caribbean pupils were nearly four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than the school population as a whole and were twice as likely to receive a fixed-period exclusion. The aim of this research is to explore the experience of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusion in England and to investigate the reasons for overrepresentation in exclusion statistics. Complementary case studies and focus groups of were used to explore the research question. The key criteria for the selection of the schools were above national average with Black Caribbean and some evidence of exclusion in the schools. Schools then selected at random the respondents in this study. A number of reasons for overrepresentation of Black Caribbean pupils in exclusion statistics were suggested by the study. These included definitions as to the meaning of racism in schools, teachers' low expectations and institutional racism, lack of diversity in the school workforce including teachers, educational psychologists, SENCOs, and lack of effective training of staff on multicultural education, diversity and race issues. The research findings in this paper also contain a number of important messages for policy makers and schools including the need to recognise that the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean pupils is a national concern and to develop targeted initiatives to tackle overrepresentation in England schools.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been considerable concern among educators, parents, professionals, and communities about the growing numbers of Black children cited in official school exclusion data). National figures from the Department for Education show that 6,685 pupils were permanently excluded from schools in England (DfE, 2016) and Black Caribbean pupils are over-represented in both permanent and fixed term exclusions (Table 1, 2 and Figure 1). Nationally in 2014-15, 0.08% of pupil enrolments resulted in a permanent exclusion. However the figure for Black Caribbean pupils was 0.28%, indicating that they were more than three and a half times as likely to be permanently excluded as pupils overall. When breaking the statistics down by gender, Black Caribbean boys were even more over-represented in the permanent exclusion statistics. The only ethnic group that had higher rates of permanent exclusion nationally were "Gypsy/Roma", a relatively small ethnic group.

---

[1] Contact: School Research and Statistics Unit, Education and Learning, Lambeth LA fdemie@lambeth.gov.uk

Table 1. National Permanent Exclusions 2006-2015 - Percentage of School population

Ethnic Background	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
White British	0.13	0.12	0.12	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.09
White Other	0.10	0.09	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.06
White/Black Caribbean	0.36	0.36	0.32	0.25	0.24	0.22	0.22	0.19	0.18	0.22
White/ Black African	0.18	0.20	0.17	0.1	0.14	0.11	0.11	0.09	0.09	0.08
Gypsy/Roma	0.44	0.54	0.56	0.38	0.33	0.30	0.31	0.26	0.34	0.49
Indian	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01
Pakistani	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.05
Bangladeshi	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.03
Black Caribbean	**0.41**	**0.38**	**0.36**	**0.3**	**0.34**	**0.23**	**0.24**	**0.22**	**0.24**	**0.28**
Black African	0.16	0.13	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.07
Black Other	0.30	0.26	0.32	0.2	0.22	0.16	0.13	0.14	0.11	0.11
All Pupils	**0.14**	**0.13**	**0.12**	**0.1**	**0.09**	**0.08**	**0.08**	**0.07**	**0.07**	**0.08**

Table 2. National Fixed-Term Exclusions 2006-2015 - Percentage of School Population

Ethnic background	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
White British	6.4	5.9	5.62	5.14	5.01	4.8	4.2	4.21	4.67
White Other	4.2	4.1	4.05	3.5	3.32	2.93	2.65	2.52	2.85
White/ Black Caribbean	13.8	11.9	11.4	10.8	10.6	9.75	8.42	8.14	8.86
White and Black African	8.1	7.0	6.42	6.31	5.79	5.19	4.57	4.23	5.14
Gypsy/Roma	19.33	18.71	15.70	14.76	14.89	15.11	13.41	14.33	18.56
Indian	1.8	1.5	1.33	1.28	1.07	1.01	0.86	0.74	0.8
Pakistani	4.3	3.8	3.55	3.37	3.05	2.77	2.59	2.44	2.77
Bangladeshi	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.7	2.55	2.27	1.92	1.79	1.83
Black Caribbean	**12.7**	**11.1**	**11.2**	**10.8**	**10.6**	**9.23**	**8.22**	**8.21**	**9.64**
Black African	6.5	6.0	5.63	5.37	5.27	4.56	3.79	3.42	3.84
Black Other	10.6	9.6	9.18	8.27	7.46	6.4	5.17	4.98	5.76
All Pupils	**6.3**	**5.8**	**5.5**	**5.03**	**4.91**	**4.59**	**3.99**	**3.96**	**4.39**

Source: Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2006 to 2015, DfE SFR26/2016
2006 Fixed Exclusions has not been included in the table because it was reported for Secondary Schools only.

When considering the fixed term exclusion data, a similar pattern appears. Both Caribbean boys and girls were over twice as likely to have fixed term exclusions as pupils overall. (See DfE 2016)

The over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils in the exclusion statistics has been noted for many years. Black Caribbean pupils were nearly four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than the school population as a whole and were twice as likely to receive a fixed period exclusion. (DfE 2016).
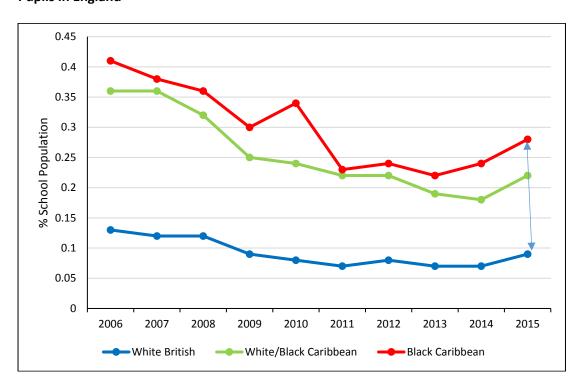
Figure 1. The Exclusion Gap: Permanent Exclusion Rate for Black Caribbean and White British Pupils in England

Recent analysis by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) claims these figures mask the true scale of the problem, with pupils forced out of mainstream schools by informal methods that are not captured in national exclusions data.

