

A Teacher's Perspective:

Applying critical race theory to understand how structure, behaviour policy and institutional racism affect the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean and Mixed Black Caribbean male students in a United Kingdom secondary school in Hackney.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean and Mixed Black Caribbean male students in a secondary school case study in the diverse borough of Hackney. It uses critical race theory to centralise 'race' and to discredit the application of a deficit theory to the affected students and their communities. This research investigates the objective factors relating to discrimination in this topic. The focus is on the impact of structure, behaviour policy and institutional racism and how they affect the teacher-Black student dynamic. The study uses qualitative research to capture the teacher's perspective and gain a deeper understanding through their professional knowledge and lived experience of the phenomena. The research found that inadequate resources and failure to correct racist structures undermine targeted policies.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation explores the causal factors for the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean (BC) and Mixed Black Caribbean (MBC) male students in a secondary school case study (SSCS) in the diverse borough of Hackney. The SSCS follows the national and local trend of high BC/MBC male student exclusion rates and has recently set up an internal taskforce to tackle the issue. Assessing the impact of structure, behaviour policy, and institutional racism (IR) can analyse whether the school leadership team (SLT) and teaching staff have the autonomy and racial literacy to affect change. The study uses qualitative research to capture teachers' perspectives and gain a deeper understanding from their professional knowledge and lived experience of the phenomena.

The dissertation uses critical race theory (CRT) to centralise 'race' and discredit the application of a deficit theory to the affected students and their communities. It investigates the objective factors of discrimination in this situation. There are three areas of analysis: 1) structural factors, focusing on neoliberal and austerity policies; 2) national policy, focusing on 'race' relations and behaviour in schools; 3) teachers and their BC/MBC male students: the impact of structure, behaviour policy and IR on these two distinct social groups. Data collection from semi-structured interviews, analysed through thematic analysis, has provided in-depth insight into a particular context connected to a broader social issue.

The teaching profession faces a difficult period, signified by strikes and poor retention statistics, while BC/MBC male students face increasing exclusion with dire consequences. Careful consideration of the factors impacting these two distinct social groups is crucial to improve targeted policy. As there is limited research or government data available concerning internal exclusion and the use of referral rooms, they are the focus of this study.

1.2 Critical Race Theory

This dissertation uses CRT, which originated in the United States in the 1970s as a radical way to tackle implicit forms of racism (Gillborn, 2008). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) identified five principal CRT tenets. First, CRT establishes that 'race' has no biological significance, although it becomes a reality through social construction. Second, 'race' and racism is a persistent and daily experience for non-White individuals and groups. Third, the dominant White group has no incentive to change a system that benefits its self-interest. Fourth, CRT is a pragmatic theory that actively seeks to eliminate racism, and lastly, CRT prioritises the experience of non-White communities.

Crucially, CRT rejects all forms of deficit theory that blames the victim and sees fault within the character and culture of oppressed groups (Solorzano, 1997). The problem lies in how we view specific communities through stereotyping, consciously or unconsciously, which has been formed by historical, socioeconomic processes (Ladson-Billings, 2013). According to Parker (2003, p. 187), the broad term 'racism' pertains to the 'attitudes, actions of stereotyping, discriminatory policies, unequal distribution of resources' that are 'fundamental to everyday life'. 'Race' as a construction is fluid across time and space (Gillborn, 2013). Understanding how these constructs operate exposes objective facts surrounding racial inequality.

However, CRT recognises how 'race' intersects with other identities of oppression, such as class and gender (Parker, 2003). Crenshaw (1991, p. 1299) described how our 'identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple dimensions', providing a method of analysing existing tensions. For example, the experience of BC boys in England is not the same as those of African descent, nor is it the same for their female counterparts (Demie, 2023). Poverty and special educational needs (SEN) correlate with BC/MBC exclusion (Department for Education (DfE), 2020a). The methodologies of CRT consider the multifaceted discriminations that play a role and intersect with racialised identities.

CRT challenges liberal proclamations of neutrality and equality. It exposes a system of White supremacy where conscious and unconscious acceptance of White superiority promotes a sensation of entitlement (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Liberal 'colour-blind' policies treat all categories of 'race' the same without adjusting for society's racist structures. Wallace (2017, p. 467) defines the privilege that is afforded to 'Whiteness' as a 'historical system of thought and action' that 'remains invisible and unexamined'. CRT identifies that a Black voice needs credence to expose these subtle layers of everyday discrimination (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

1.3 Can Critical Race Theory Be Used Effectively in an English Educational Context?

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first realised how CRT could apply to education policy. They realised that gender and class theories could not effectively analyse racial inequalities. By addressing the White cultural normalisation of education policies, hidden racist structures can be identified (Wiggan et al., 2022). CRT is an American creation. In the United States, race relations have undergone different historical and socioeconomic processes (Gillborn, 2008). However, Gillborn (2008) argued that CRT is a theory with clear directives, which can be adapted to the UK situation. By removing all racist rationale that BC/MBC male students are in some way deficient, true causal factors can emerge.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In England, concern for the disparate education experience of BC/MBC boys has existed since the 1950s (Rickets et al., 2022). In *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System* (1971), Bernard Coard was one of the first publications to emphasise the role of IR. Black exclusion is a widely accepted and researched phenomenon. However, academic work is still predominantly problem-orientated rather than solution based. This literature review considers a broad range of literature: government policy legislation and reports, research by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and charity organisations, and relevant peer-reviewed academic research. Although most studies in this field are U.S.-based, most sources included in this study are from the United Kingdom and, more specifically, from England. There is a significant need for more research within the British context. Little research exists on the daily occurrence of unofficial internal exclusion practices and the use of referral rooms. The review divides into three sections: (1) Black exclusion, (2) structural factors, (3) teachers and their BC/MBC male students.

2.2 Black Exclusion

This section's review of the literature defines exclusion in the United Kingdom and establishes the most recent and available national, local (Hackney) and SSCS exclusion data. It mainly uses government literature to determine the scope and legal framework of school exclusion in England and to consider the outcome and impact on those it affects. There are two types of official exclusions: fixed-period exclusion (FPE), a maximum of fortyfive days permitted within a school year, and permanent exclusion (PE), which blocks re-entry to the issuing school (DfE, 2020a). There is also a third 'unofficial' type: internal exclusion, where a student is removed and placed in a referral room. Schools are not currently obligated to supply data on internal exclusionary practice. The *Education Act 2002*, Sections 51–52, and the *School Discipline Legislation 2012* provide the English statutory and legal framework. The DfE (2014) advises schools of their obligation regarding the *Equality Act 2010* and their duty of positive action to mitigate against disadvantage for pupils with protected characteristics.

In England, most exclusions occur in secondary schools (DfE, 2019). According to the DfE (2020a), BC/MBC boys are nearly three times more likely to be permanently excluded than their White British (WB) peers. Using data from a cohort of over half a million students in secondary school up to Key Stage 4 (KS4), Strand and Fletcher (2014) identified that 16.3% of all students experience one or more FPE,

but this increases to over 30% for BC/MBC boys. After controlling for other factors (SEN, free school meals (FSM), repeated exclusions, poor attendance, criminality and being in care), Black pupils are less likely to fit the typical WB profile of excluded children (DfES, 2006). The DfE (2006, p. 10) reported this as the 'X factor' of ethnicity. The recent Timpson Report (DfE, 2020a) on exclusion confirmed that nothing has improved and Black exclusion in education remains an ongoing concern.

The SSCS is in Hackney, the sixth most diverse borough in London where 40% of the population comes from Black and ethnic minority groups and Black British makes up 20% (Hackney Council (HC), 2023). Data from HC (2022) show that exclusion in the locality corresponds with the national trend. In Hackney, as nationally, permanent exclusions were handed out for persistent minor breaches rather than a 'one-off serious breach' (HC, 2022). The SSCS emulates the national and local trends in disproportionately excluding BC and MBC male students.

Outcomes for children excluded from school are stark. Government figures show that only 18% of children who experience repeated FPE manage passes in English and maths GCSEs, but this is nearly halved for children with PE (DfE, 2020b). Children from the 2016/17 cohort who completed KS4 in alternative provision (AP) were likelier to become 'young people not engaged in education, employment, or training' (DfE, 2018). The impact of exclusion on children's mental health is also worrying. Parents reported to the Coram Institute (2019) that excluded children commonly suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and suicidal feelings. Exclusion is also a high marker for becoming a victim of a crime or an offender (DfE, 2019). The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (2020) found that school is a vital protection against criminal exploitation, especially for young Black males. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) (2017) has calculated that the economic cost of each PE cohort is in the estimated region of £2.9bn. Exclusion is a severe social problem, costing the affected children and their families immeasurably, and costing society as a whole.

2.3 Structural Factors

This section draws on government, relevant academic and NGO literature to explore critical national policy events for race relations, with a particular focus on IR. Targeted academic work mainly uses a CRT framework, such as the framework put forward by British educational researcher David Gillborn identifying colour-blind processes within policy. This section also explores structural factors impacting exclusion, such as the neoliberal agenda and austerity, and how this has influenced education policy. Last, this section analyses the latest government recommendations on exclusions in the *Timpson Report* (2020a).

The Macpherson Report (1999, p. 6.48) into the racist killing of Stephen Lawrence was a pivotal moment in UK race relations policy, which established 'unequivocal acceptance' of IR and the harm it causes. The report defines IR 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, p. 6.34)

In response, the *Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000* (RRAA) placed a statutory duty on all public institutions, including educational institutions, to 'eliminate unlawful racial discrimination'.

However, the term IR met fierce resistance, with teacher trade unions classing it as an attack (Gillborn, 2008). Within the government, less inflammatory terminology was preferred (DfE, 2006). The enforcement of the RRAA was weak, tending to justify institutional policies rather than hold them to account (Gillborn and Demack, 2018). The introduction of the single Equality Act 2010 further weakened accountability by enabling public bodies to prioritise what they deemed necessary, and 'race equality' objectives became voluntary (Gillborn et al 2016). Critics also saw the *Equality Act 2010* as signifying a 'post-racial' society, which downplayed the persistence and seriousness of IR (Wilkins, 2013).

Many academics have argued that the centralisation of 'race' proved short-lived, and the government agenda returned to a colour-blind ethos and 'fairness' for all (Gillborn et al., 2016). The Runnymede Trust (2020b, p. 9) have referred to this as 'colour-blind racism', where policy language prefers more palatable terms, such as diversity and inclusion, than implicit racist terminology. One notable change came under the coalition government, where the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Skills and Services (Ofsted), the mandate in education policy, no longer included a race equality target (Gillborn et al., 2016). Instead, the focus shifted to poverty, based on those eligible for FSM, which identified poor working-class White boys as most deserving of targeted support. Class replaced 'race' disadvantaged, ignoring that Black discrimination exists regardless of class status (Runnymede Trust, 2020a).

A deracialisation of policy also combines with a neoliberal agenda directing public sector management in England. The emphasis is now on standards and efficiency that further marginalise racial equality justice (Wilkins, 2013). The marketisation of the schooling system, which aimed to improve quality through competition, primarily benefits the middle-class, predominantly White, 'consumer' parent (Fisher, 2008). Headteachers pressured by exam results and attendance quotas recognise the advantage of excluding 'challenging', underperforming children (Demie, 2023). Off-rolling is evidence of this, described by Ofsted (2019) as when 'exclusion is in the best interest of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil'. Fisher (2008) argued that a fragmented schooling system of local-authority funded schools and more autonomous academies now exists. At their discretion, SLTs can care (or not) about high exclusion rates. Its prevalence, therefore, with no government oversight, varies significantly among schools and types.

Austerity measures after the financial crisis have also profoundly affected school resources. The IPPR (2017), accounting for a rising student population, identified an 8% fall in government spending per student from 2014 to 2020. A lack of funding also makes the cheap method of excluding to reach targets alluring (Royal Society of Arts, 2020). Schools have been facing a rise in complex student needs while experiencing a fall in external support options (Demie, 2023). There are now 33% of children living in poverty, disproportionately affecting Black families (SMC, 2020). Joseph (2020) recognised that the combination of colour-blind policies under oppressive neoliberal regimes individualises Black students for poor behaviour without factoring in IR.