> "Despite only 6,685 reported permanent exclusions last year, 48,000 of the most vulnerable pupils were educated in the AP sector which caters for excluded students, with tens of thousands more leaving school rolls in what appear to be illegal exclusions. Some are removed through "managed moves" between schools; in other cases children are transferred to off-site AP – some of which will be independent and unregistered – while others disappear into "elective" home education." (IPPR, 2017:7)

In general boys are much more likely to be asked to leave their school, and Black pupils from Caribbean backgrounds are still significantly overrepresented in pupil referral units. These statistics have highlighted the overrepresentation of Black boys who have been permanently excluded from school.

Reasons for permanent exclusions range from acts of extreme violence to comparatively minor misbehaviour. The most common reason recorded for exclusions in England was persistent disruptive behaviour. The second most common reason for permanent exclusions schools was physical assault against an adult and a pupil (DfE, 2012).The research into exclusions also highlighted causes such as verbal abuse or threatening behaviours against another pupil and adult, bullying, racist abuse, sexual misconduct, theft, violence towards teachers, non-teaching staff and other pupils, damaging school property and possession of drugs and alcohol.

Of equal concern are findings suggesting racial inequality in school leadership teams, under-representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) teachers and a culture in schools where racism is widespread and pervasive (see Haque and Ellitt 2017; Demie and Christabel 2017).

Previous UK studies have also shown excluded children to be amongst some of the most vulnerable young people in society (Parsons 1999, 2009; IPPR 2017). They are likely to come from families which have broken down, some children will have spent time in the care of the local authority, have experienced abuse and neglect, as well as have identified special educational needs. Some research has focused upon the strong over-representation of Black Caribbean boys (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Gazeley 2010; Strand and Fletcher 2015; IPPR 2017; Hague and Ellitt 2017) in exclusion statistics.

Exclusion from school is not a disciplinary tool unique to England. In the US for instance, where exclusion from school is termed suspension, differential rates of suspension have long been reported in the US literature (Fenning and Rose 2007; Raffaele Mendez and Knoff 2003; McFadden 1992). The over-representation in exclusion of ethnic minorities, African American and Black Caribbean in particular, has been widely debated in USA (e.g. Raffaele Mendez and Knoff 2003).

In addition to Black Caribbean students, there are also concerns of overrepresentation issues in the exclusions statistics in UK about Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils. The government research identified Gypsy/Roma and Traveller pupils as being strongly affected by many factors influencing their education including racism and discrimination, myths, and stereotyping (see DfES 2003, DCSF 2008, DfE 2012). The key barriers to achievement for White/Black Caribbean mixed heritage pupils are similar to those which have been identified for Black Caribbean pupils such as low teacher expectations, behavioural issues and attitudes resulting from peer group pressures (Sewell 1997, Gillborn and Mirza 2000, Gazeley 2010; Demie and Mclean 2017). However, the findings of previous research indicate that, for White/Black Caribbean pupils, these barriers to achievement have distinct and unique attributes including teacher perceptions of White/Black Caribbean pupils as having 'identity issues' and problematic household structures, as well as peer group pressure relating to their mixed heritage.

Overall the data and research review suggests that Black Caribbean represent the most excluded group of pupils in British schools (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, EHRC 2015). There is also a widespread consensus in the research literature that young people who are excluded from school are at far greater risk of a variety of negative outcomes, including poor educational attainment, prolonged periods out of employment; poor mental and physical health; involvement in crime; and homelessness (Parsons 2009; Gazeley 2010; IPPR 2017; DfE 2016; Strand and Fletcher 2015; Demie and Mclean 2017).

Research aims and methods

Three overarching questions guided this research:

- What does previous research and data tell us about Black Caribbean pupils' exclusion?
- What are the reasons for overrepresentation in exclusion?
- What are the implications for policy and practice?

Exclusion in its broadest form is the removal of a child from their existing educational establishment due to their behaviour.

Two complementary methodological approaches were used to explore the research question-*What are the main reasons for overrepresentation of Black Caribbean in school exclusions?* Details of the methodological framework are summarised below:

Semi-Structured one to one interviews: a questionnaire was used to interview headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils, and educational psychologists in order to gather evidence on exclusions issues and the reasons for overrepresentations of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusion.

Focus Groups: Focus groups were used to gather the views of school staff, governors, parents, educational psychologists, and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) on the reasons for the over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils in exclusion statistics, as well as exploring what practical steps should be taken to reduce the exclusion rate. The focus groups comprised 14 Black Caribbean parents, 15 teachers, 17 governors, 8 SENCOs, 5 educational psychologists and 20 school staff, including teaching assistants and learning mentors. Each focus groups, on average, involved 4 people lasting less than 2 hours interview and discussion. We carried out 19 focus groups during the period of the research.