The recent *Timpson Report* into exclusions (DfE, 2020a, p. 83) identified this 'perverse incentive' of exclusion, recommending a review of funding and reform of the accountability framework, making schools responsible academically for students' post-exclusion. Another critical report recommendation is using Ofsted to force overarching progress in a fragmented school system and to continue to challenge 'off-rolling'. However, the *Timpson Report* (2020a) contains little mention of IR. There is a focus on the 'mishandling' of SEN children and an emphasis on overlapping characteristics and intersections rather than on 'race' directly. The report is currently unenacted. The government has prioritised improving school behaviour. Demie (2023, p. 140) concluded there is resounding 'silence' on the disproportionate prevalence of Black exclusion.

2.4 Teachers & Their BC/MBC Students

The final section of the review looks specifically at how structure, behaviour policy, and IR affect teachers and their BC/MBC male students. Centring on CRT's understanding of 'race' as a construction, a wide range of academic literature has analysed what can support or hinder Black inclusion.

All schools must have a behaviour policy for 'promoting self-discipline and proper regard for authority' (*Education and Inspections Act 2006*, p. 88). According to the *Timpson Report* (2020b, p. 5), exclusion is an 'important tool' in behaviour management for headteachers, who have final authority, overseen and advised by a board of school governors. Significantly, exclusion should only be a 'last resort' (*School Discipline Regulations 2012*). However, with the ongoing practice of off-rolling officially acknowledged, it is clear some schools exclude it for reasons other than it being the last option available.

Government pressure to meet attainment targets informs behaviour policies in secondary schools in England (Ball et al., 2011). For example, Progress 8 makes it harder for teachers to accommodate challenging behaviour (Cole et al., 2018). According to the IPPR (2017), school hyper-management structures diminish teacher creativity and autonomy. Tony Sewell's (1997, p. 68) London-based research on 'Black masculinities and schooling' found that teachers have a reduced scope for an emancipatory role in a 'survival' mentality or the energy to dwell on ethnic positioning. Neoliberal policies and austerity impact on the teacher-Black student dynamic.

There is a broad government consensus that discipline and its enforcement are integral to learning and results. A government poll involving parents, pupils and teachers reported a growing demand for 'zero tolerance policies' to ensure calm classroom environments (DfE, 2017). However, the House of Commons Education Committee (HCEC) (2018) connected the increase of zero tolerance to rising exclusion. Due to conscious or unconscious bias, Black exclusion is particularly affected (Gillborn and Demack, 2018). Research has shown that repeated FPE is counter-productive and detrimental to engagement (DfE, 2019). There is little research on the impact of repetitive internal referrals (Stanforth and Rose, 2020).

According to the government, poor behaviour is a reason for teachers leaving the profession. The Policy Exchange (2018) reported that two-thirds of teachers were either currently or had previously considered handing in their notice due to behavioural issues. Their recommendation was to abandon child-centred pedagogy and enforce teacher authority. Similarly, the DfE (2017) reported that good behaviour increased staff job satisfaction and improved staff recruitment and retention. However, a

recent poll by the National Education Union (NEU) (2022) noted that the rise in teachers intending to leave was mainly due to an 'unmanageable' workload and the government undervaluing the profession. Teachers face increasing pressures due to austerity, especially support staff cutbacks, increasing class sizes and a punitive Ofsted inspection system. Current teacher strike demands are focused on pay and working conditions and do not mention students (NEU, 2023).

In secondary schools, teachers have reduced time and structure for personal student engagement (DfE, 2019). Primary schools enable more emotional support and focus on child well-being (Demie, 2023). Good relationships with teachers allow pupils to feel a part of the school community. Being racially stereotyped or punished unfairly undermines a sense of belonging (DfE, 2019). Challenging behaviour often indicates something deeper going on in a student's life (Demie, 2023). Stanforth and Rose (2020) found that teachers who could contextualise their students' lives had more empathy and patience for poor behaviour. Without this understanding, teachers tended to individualise blame without questioning overall trends in exclusion patterns (Stanforth and Rose, 2020).

Another issue is the lack of diversity in the teaching workforce. In 2018, 85.9% of all teachers in English state-funded schools were WB, and three-quarters were female (DfE, 2020a). While 25% of English students are from ethnic minorities, only 9% of their teachers are, reducing to 3% of headteachers and 4% of governors and trustees (DfE, 2019). School leadership with the final say in exclusions should reflect the school's demographic. The government recognises that pupils need cultural representation and visible role models (DfE, 2019). However, research has shown that structural racism in the recruitment process and workplace produces barriers to entry, retainment, and career progression for minoritised teachers (Bradbury et al., 2022). The feminisation of the teaching workforce negatively affects boys, but Black boys are affected further due to the intersectionality of 'race' (Cooper et al., 2022).

Due to a White majority in teaching, implicit bias, stereotyping and false assumptions about Black students, families and culture are pivotal in exclusion trends (Gillborn et al., 2017). School staff members are part of society, conditioned by the same socioeconomic and historical processes that shape common-sense opinions about ethnic minority communities (Ladson-Billings, 2013). The media portrays powerful negative representations of Black young men and constructs them as threatening (Demie, 2023). Research has demonstrated that Black students suffer more severe punishment for the same infraction committed by a White student. Anyon et al. (2018) identified that Black students are punished for subjective misdemeanours, while White students receive punishment for objective

demonstrations of rule violations. Black students have no greater predisposition to rule-breaking but rather a projected ideology that stereotypes them as troublemakers (Chadderton, 2022).

Okonfua and Eberhardt (2015) investigated the psychological processes behind teachers' racial stereotyping. They identified teachers' increased sensitivity to repeated Black student infractions that they referred to as the 'Black-escalation effect', encouraging retaliation through increasingly poor behaviour by the victimised Black student (Okonfua and Eberhardt, 2015, p622). Howard and Reynolds (2013) recognised how Black males struggle to reclaim an identity within a school that constructs them as deviants. Male students tend to externalise mental anguish through outward behaviour, whereas females tend to internalise and inflict self-harm (IPPR, 2017). Warikoo (2011), in her study on youth cultures, found that children reach an age in secondary schools where they become more aware of discrimination when police also target Black males disproportionately for stop and search procedures.

Childs and Wooten (2022) identified the repeated exclusion of those outside behaviour norms as 'othering' and that schools, as cultural centres, push an assimilationist agenda that teaches students who belongs and who does not. White moral standards regulate behaviour (Wiggin et al., 2022). Mills (1997, p. 10), author of the 'racial contract', referred to this as the 'moral contract'. Foucault identified school discipline as preserving and continuing societal norms, reinforcing dominant elite (White) values (Ball, 1990). Hidden rules constructed by the White middle classes make it harder for outsider children and parents to navigate, perpetuating racial and social stratification (Little and Welsh, 2019). Some school policies, for example, uniforms and the White normalisation of appearance, can support White supremacy in schools. The penalisation of Black hairstyles is an example of a discriminatory in-school policy (Levinson, 2016).

The research literature has shown that teachers have essential roles and responsibilities in shaping children's futures. Childs and Wooten (2022) recognised educators' duty to address their implicit biases that actively harm Black children. In a survey of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), the least training received was in teaching children from different ethnicities (DfE, 2019). These NQTs were not familiar with concepts, such as IR or the causes of disproportionate exclusions. The Children's Commissioner (2013) found that teachers could graduate without ever receiving diversity training. Gillborn and Demack (2018) found this inexcusable, considering the decades of research and evidence that prove the essential role of unconscious bias training in tackling race education inequality.

While everyone engages in stereotyping, there are differing personal motivations to overcome it. Policy should encourage symmetry in teachers' efforts in this respect (Dovidio et al., 1997). One of the

challenges is the sensitivity in facing one's own bias. Pushing a multicultural agenda is less challenging than tackling racism (Ohito, 2016). Diangelo (2019, pp. 8–9) described this issue as 'White fragility'. Being culturally represented in schools and other institutions creates a White intolerance to dealing with racial stresses (Diangelo, 2019). It is necessary to discuss race in education in a consequential way (Elmer-Soman, 2022).

A relationship-building approach and raising race literacy can shift blame away from the student to teachers' practices. Although, Anyon et al. (2018) cautioned that it can also focus too much on individual teachers while ignoring the overarching racist structures within schools. The effectiveness of micro-policies can substantially reduce, without mitigating, opposing structural forces. The DfE must enforce an inclusive ethos and address inadequate funding (Demie, 2023). The Runnymede Trust (2020b) also clarified that policy-makers and not teachers, are at fault for disproportionate Black exclusions. However, Demie (2023) found that schools that cultivate a more understanding approach to behaviour can challenge national trends.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and justifies the methods used to conduct the relevant research to examine the views of teaching professionals on how structure, behaviour policy and IR affect BC/MBC male student exclusion.

3.2 Method

The research is a case study design. This type of analysis enables exploration into the distinct complexity of an organisation (Clark et al., 2021). Schools as institutions are unique, particularly in a fragmented English system. Policy and its practice are affected by individual actors, situational circumstances and historical processes (DfE, 2019). Therefore, this study aims not to uncover generalisable findings but to create an in-depth analysis of a particular context for a broader social issue. The SSCS is typical of a Hackney state-maintained school in terms of a diverse population, as it has no specific admissions criteria. Critically, the SSCS is representative of national and local exclusion trends. Another fundamental factor is that the SSCS is currently exploring and tackling the disproportionate exclusion of BC/MBC children, establishing a taskforce of which I am a part. The taskforce aims to support teachers in managing challenging behaviour more inclusively. Being a member of this taskforce provided me not only with access but a real-life opportunity to be involved in improving BC/MBC inclusion.

Initially, desk-based research informed my investigation, establishing the English legal and policy framework and determining current national and local trends in exclusion. A review of relevant academic literature, particularly those studies using CRT in education policy, established the positioning of my research. As part of the school's taskforce, I attended monthly meetings, specialist presentations and in-school teacher training. There was also the opportunity to listen to the lived experiences of BC/MBC students at risk of exclusion. From this advantage point, I could develop my research question more fully.

The ontological position of the research is constructionist, with the understanding that interactions between individuals continually construct the social phenomena under investigation, in this case, teachers and their BC/MBC students (Clark et al., 2021). As the study concerns the subjective nature of behaviour, it takes an interpretivist approach, focusing on teachers' interpretational work as policy

actors and how they negotiate policy demands (Ball et al., 2011). A qualitative method is the most appropriate approach for capturing personal feelings and how the social phenomena of BC/MBC exclusion manifest through teacher-student interaction (Silverman, D. 2022). Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, enabling interviewees to have freedom of expression while still being guided by the research requirements. This technique also allowed interesting themes to arise from one interview and benefit consequent ones (Clark et al., 2021).

The teaching profession is going through a difficult moment, signified by strikes, due mainly to economic and education policies. By enabling teachers to voice their lived and daily experience of the phenomenon, the objective is to uncover meaningful insights into where the tensions lie.

3.3 Sample & Sampling Method

The participants selected for this research were five teaching staff in the taskforce at the SSCS with Black and White ethnic heritages. Purposeful sampling is a nonrandomised form of identifying information-rich cases (Clark et al., 2021, p. 378). Patton (1990, p. 169) described this technique as enabling qualitative inquiry to explore relatively small samples while acquiring knowledge about 'issues of central importance to the purpose of the research'. Teachers in the taskforce were immersed in the phenomena, informed, and actively engaged. Interpreting their lived experience of BC/MBC exclusion was integral to this investigation.

3.4 Ethics

Ethical considerations, before collecting data, were a priority due to the highly sensitive nature of IR and bias. The research design referred to the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) at all stages, and data collection conformed with the Data Protection Act 2018. As the teachers were taskforce members, they were well-informed on current Black exclusion research. The study did not project sensitive information, but provided a space to reflect and capture opinions and feelings. For participants' privacy, letters replaced names, and the pseudonym 'SSCS' was used for the school. The project used only general statistical school data (with permission) to further protect anonymity.