The fieldwork was carried out to elicit responses from, and collect views of, members of the Black Caribbean parent and pupil community, as well as a number of stakeholders whose work directly affects the lives of Black Caribbean pupils in schools. The aim was to triangulate the voices of the various stakeholders in their education using the evidence from one to one interviews and focus groups. The research was carried out from November 2016 to March 2017 in an Inner London local Authority.

Findings

The key question that was asked during the focus group and one to one interviews to gain more insight was: *What are the main reasons for overrepresentation of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusions?*

A number of reasons emerged from the study for overrepresentation of Black Caribbean pupils in the exclusion statistics.

Teachers' low expectations and institutional racism

We asked those interviewed for their views about the reasons why there is over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils being excluded from schools:

> *'I think there are a number of different reasons. My personal view is I think there is quite a lot of institutional racism, particularly against boys of Black Caribbean background. In one school I have two children behaving in the same way, one from a middle class White background and the other Black Caribbean and the Black Caribbean child was excluded. About the Black Caribbean boy they were saying: 'the family is very traditionally Jamaican'. When I asked her what that meant she said: 'there's a lot of violence in the family and mother wears a lot of different wigs every day'! When challenged schools can get defensive. People get sensitive about being called racist...' 'It is important to question when your referrals are coming*

from a particular group and you should be asking why this is. For me, I think there are Black Caribbean boys who are excluded because of their needs which haven't been assessed.' (educational psychologist A)

'When we talk about behaviour issues, there are a lot of youngsters Black and White who misbehave. Because of stereotyping and the media, as far as teachers are concerned, we are talking about a system that has taught them that the Black male has a problem, or is difficult, so as soon as a young Black boy picks up something and throws it, he is regarded as being a difficult child. If a White boy does it, they say he's having a bad day. It's the branding. The LA gentrification is going backwards. If we are having people in LA who have no general understanding of the population, with all its people groups and people managing who have no idea of the local community, then they are going to be branded.' *(Parent B)*

Another educational psychologist gave her views about the over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils being excluded:

'I would say that racism is a factor in this. A school is not in isolation of community and racism exists in our society at large. We have families under stress that the child is exposed to and the child might be more likely to themselves have stress, and exhibit symptoms or behaviours which the school finds difficult to manage. An identical behaviour might be perceived as being more aggressive if it is coming from a large Black boy than a small White girl. It's what is described as 'challenging behaviour'; the attributions teachers might have for Black pupils might be seen more negatively. It could be about perceptions. The school feels powerless. They do not want to exclude but they have reached a point where they cannot do anything with the child. There seems to be less tolerance now in schools, perhaps because of the demands on teachers.' (educational psychologist B)

A similar response was reported when we asked headteachers "*to what extent they believe institutional racism is a factor in the underachievement and exclusions of Black Caribbean pupils*"?

'Absolutely! How many black policemen have we got, or how many black teachers have we got? You can imagine the difficulties they would face if they joined the police force. I suspect strongly if you went back to the 1970s there would have been teachers who had one or two black children in their class and they would be called racist names. Racism was probably rife in the 1960s and 1970s. They had an expectation that children were going to be difficult. They expected bad attitudes. It comes right back to people thinking black people are inferior. Even now in parts of this country they think the same.' (Headteacher, School A)

'Institutional racism is a major issue – in our own services, paediatricians, society at large. Teachers and SENCOs in schools will say things to me as a white person about the reasons for exclusion that they wouldn't say to Black person.' (educational psychologist A)

The trend whereby very young children are now being excluded from school and sent to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) was highlighted by those we interviewed as a serious concern, but it is significant to note that it is mainly Black Caribbean boys that are being excluded: educational psychologists expressed their concerns:

'One of the things we need to do as a profession, quite often we are brought in during a crisis situation and we have to think about how we work proactively or assertively. In Reception and Year 1 what can we be doing systematically, offering a supportive challenge, being critical friends to think about what might make a difference early on? Some of it is to do with mismatch in school about attainment and progress, whereas diversity issues and other major issues such as disproportionality are not picked up. We can refuse to go into schools at the eleventh hour to say that this child is a problem – if you want a piece of paper to say we have seen the EP therefore they have emotional and behavioural issues so they are out! You can feel pressured but we wouldn't do it.' (educational psychologist E)*

Another educational psychologist gave an example of this:

'We are asked to do an assessment on a child and the next week the school excludes them – in some cases permanently. I have had this happen five times personally. I have just had a Black Caribbean child excluded in Year 2. His learning needs were not addressed and he had emotional needs. I contacted the Educational Psychologist who covers the PRU and she said 'I'll see if he turns up here'. I am confused about the system. If the schools are Academies we cannot do anything about it. There are a lot of illegal exclusions, e.g. a child coming into school for mornings only, or a Headteachers says 'take them home to calm down' or 'managed moves' to another school or 'transfer'. The issue for Black Caribbean boys or other disadvantaged groups is that they do not have parents who know the system, so they do not have the power to say this is wrong you are not allowed to do that. They say 'the school is threatening to exclude my other children in the school' – they are powerless.' (educational psychologist A)*