All participants signed a consent form that contained an introduction of myself and a full explanation of the project's topic and objectives, clarification on data collection methods, recording and storage and the participants' right to withdraw consent at any point. The interviews took place online and were recorded with permission. To allow the interviewee time to raise questions, they received the form at

least one week before. Some participants raised concerns over privacy and data collection, so extra reassurances were provided. The form's content was read aloud before each interview to yield an additional verbal agreement.

All interview questions were respectful, free from opinion and limited to the agreed topics on the consent form. Before discussing a sensitive topic, participants received a warning and a reminder that they could pass on a question or choose not to elaborate. All answers were received in a non-judgemental and compassionate way so that each participant felt valued and listened to.

3.5 Data Analysis

The research project used thematic content analysis, which enables the discovery of meanings and understandings within data (Braune and Clark, 2006). It is a suitable and flexible method when the aim is to interpret participants' perceptions (Creswell, 2014). After familiarising myself with each transcript, I coded the data using the software NVIVO. At first, the analysis identified open codes from which themes originated. I identified overarching categories and kept my research question at the forefront by referring to my literature review findings.

3.6 Limitations

Being part of the taskforce provided me with a unique opportunity but also meant I had two simultaneous priorities: the taskforce and my research. Initially, I wanted to unite the two, but to maintain integrity in my work. It became clear that this would not work. While both entities shared an objective, my CRT approach meant IR was a central consideration. For reasons discussed in my literature review, there was an uncomfortableness in talking about bias that, from observation within taskforce meetings, often gets marginalised. I also found that the taskforce's roundtable meeting style did not enable optimum levels of discussion about complex tensions within Black exclusion, but anonymous and individual interviews enabled participants to reflect on their experiences and opinions fully. My aim was that my research findings complement the taskforce by providing another valuable dimension. However, my sampling size was modest. Future expanded data collection could provide greater knowledge and understanding.

Chapter 4: Research Findings & Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings and analysis of the data collected from five school staff members working on the taskforce at the SSCS. By conducting a thematic analysis, three core themes emerged: (1) structural factors, (2) tensions and contradictions, (3) policies as racist structures.

4.2 Structural Factors

The first theme explores the participants' perceptions of what structural factors exist and how this impacts the school, their job capacity and exclusions. There were three subthemes: (1) external and internal factors, (2) job capacity, (3) exclusions.

4.2.1 External & Internal Factors

This subtheme analyses the external and internal structures affecting participants' professional lives. All participants support the current teacher strikes, which signify a general malaise with the current conditions in education. Low pay is a fundamental criterion, but the lack of resources and heightened bureaucracy are also significant factors. These echo the NEU (2022) strike justifications and stand contrary to the Policy Exchange (2018) findings with which the government has placed blame on students' 'poor' behaviour. In contrast, all participants displayed strong child-centric values throughout, commonly relating how professional difficulties affect their students.

Yeah, so I am striking, and my reason is that even though I've only been in education, maybe eight years ... it's really clear that it's becoming increasingly difficult to fund.
(Participant A)

I do think that education, as with the National Health Service, is the foundation of society. You have to invest in the young people, and that means investing in the staff. (Participant E)

Participants also expressed that while school investment diminishes, internal school requirements are growing due to increasingly complex student needs. These data were consistent with the literature

review findings. Collectively, participants recognised the government's responsibility to address the shortfall.

[The government] know that schools are getting more difficult to work in ... there's a lot of data that ... things are getting more challenging. Yeah, the money ... and the services around schools are not increasing to support that. (Participant A)

I think that the resources available, like for many schools ... they're not always enough to cater for the students and all their needs. (Participant E)

Regarding complex needs, SEN students were a focus for participants, especially as there was an overrepresentation of BC/MBC students in this group. Long delays in local government provisions for diagnosing students lead to the mishandling of behaviour incidents that then lead to exclusion. Those with special needs, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), would find the referral room experience particularly hard. The lack of funding creates structural harm for vulnerable, disadvantaged children.

Nine times out of 10, those students [excluded] are complex SEN students ... and then ultimately, there isn't a space that is supportive or calming. (Participant A)

Trying to get a child assessed for special needs, the waiting list is so long, it is causing the child harm because they're not able to access the support that they need, which is not always the school's fault, because they're relying upon the borough. (Participant E)

Participants recognised the pressures of wider socioeconomic inequalities, also unfairly affecting BC/MBC male students. Teachers are front-line workers dealing directly with child poverty, which is worsened by neoliberal policies and austerity. They identified how disparity manifests into education inequality and exclusion.

School is ... a microcosm for society ... if we have deep inequalities ... how can we expect there to be this learning of quality and this behaviour of quality ... in school? (Participant D)

I think they're emotional, things like not eating; it affects behaviour, we know that. So, if they can only eat once for the day because if they use it [FSM budget] at break time ... they then go without lunch, and then the behaviour creeps in again.
(Participant E)

Schools are hierarchical structures. The power to exclude rests exclusively with the SLT (School Discipline Legislation, 2012). For the most part, participants acknowledged the SLT as a positive structure compared to other schools, namely academies. They felt they have some autonomy and input into the exclusion process. In particular, the taskforce promoted collaboration rather than top-down policies.

I choose to work at this school because there is that autonomy to challenge leadership when there's a sanction in place and ... come to ... the best decision for that child. I've worked in academies where it's ruthless, and it doesn't matter what their need is, or what happened. If the SLT says that particular thing leads to a five-day exclusion, that student gets a five-day exclusion. Regardless. (Participant A)

I think we're on the right track at the school. Because we're talking about it, and we're doing ... the taskforce, which once upon a time would be ... a tick box activity.
(Participant C)

The case study school's SLT is a positive example of how schools can consciously attempt to address high exclusion rates. However, the motivation came from within, as currently, there is no government oversight via Ofsted to guide all schools to make this a priority and standardised practice (Gillborn et al., 2016).

4.2.2 Job Capacity

This subtheme explores how teachers perceive external and internal structures to shape and affect their job capacity. There are three key issues: 1) multifaceted job role, 2) lack of staff and 3) inadequate training.

The participants expressed how the existing conditions for teaching have created a multifaceted job role with the growing needs of students. Participant B described it as being a 'wearer of many hats'.