'My understanding of a PRU is that it is supposed to be a temporary measure to enable pupils to reintegrate back into school but it seems many of them stay there. When they leave, people say they have been to a PRU and even if their behaviour has improved, there is a stigma that this carries.' (educational psychologist D)*

On the question of why there were so many Black Caribbean pupils excluded from mainstream primary and secondary schools, it was proposed that it was because these pupils do not know their own history and identity:

'The problem is history and how it is taught. Why are you not aware of your history? Where is your story? How can you continue to move forward if you don't know about yourself? This is not being addressed.' (Learning Mentor)*

Another difficulty expressed was the complexity of relationships which are a feature of the Black Caribbean community, which results in children moving between family members when conflict or difficulties arise:

'In LA everyone is related to everyone else. There is so much conflict within the family and the community and they bring that into school. They are all related somehow. It is hard to find these children because they are not in a stable situation. They live with an aunty and there is a problem, so they are moved to another… they constantly move because of their circumstances. You cannot find them because they are always moving from various relatives. This is another barrier to their achievement.' (Learning Mentor)*

We suggested that family connections like this exist in Caribbean countries also, so why is it a problem here?   The Learning Mentor responded:

> *'There is more disconnect here because they do not have the support systems. There are also other issues around housing, and poverty. What is expected here is very different compared with the Caribbean – there are different expectations.' (Learning Mentor)*

A Senior Educational Psychologist commented:

> *'This is not a new issue. When African Caribbean people first came to this country, the challenges they faced have all had an impact, the disaffection, disengagement from the curriculum, discrimination in society. Now there is quite good achievement in Primary Schools but as pupils have more access to information when they get to Secondary School they start to see things differently. Over my time in LA I have certainly seen five year olds, pre-school children at Nursery level excluded from school for being violent, not being able to socialise, kicking and biting other children, putting themselves and others at risk, not being able to work in a classroom even with individual support from an adult, not being socialised. You look at issues behind this, substance misuse, domestic violence, there are lots of reasons why the child cannot cope. It wouldn't be right to blame the schools for this. The Primary Pupil Referral Unit is unable to pick up all the support schools need. We have picked this up, we visit schools and offer advice and support.' (educational psychologist C)*

We asked for a case study example of a pupil which would help us to understand what had happened in the child's life which had led to them being excluded from school:

> *'A fifteen year old girl of Jamaican heritage who is pregnant, she is an able girl, who came here from a good school. She is creative and independent. The father was a pupil here last year. When she realised she was pregnant, the father of the unborn child said 'go and find M……..'* (A member of staff). *When I heard about this I thought: "We had the father, the mother and soon we will have a baby because of the chaotic life they lead". 'The girl is in Care and thankfully she has a very good Health Visitor and a good Social Worker. She doesn't have any contact with her own mother or any other relative. She has a couple of brothers but doesn't know them. She has been permanently excluded from school. She is bright and if her circumstances were different she could have gone into the 6th Form. Apparently she and a group of girls stole a teacher's credit card and used it.' (Learning Mentor)*

We asked whether SENCos are challenged by educational psychologists if they make wrong judgments about pupils.

> *'We do as educational psychologists do that, but might do it through the types of questions we ask and raising it as a question can allow you time to reflect. Our policy requires us to raise it directly if there are overtly racist issues.'* (educational psychologist A)

> *'There are illegal exclusions, say for half a day, or parents are advised to take the child to another school or they will be permanently excluded.'* (educational psychologist C)

Secondary schools report that this can result in children attending many different primary schools:

> *'Parents chop and change schools and children are increasingly moved sometimes up to seven primaries. Some are told to just go and they have home schooling. It's an indictment of the system.' (Deputy Head, Secondary School, School E)*

> *'The numbers of Black Caribbean students who come in to us (PRU) have undiagnosed SEND, ADHD, MLD, SLD – a disproportionate number. The question is when our Black children with SEND act up they are excluded. Some children have been to 3 or 4 primary schools because parents are told to remove them, so this is how they remain undiagnosed. The additional needs are seen as behavioural problems rather than special needs.' (SENCo, School R)*

According to an Adviser on Behaviour Management working with schools in a London borough, fixed term exclusions whereby a pupil is sent to a partner school, is something schools are using:

> *'They send pupils to a partner school so that the statistics don't go up. They say can you hold this child until somebody does something? You sometimes have a child there for up to six months, in limbo. Schools are thinking how we are going to get this child off roll. Eventually as he was in an isolation room and didn't cause any trouble they put him in an isolation room and didn't cause any trouble they put him in the classroom.'*

In response to the question of why the number of permanent exclusions of Black Caribbean pupils is so high, the Adviser for Behaviour Management commented:

> *'A lot of people find Black Caribbean pupils threatening. History is being brought to bear on this. Black children mature earlier, they look bigger so they present as a threat. Everybody thinks that. Very few people can see them as a child. A teacher can see a White child and a Black child both misbehaving but it's the Black one that gets into trouble. It's not just a White thing. I know Black teachers who are the same. I grew up in a house of women, so my first experience of a man was my husband. When I had a son I thought what am I going to do with a boy? Seeing him as a baby and then a child I know.'*