A teacher has to be many things, a youth worker, a counsellor, a friend. (Participant C)

You're not just an educator. You are a social worker. You are a therapist. You are a youth worker. You are all these things ... there's far too much pressure on schools, on school workers. (Participant D)

The complexities within the job were described as an overwhelming pressure to perform simultaneous but contrasting, sometimes conflicting, duties, resulting in work-related stress and the compromising of responsibilities.

A professional person going uphill with roller skates, that's what it feels like. (Participant B)

I will never ... have time to worry about their [academic] progress because I'll just deal with their behaviour ... with the Child Protection concerns ... I mean, it's a difficult balance. There is always a trade-off. (Participant A)

Inadequate staffing was also a critical issue for participants that affected their and their students' well-being.

We just don't have enough staff ... I do what is possible ... but sometimes I think it's almost like we need to be a team with double the amount ... It is too much. (Participant B)

I think that being understaffed is a major issue ... If you look at the number of pastoral workers per student, there aren't enough. (Participant D)

As well as insufficient staff allocation, there was also a sense of inadequate teacher training, especially in maintaining quality provision for a diverse range of students.

In terms of how complex some of these students are ... staff don't have enough training to know how to deal with them. (Participant A)

They could ... train teachers and staff how to work with challenging children and actually get them to unpick why their education is difficult. (Participant C)

There was a general feeling of unmanageability when describing their job roles. Even though the structural impediments were well articulated, there was also a sense of personal failure in discourse.

I deal with all the antagonistic feedback, and ... you're doing that all the time, and ... it makes me think that, oh my god, is this my fault? (Participant B)

I've cried a few times at school. Teachers have breakdowns. I've had friends in school who have had breakdowns. (Participant D)

Throughout this section, participants reiterated why teachers feel that now is the time to stand up for their and their students' rights through industrial action. The resources are not in place to support a diverse range of children in mainstream education, with serious ramifications.

4.2.3 Exclusion

This subtheme focuses on how a lack of resources as a structural factor impacts exclusion specifically. As previously stated, socioeconomic and SEN intersectionality affects vulnerable and racialised demographics more (DfE, 2020a). However, a lack of resources influences the exclusion process in other ways. The participants identified four key issues: (1) school autonomy, (2) student experience, (3) AP in mainstream and (4) time poverty.

Due to a lack of funding, several participants perceive a limitation to the SSCS's agency for affecting positive change. Academies are referenced as unfavourable by the participants as not being child-centric. However, some participants feel their school functions similarly due to lacking resources, especially regarding internal sanctions in referral rooms.

We are trying to do the right thing and not create a loss of learning ... but when you're so limited in resources, you end up having to resort to the same kind of sanctions as academies and putting them in referral rooms ... which you know aren't fit for purpose. (Participant A)

Because we are under-resourced in terms of if a student in this school essentially is struggling, we can give them counselling; we can give them a mentor. But then, beyond that, all we have is the referral room. (Participant C)

There is also an inability to deal with external exclusions in-house with appropriate AP where the student can continue learning but receive specialist care and have their behavioural needs met by known staff.

I do think [AP] needs to be within school; to take a student out of the mainstream, it can be really damaging ... if they don't agree with it ... but there is no other option. (Participant A)

If school could have their own provision, like what was considered about building across the road ... it would serve ... more purpose, because you'd have staff from school that are part of the team. (Participant C)

As well as external APs not meeting the bespoke demands of the school, they are prohibitively expensive, further impacting limited resources.

It's very expensive, and the provisions in Hackney, I would say, are very mixed ... they don't work for every student. (Participant C)

Alternative provision is costing our school a fortune, and that is highly problematic because it's taking a lot of funds from the school ... the money could be used better to keep the kids in school. (Participant D)

Another crucial impact on exclusions is the lack of time as a resource; teachers have insufficient reflective space to make essential judgements, despite holding significant power over students' lives. Time poverty can prove highly consequential for students.

If you're ... stretched pastorally, you'll make decisions that you perhaps wouldn't make on another day where you've got more time to speak to that extra person or call that member of staff or get someone else's view ... just to be a bit more consistent and a bit more considered. (Participant A)

It's like when you go to the GP with a headache, and they don't have time because they're under pressure; they can't look at you like a holistic being. (Participant D)

Another impact of being time-poor is the inability to have essential restorative conversations with students after an internal sanction. A restorative conversation explains the reason behind an exclusion to the student so that the student can learn and rebuild from it. Without one, it becomes devalued, and there is a risk of negatively impacting relationships with teachers and the institute.

I think after a while, and this isn't anyone's fault, teaching staff don't have the same will to go down there [referral room] and have these [restorative] conversations, because it's time-consuming. (Participant C)

As a teacher, you don't always have that time to sit down, and speak for half an hour to a child. (Participant D)

In conclusion, the participants convey how their school lacks adequate resources to cope with a rising scope of student needs due to structural causes, a particular problem for race equality with the overrepresentation of BC/ MBC male students in low socioeconomic and SEN groupings. Funding cuts have serious consequences for teaching regarding the workload manageability and scope, adequate staff and required skills to cope with student diversity. Notably, despite the SSCS actively tackling high exclusions, the participants identify that structural factors undermine SLT and staff agency to do so. The student exclusion experience is reduced to that of an academy without resources to make fundamental changes. Similarly, time poverty within excluding undermines fair decisions and meaningful restorative conversations. Unfortunately, despite understanding structural impediments, a sense of personal failure enters the discourse when participants discuss their professional lives.

4.3 Tensions & Contradictions

This theme identifies the conflict and tensions that participants have within the practice of exclusion. By analysing these contradictions that teachers hold, it is possible to expose underlying common-sense values and counter-intuitiveness from an institutionalised perception. There are two subthemes where tensions are prevalent: (1) zero tolerance and student context and (2) internal exclusion as the 'better' option.

4.3.1 Zero Tolerance and Student Context

This subtheme exposes an inherent incompatibility between zero tolerance of socially constructed ‘unacceptable behaviour’ and student context. Research shows that zero tolerance rules, due to unconscious bias, affect BC/ MBC male students more, and therefore it is essential to analyse its purpose and value within the system (HCEC, 2018).