Overall the above findings supports previous Macpherson (1999) report which presents a stark example of racism and its prevalence in contemporary British society, which substantiated what Black people have been voicing for many years; racism permeates the structures and institutions of British society. It also provides a cogent example of the ways in which some teachers over discipline Black Caribbean pupils to avoid any perceived threat to school authority and classroom management. There can be no denial of the saliency of racism and teachers low expectation affecting the life chances, aspirations, and opportunities of young Black Caribbean pupils which have led to overrepresentation in the exclusion figures in England. We would argue that Black Caribbean pupils are often working against teachers low expectations that perceive them as having lesser ability and expectations of bad on behaviour. It is within this context that discrimination takes place through the processes of low expectations of ability, which lead to differential treatment and racialised disciplinary control that leads to excessive exclusion of Black Caribbean pupils from schools. It is reasonable to conclude here that "institutional racism" and low expectations by teachers are one of the reasons for overrepresentation of black Caribbean pupils in exclusions.

Labelling of Black Caribbean Pupils

Other factor for overrepresentation of Black Caribbean pupils in exclusions is labelling. Our interviews revealed a picture of schools labelling pupils in much the same way in the UK as the research in the US described:

> *'Black people are seen as violent, they are seen as physically stronger, whereas they have poorer health than whites. They are thought of as being strong. It translates down into school. A Black Caribbean pupil would be excluded rather than a white child. Now that schools have to write down how many days pupils are excluded, schools find another way, so they have to stay in a classroom on their own and officially it's called internal exclusion. I advised a friend whose son had been excluded to ask to see the official school figures for exclusions. He was never excluded again. He was autistic.'* *(Parent C)*

> *'I was working in some schools in* LA *it was a shock to me how teachers talked about children in the staffroom and how information was shared, named and shamed and circulated amongst staff. Sometimes teachers from white middle class backgrounds might try to understand but they cannot because of their lack of experience. There seems to be a threat by teachers about how black masculinity presents itself. There is a lack of understanding about this, how this can impact on how their behaviour is perceived by educators.'* *(Parent B)*

> *'My son has always been bigger than the average child. From Year 1 onwards he got labelled, stereotyped from Year 1. They put all the Black children on the same table in his class. From then on I felt I needed to fight. There was a particular incident where my son told me his teacher kept calling him 'Violent'. At Nursery they called him 'Orange'. For a long time it didn't click until one day I went into school and they said he was rough and needed to watch his behaviour. I once told him to become careful because he was so big. Then I had a telephone call to say he was traumatising a child by locking him in the toilets (he was only five years old). I asked him explain what had happened and he said the boy had kicked him and called him a 'black monkey' and because he had been told not to fight he pushed him into the toilets. It turned out his teacher called him a 'violent' liar.' (Parent H)*

> *'I believe there has been some labelling of children – many years ago when I first became Headteacher of this school, I was given the label for a child as having 'oppositional defiance disorder' – I said 'sorry, he is just naughty!' He was behind with learning, his literacy and basic skills were below par, and he had low self-esteem. I believe this school had failed him. To me the focus was on the wrong things. That boy ended up in prison, he turned up here a year ago and it was like he was returning to his family.'* *(Headteacher, School A)*

> *'It seems to me that black males, both Black African and Black Caribbean are a bit more penalised on issues compared with their counterparts from other countries. When children are naughty, the Black African and Black Caribbean boys get into trouble, while their counterparts who do the same thing, they wouldn't get the same penalty. With under-fives there are a lot more Black Caribbean and an increasing number of Black African underachieving. The distinction is getting more blurred.'* *(Parent D)*

'I have some concerns about the labelling of Black Caribbean boys. A Paediatrician said he was looking at a child having ADHD but we were worried about his speaking and listening skills. There is a big issue about labelling ADHD if it is a Black Caribbean boy. It becomes self-reinforcing for a Black Caribbean boy to be labelled, whereas a little white girl it's a different view. Terms such as 'attitude', 'rude', they are enforced by saying to a child 'you are rude.' (educational psychologist A)

'There's an issue with boys in particular. We know that boys are later than girls in picking up their reading skills. The reasons for Black Caribbean boys picking up these skills later though are interpreted in a different way. Schools would say 'they probably don't read at home' and we try to unpick that.' (educational psychologist A)

Overall the people interviewed expressed strongly about the damaging effect of labelling Black boys as a result of what they wore, who their friends were, how they spoke or whether they were in trouble before. Once the Black boys gained a reputation for behaving badly, it was difficult to convince teachers of genuine change for the better.

Another reason for overrepresentation that emerged from the parents' interview was a strong feeling that an inappropriate assessment scale is used by educational psychologists and SENCOs to assess Black Caribbean pupils. The Conners scale is a diagnostic tool to identify attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and associated conditions where parents and teachers are given a questionnaire to complete. This is often diagnosing black Caribbean pupils as being anti-social. However, research has shown this scale relies on contextually inappropriate assumptions as teachers in the US were giving a higher score to children with African American backgrounds (Conners, 2008). The scale was leading to Black Caribbean pupils incorrectly being labelled as having ADHD which impacted on them being excluded from school.

An educational psychologist felt that parents were right to be worried about labelling and use of the Conners Scale and argued that:

'The Conners Scale which is given to the parent and the teacher to fill in (about the child) is used to diagnose ADHD. Black Caribbean pupils are coming out as anti-social. There is discrimination in the tools that are being used. Paediatricians evaluate the scale but it is faulty and contextually inappropriate as research has shown that teachers sometimes rate children higher with African American backgrounds in the US. This is now happening with Black Caribbean pupils here. I do not blame parents for being worried or terrified of psychologists. My doctoral research project was on SBD difficulties. We have changed the labels but they come from an historical context, still a stigma... it is called, social, emotional and mental health now. The problems now focus on behaviour rather than on the child's learning. Schools will often say we need the behaviour to improve before they can learn. I tell them it's chicken and egg, we need to look at both.' (educational psychologist A)

Training and induction issues

There is a training issue for teachers, educational psychologists and SENCOs on multicultural education, and diversity and race equality. University lecturing of teachers and education psychologists has not prepared them in understanding race and diversity issues including

how to handle the challenges that come with this in order to ensure that all students receive fair treatment. Our finding suggest that the institutional culture has a clear impact on the equality and diversity expertise of academic teaching staff who teach or support learning, with leadership, teaching and learning strategy, and student engagement as strong enablers. Schools and universities in Britain are becoming globalised, diverse and multicultural and it is important that teaching staff be adequately prepared to handle the challenges that come with this in order to ensure that all students receive fair treatment and do not feel that they have somehow been treated differently because of who they are.

A headteacher expressed her concerns that some school leaders do not appear to be aware of the need to induct new staff with regard to equality issues. She commented:

> 'Teachers and staff need an induction course to show them how to relate to children from other ethnic groups. In Catholic schools you get children from every background. You need to make them feel valued and build their self-esteem not make them feel inferior. Anyone employed in a school, who is not White British, Black British or African but is from Eastern Europe and South Africa needs to be inducted if they are to be employed to work in a diverse community.' (Retired Headteacher, School Z)

Teachers' understanding of diversity varied according to where they did their initial teacher training:

> 'I did my PGCE in Manchester last year. There was no focus on inclusion or of teaching in a diverse community. My first placement was in a school with mainly Bangladeshi pupils and the other was all white. One of the reasons I came to London to teach was because I wanted to teach in a diverse community. I was nervous when I first started in case I couldn't do it.' (Teacher, School D)

> 'I have come across teachers from all over the country who came to work in LA. It was such a culture shock they didn't even last a year.' (educational psychologist D)

> 'I speak to teachers who remember doing half a day on inclusion in their training.' (educational psychologist D)

> 'I trained at the Metropolitan University in London and I was sent off to schools all over the place, East, South and West London! My friends in Northern Ireland are quite impressed and amazed at the diversity in our schools.' (Secondary HOD, School D)

> 'People think that you can pick up a successful Headteacher from here and put them there, but it doesn't work that way, it's contextual. I was in a school near Heathrow and the racism was rife! The degree of racism I experienced in a School in Eltham was awful. You cannot go anywhere and teach in a school. You have to understand the community you are working and they have to accept you. I would hire anyone who had a love for children. Children will generally respond to those teachers. When schools are successful it's because there are leaders who are aspirational and want everyone to do well.' (Former Vice Principal, Church Leader B)

Educational psychologists commented on their own professional training with regard to inclusion/diversity:

> 'Anyone trained after 2006 would have a Doctorate. Training prior to that was at Masters Level. On our training it was largely white women training and we had one day on diversity at IOE which was presented by a black man.' (educational psychologist A)

'At UCL they were quite strong on inclusion and equality issues and the use of appropriate resources for testing.' (educational psychologist C).

Lack of diversity of school workforce including teachers, Educational Psychologists and SENCos

There is also a question about whether the ethnic composition of teachers and the Educational Psychology Service reflects the general population. This is, of course, in the context of few schools in England having a diversified workforce that reflects the community they serve. Recent data suggests that only 91% of school leadership and 86% of teachers and other staff are White British (Demie 2017). In addition The Educational Psychology Service, like the wider education service is represented predominantly by middle class white females. For example, the Education Psychology Workforce Survey by NAPEP in 2013, records that 84% of educational psychologists are female. As one educational psychologist noted this is one of the reasons for overrepresentations of Black Caribbean in school exclusions:

'There are bigger issues within educational psychology – they did a survey on the demographics in the UK, but only on age and gender, but nothing on ethnicity. I do not think educational psychologists represent the general population. People want to see a connection.' (educational psychologist A)

'If we had a more diverse profession would the problems go away? Is there institutional racism? I believe there is in individuals, so yes definitely. Styles of speaking are more valued by our institutions and universities are no different.' (educational psychologist A)

'Educational psychologists tend to be women and have been in teaching, who have had their babies and re-train to become Educational Psychologists; white, middle-class women. Their experience of black people is limited so when they see a Black Caribbean child they think that's how black people are. In the 1960s they were viewed as ESN – Educationally Sub-normal. But now a lot of black families resist having a label for their child and refuse an Educational Psychologist's assessment.' (SENCo, School Q)

'Inclusion is a whole school issue. As teachers we don't get time with the Educational Psychologist. It's about what we say – the Educational Psychologist is probably acting on information that they are given. We could say they need an assessment or a referral. ADHD, ADD in terms of mental health, a lot of the time it is developing in the parents and passed down to the students because it's behavioural and a pattern of thinking. As West Indians we have had trauma and brutality over generations. It has not got better. We need justice. If you focus on equality you do not acknowledge.' (SENCo, School Q)

We would argue that there is a question about whether the ethnic composition of teachers, Educational Psychologists and SENCOs reflects the general population.   Despite the fact that schools and universities in Britain are becoming globalised, diverse and multicultural, teaching staff and educational psychologists and SENCOs are often not from the diverse multicultural community that the schools serve.