Apart from initial warnings, exclusion is the only sanction available and, therefore, overall, has become a normalised practice. There is consensus that the rules, and the consequence of breaking them, are essential in facilitating learning and enabling school workers to carry out their jobs in a secure and respectful environment.

Like any Institute of Education, ... there are rules that kids know they need to adhere to. So, I think zero tolerance has to be there because the minute you start wavering from that, the boundaries are not very clear. (Participant B)

I think often, understandably, if ... something’s happened in the class, and at that point, that child may need to just be removed. (Participant E)

Another justification for zero tolerance is the fear of escalation or possible anarchy if behavioural rules are not applied uniformly across student bodies.

To ensure that we are nipping any behavioural traits in the bud, as opposed to letting them escalate to the extent that it can sometimes be uncontrollable. (Participant B)

If a child has been swearing and verbally abusing staff and stuff like that, that is not acceptable behaviour because we can’t have that behaviour in the school because everyone else will follow it. (Participant E)

However, while there is a consensus that there should be zero tolerance for ‘unacceptable’ behaviour, this perception becomes incompatible when the individual student context enters discourse. When the participants focus on the circumstance rather than the behaviour, this enables further reflection and questioning of the validity of blanket exclusion.

Obviously, we need to have some sort of punishment. But maybe we're looking too much at punishment and not enough about why the child did that, what's going on. (Participant D)

When we look at the child on a piece of paper, if you list everything that's going on, I don't think we would always approach the situation how we do it because we can see the child. (Participant E)

Additionally, within this framing, participants can perceive teenagers as a social group with innate characteristics incompatible with a hard stance on behaviour. The specific and substantial difficulties facing adolescents may require some behaviour policy modification.

Because if you're in a confrontation, you're a teenager, adrenaline hormones, all sorts, soaring through your body, you might do something that you wouldn't necessarily think about doing ... if you weren't in that frame of mind. (Participant B)

I've not met a child that has sworn at a member of staff and not knowing it's wrong ... but at that time, [they don't] know how to control their anger and emotions. (Participant E)

Another tension identified is the imbalance of value placed on two key zero tolerance rules: missing detentions and fighting. Even though the first misdemeanour could stem from a minor infraction such as wearing a coat inside of school, ultimately, the consequence can be the same as the act of physical aggression. Some participants expressed that the imbalance of justice reduces the value of detention for some students, and the weight they give it, as well as the minor infraction, rules themselves.

Some of them may think that certain rules are quite unrealistic, and ... if they're not following that rule, they get the behaviour incident and then a detention, then they don't go, and then it escalates. (Participant B)

[Students] were saying ... we don't deep [care about] it that much ... if we don't go to detention three times for not taking our coat off, we can get suspended for, like, five days. (Participant D)

With deeper analysis, constructing the category for fighting as a generic zero tolerance offence also becomes problematic. A student with this label could be either the aggressor or defending themselves, sometimes trying to self-address as a bullying victim. The participants report parents teaching their children to stand up for themselves in these cases, conflicting home-life rules with school-life rules. The school regulations specify that children should seek support from staff, but this is problematic as the adolescent code of honour contains peer-on-peer retribution for 'snitching'. Adolescents, therefore, are forced into a difficult position of navigating two social worlds, especially Black boys who express the need to project masculinity for protection (Warikoo, 2011).

Is it self-preservation? Is it protection even more? I often hear, well, you know, my mum has told me if somebody hits me, I hit them back; it's self-defence. (Participant B)

So that culture does not help us because ... the kids are scared because someone can come and say I hear that you snitched. (Participant C)

By analysing the data, the participants express belief and necessity in universally implementing zero tolerance rules, but at the same time, acknowledge counter-intuitiveness and naturally occurring injustices arise when applied indiscriminately.

4.3.2 Internal Exclusion as the 'Better' Option

This subtheme identifies a vital tension within exclusion where internal exclusion, i.e. the referral room, is the 'better' option than an external exclusion. The referral room is where students go when they are removed from the classroom but not sent home; they can also 'serve' internal fixed-period notices for as many as five consecutive days. The students work in silence; they must eat lunch at their desks and are only allowed to leave the room accompanied to use the bathroom. A part of the autonomy participants feel they have within the institution is the ability to champion converting a student's external exclusion to an internal one. There are three reasons that participants view them as the superior option: they are more punitive as students despise them, they reduce a loss of learning as it takes place in school, and students can avoid a mark on their permanent records.

All heads of years, regardless of what the sanction is ... always try and say to SLT that we'd rather they [excluded student] had an internal exclusion, one, because ... they

don't miss out on learning ... and two, students don't want to be in a referral room, whereas sitting at home, parents at work it's quite a luxury. (Participant A)

Internal sanctions are better because they don't affect their school record; post-16, colleges will just say how many times has a student been suspended. (Participant C)

However, while participants weigh the merits of the referral room as the better option than external exclusions, there is also clarity on how the experience must be for the students kept in confinement, especially concerning students with SEN.

And if they need to be internally suspended to avoid a suspension, it's essentially just a room they go in, which sometimes is the worse place to put the most dysregulated student. (Participant A)

Claustrophobic, angry or if you have ADHD? Terrible. (Participant D)

One participant reflected on what a BC male student had said about their experience in a referral room. He eloquently challenged the contradiction of confinement.

He [Black student] said, 'You bang on about these well-being things and being antiracist, but you're putting me, a Black boy, in this room for five days. How do you think that affects my mental health? How do you think that affects my self-esteem?' And I couldn't answer him. (Participant D)

Additionally, there is a belief that detentions in referral rooms are ineffective.

They go into the [referral] room, and it serves no purpose, really, even with restorative conversations. (Participant C)

When you exclude someone for three or five days ... I don't know what we expect back because we are dealing with a child here. (Participant E)

The complexities and contradictions surrounding these issues are possibly at the root of why the current system needs reconsidering. External exclusions, by punishing with loss of learning and through stigmatisation damaging student prospects, arguably are the counter purpose of educational

institutions. Participants, therefore, with common sense, frame internal exclusions as the 'better option', but when participants analyse how they function, especially for repeat offenders, often SEN children, they understand them to be harmful and ineffective. Any punitive system for children that is detrimental and harmful for no purpose needs systemic change.