We asked "what are the institutional barriers which prevent Black Caribbean applicants from becoming Educational Psychologists." A number of the respondent pointed out issues with social capital, finance and the selection process:

'A Black Caribbean girl couldn't get on to any of the Educational Psychology courses at any of the Universities despite having exactly the same qualifications as me. On my course there was one Black Caribbean man and a Black African girl among 15 white women. They saw themselves as 'the quota'. (educational psychologist A).

'If you are in a position to study for a doctorate, you have to be in a position to provide the social capital. There are things that restrict you, not least finance. As a profession since the sixties, it is to promote equality. It was present in everything we did. I did clinical training, a systemic model with emphasis on culture and diversity. The Educational Psychology Service reflects the wider education service in that it is female dominated.' (educational psychologist B)

'I had seven years teaching experience (prior to becoming an Educational Psychologist) and I applied four times to get on the course… every year for four years. I am a determined person.' (educational psychologist B)

We asked about the selection process using by one institution, for training Educational Psychologists:

'Since 2009 I have seen a reasonably diverse group emerge. It is not fully proportional though as yet. Wherever we have a local teacher who expresses an interest in becoming an educational psychologist we will talk to them and encourage them and help them to prepare. We do our best to encourage. There are gender issues as well. Most of the educational psychologists are women'…. 'One of the issues at … Is that we shortlist with the applicants names on the forms. I do not think this is helpful. There are also other factors, such as applicants needing to have had teaching experience. They may be competing against people who have the money or the family are able to provide the financial support during training. Those who come from less affluent backgrounds or family commitment, they are at a disadvantage. We know that …… is not perfect. We have a responsibility to challenge the section processes however.' (educational psychologist C)

Efforts should be directed towards the recruitment of more Black Caribbean Social Workers and Educational Psychologists to train in these professions with added incentives as outlined to encourage them to work in inner city schools. The training of all those entering these professions should include knowledge and understanding of the cultural context in which Black Caribbean pupils are living. Currently there appears to be an issue about the lack of understanding some have:

'I am not happy with social work – it is not their fault it is the system. They are not ready to take on the challenge of young people. It doesn't matter where you come from but you do need an understanding of the people you are dealing with. There is a complete disjointing, expectations do not fit, understanding of the system and education in general, no knowledge of how schools operate. You just can't take a child out of class because you have five minutes visiting time.' (Learning Mentor).

'Educational Psychology is a white middle class, female dominated profession. It is unusual in LA that we have black Educational Psychologists. We have more than other places. You understand the families you are going to work with. Assessment of pupils from the West Indies was wrong in the early days and often this is the case now.' (educational psychologist C).

Discussion and implications for policy and practice

Overall the conclusion of this research confirm that the disproportionate exclusion of Black pupils from schools has been linked to a range of factors, including challenging what is racism in school settings, teachers' low expectations and institutional racism, lack of diversity in the school workforce, lack of effective training programme for teachers, educational psychologists, SENCOs and

school staff on multicultural education, diversity and race issues. Many of the people we interviewed in the focus groups reported that they had experienced racism in varying forms and that institutional racism is one of the factors that hindered the achievement of Black Caribbean pupils. Many pointed out the forms of racism which have contributed to this exclusions and which manifested itself most harshly in the form of being overlooked for answering questions, verbal aggression from teachers, harsher reprimands for Black Caribbean pupils compared to other ethnic groups and White British pupils for the same misdemeanour, racist stereotyping and exclusions. There is also strong evidence that teachers, educational psychologists and SENCos training has not prepared them in understanding race and diversity issues.

These findings are supported by other international study which shows that biases in expectations may influence which children teachers feel are most likely to pose significant challenge. The USA study confirm that White teachers often hold higher expectations for White students than for Black Students and are more likely to recommend Black student for disciplinary action (see Hathaway 2016; Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007). Other researchers (Bates & Glick 2013 and Hathaway 2016) also suggested the implicit biases may differ depending on races and argued that that Black teachers are more likely to have higher expectations for Black children than White teachers.

The research findings in this paper also contain a number of important messages for policy makers and schools. We would argue that policy makers and schools need to recognise that the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean pupils is a national concern for some years and at present   were nearly four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than the school population as a whole. The recommendations from this study is that there is a need to develop targeted initiatives to tackle overrepresentation and to reduce Black Caribbean exclusions in England schools.

However, there are some limitations to this study that need further research. A research approach such as this is bound to have its critics 'as it will not meet academic ideals in terms of sampling and conventional research methodology' (Lewis & Demie 2015, p. 19). This one is no exception as it is based on a small number of case study schools and focus groups in order to explore in detail the experience of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusions. We would argue that case study and focus group approach of research used in this study is an established research design that is used extensively in a wide variety of disciplines, particularly in the social sciences to provide a broader range of information and research evidence (see Carey and Asbury 2014); Bassey 1999; Stakes 1995; Bell 1993). They are useful to obtain detailed in-depth information about personal
and group feelings, perceptions and opinions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods such as observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys. It is also presented in a more accessible way than other forms of research. It can serve multiple audiences and in this particular instance, the audience is likely to be policy makers and schools. While we do not aim to make generalisations as a result of the case studies and focus groups evidence, we would argue that learning from the research findings can make a difference to schools and policy makers. Furthermore, any extension of our research with larger sample and longitudinal study in different regions and local authorities in England has the potential to enhance our understanding of the factors responsible for exclusions in schools in England.

References

Bassey, M. 1999. Case Study Research in educational settings. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bates, L.A., & Glick, J.E. 2013. Does it matter if teachers and schools match the student? Racial and ethnic disparities in problem behaviours. *Social Science Research, 42*, 1180-1190

Bell, J. 1993. Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Carey, M. and Asbury, J. 2016. Focus Group Research. London: Routledge

Demie, F. 2017. *What Works in Raising Achievement of Black Caribbean pupils in schools: Implication for developing leadership and addressing diversity*. London: School Research and Statistics Unit, Lambeth LA.

Demie, F. and Christabel, M. 2017. *The achievement of Black Caribbean pupils in schools: Good practice*. Lambeth LA: Lambeth School Research and Statistics.

DfE. 2012. *A profile of Exclusion in England, Department for Education*. London: Department for Education.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183498/DFE-RR190.pdf

DCSF. 2008. The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

DfES. 2006. *Exclusion of Black Pupils Priority Review: Getting it, getting it right.* London: Department for Education and Skills.

DfES. 2003. Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller Pupils. London: Department for Education and Skills.

EHRC. 2015. *Is Britain Fairer? The state of equality and human rights*, Equality and Human Rights Commission
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/is-britain-fairer-the-state-of-equality-and-human-rights-2015

Fenning, P. And Rose, J. 2007. Overrepresentation of African American Students on Exclusionary Discipline: The Role of School Policy. *Urban Education, 42*(6), 536-559.

Gazeley, L. 2010. The Role of School Exclusion Processes in the Re-Production of Social and Educational Disadvantage. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 58*(3), 293-309, DOI:10.1080/00071000903520843

Gillborn, D. & Youdell, D. 2000. *Rationing education: policy, practice, reform, and equity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gillborn D and Mirza H S. 2000. *Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Class and Gender, a Synthesis of Research Evidence*. London: Office for Standards in Education

Hathaway, B. 2016. Implicit bias may help explain high preschool expulsion rates for black children. Yale: Yale Univeristy, https://news.yale.edu/2016/09/27/implicit-bias-may-help-explain-high-preschool-expulsion-rates-black-children

Haque, Z and Ellitt, S. 2017. *Barriers Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BME teachers*. London: The Runnymede Trust.

IPPR. 2017. *Making the Difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research
https://www.ippr.org/files/2017-10/making-the-difference-report-october-2017.pdf

McFadden, A.C., Marsh, G.E., Price, B.J. and Hwang, Y. 1992. "A study of race and gender bias in the punishment of school children." *Education and Treatment of Children* 15: 140–146.

Nielsen, L. 1979. "Let's Suspend Suspensions: Consequences and Alternatives." *Personnel &Guidance Journal* 57 (9): 442-445.

Parsons, C. 2009. "Explaining sustained inequalities in ethnic minority school exclusions in England—passive racism in a neoliberal grip." *Oxford Review* of *Education* 35 (2): 249-265

Parsons, C. 2008. "Race relations legislation, ethnicity and disproportionality in school exclusions in England." *Cambridge Journal of Education* 39 (3):401-419

Parsons, C. 1999. *Education, Exclusion and Citizenship.* London: Routledge.

Rafaele Mendez, L.M. and Knoff, H.M. 2003. Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. Education and Treatment of Children, 26, 30-51.

Runnymede Trust. 2010. *Schools Exclusion*. London: Runnymede Trust
https://www.scribd.com/document/38420833/Autumn-2010-Runnymede-Bulletin

Seidman, I. 1998. Interviewing as qualitative Research. London: Teachers College Press. P.3.

Sewell, T and Majors, R. 2001. Black boys and schooling: an intervention framework for understanding the dilemmas of masculinity, identity and underachievement in: R. Majors (Ed.) educating our Black *Children. New directions and radical approaches,* Routledge, Falmer.

Stake, R. E. 1995. *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strand, S. & Lindsay, G. 2009. "Evidence of ethnic disproportionality in special education in an English population." *Journal of Special Education* 43, (3): 174-190.

Strand, S. and Fletcher, J. 2015. *A Quantitative Longitudinal Analysis of Exclusions from English Secondary Schools*. Oxford: Education Department
http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Exclusion-from-Secondary-schools_small.pdf

Tenenbaum, H.R., & Ruck, M.D. 2007. Are teachers' expectations different for racial minority than European American students? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *99*, 253-273.