In conclusion, ultimately, mainstream education will not be an inclusive space until it finds a way to accommodate the innate characteristics of teenagers and allow them to learn and make mistakes in a less judgemental and punitive space. There will always be context to behaviour; therefore, zero tolerance is difficult to justify. That is not to say that the staff and students do not deserve a safe and respectful space. However, urgently needed are resources for a more therapeutic alternative to the referral room and beyond, recognised by the participants. The current options are arguably not options at all. Until then, students who struggle to conform will be penalised by either forgoing their education or well-being.

4.4 Policies as Racist Structures

This theme explores the perceptions of policies in place that act to conform behaviour to acceptable norms and how colour-blind processes can serve as racist structures. Using a CRT lens enables an investigation into the different perceptions and privileges based on ethnic heritage. This theme has three subthemes: (1) decentring race and White fragility, (2) stereotyping and (3) White privilege.

4.4.1 Decentring Race & White Fragility

When asked if racist structures exist in the SSCS context, participants answered differently according to their ethnic heritage. White participants tended to either downplay or decentre race as an issue.

I don't think there's anything at this school, in particular, that stands out systemically that creates a particular problem. (Participant A)

So, I think that it's about race to a certain extent, but it's also about humanity and humans connecting, which I think that sometimes the race conversation can create barriers. (Participant D)

One Black participant recognised the White fragility when talking about race within the institution.

I think [institutional racism] is very difficult to address because that requires ... people having to accept that there's some wrong happening ... and I think then you can move forward, but it's a very tricky, prickly subject. (Participant E)

Extensive research has demonstrated that racism and unconscious bias play a pivotal role in the differential treatment of Black students. Policies must be scrutinised with this in mind (Gillborn et al., 2017). For both Black participants, racist structures in school were present.

Yeah, the racial structures are definitely in place. There's the unconscious bias that goes on in schools at times; we know for a fact that it does happen. We need to change the culture of that. (Participant C)

It's happening. It's real ... this data that they're collecting on Black children being treated differently is going ... far back. And I ... don't understand why there's not ... robust policy to support these children. (Participant E)

A shared ethnic heritage with the Black students enabled participants to identify policies differentiating their experience. The policy that stood out was on accessories, affecting freedom of expression. School rules allow students to dye their hair different colours but disallow the wearing of hair accessories. Participant S identified this as racist, as mostly White students dye their hair, while Black students use the prohibited accessories. Banning durags and bandanas was specific to Black boys' identities. The data supported the research carried out by Levinson (2016) in British schools.

Well, I think most policies benefit the more powerful ... But ... if we look at ... what the children are allowed to wear, or ways of expression ... that someone's got flowers in their hair, or they've got a bandana, or whatever it is, we label that as being threatening or ... it's not conforming, but we allow other things. (Participant E)

None of the White participants identified where school behaviour rules acted as racist structures.

Unlike an academy, it's not a school that has ridiculous rules or anything. (Participant A)

However, White participants could recognise the racist structures external to the SSCS, such as the police, media and the public. Mistreatment in the outside world became a reason Black boys may be acting out or 'differently' due to frustration caused by this 'external' treatment.

Society doesn't help us at all ... there are far too many innocent Black young males being targeted ... that is where they feel ... they might have to ... act in a certain way that is already being perceived as threatening. (Participant B)

And to be honest, the public, the police, I think everyone's to blame ... So, I think they might think, well, you don't care, so, I might as well. (Participant D)

For the White participants, rather than 'race', the framing of disadvantage was exclusively around economic and SEN intersectionality.

I think for us, one of the key points is that the Black students that tend to get suspended ... also have SEN but are not always diagnosed. (Participant A)

We're aware of the data, and we're aware it's not a level playing field. (Participant B)

While the disadvantage is multidimensional, without accepting and understanding the primary factor of IR and unconscious bias, no targeted policies are likely to treat the whole issue. Institutions have more substantial autonomy to treat these issues internally, while other factors may be less in their control.

4.4.2 Stereotyping

This subtheme demonstrates the implicit stereotyping of Black boys concerning their behaviour. All ethnic heritage groups identify the process of 'adultification' affecting the BC/MBC boys (and girls) as an issue. They are interpreted as older, resulting in being judged and treated differently by staff. However, while White participants suggested there may be an overreaction, the behaviour was still perceived as 'different'.

[BC/MBC] boys in my youth group ... are bigger, they're louder, and they tend to argue more ... They're perceived to be perhaps a bit older than they are and ... don't

perhaps get the same treatment ... the staff can be quite quick to issue them with a detention. (Participant A)

For the Black participants, behaviour was not differentiated based on ethnicity. There was no such thing as 'Black' behaviour.

My honest opinion is that for Black kids, the tolerance ... is lower. I think what is accepted for other children isn't accepted for the Black kid. That Black kid might get told off once and it'll be you're out. (Participant E)

The response by Participant E supported the psychological study made by Okonfua and Eberhardt (2015, p. 622) and what they refer to as the 'Black-escalation effect'. Research has shown that staff diversity is essential for Black inclusion (Child and Wooten, 2022). Even subtle unconscious biases work as a racist structure against Black inclusion.

4.4.3 White Privilege

This subtheme explores the perception and prevalence of White privilege and how it undermines Black student positioning in school as a 'White space'. As a phenomenon, all participants, independent of ethnic heritage, could identify the marginalisation of BC/MBC students in school. 'Student voice', the platform for students to voice grievances, was a particular concern. One participant identified that a privileged status was assigned to those with higher language skills and confidence.

They have student voice ... but again, the children who may be don't have the language skills that other kids have, I'm not quite sure that they will be able to have their concerns heard and the same value given to them. (Participant E)

Crucially, participants recognised that where a Black student's voice is missing most is within the exclusion process.

It will probably be a starting point to get [BC/MBC boys] voices heard, because quite often ... unless you get someone's personal experience. What do you actually know? (Participant C)

When in the past I have spoken to [Black boys] about ... exclusions, I think they may come up with much better ideas than adults because they're the ones that have to go through it. (Participant D)

Participants also recognised that a hierarchy of experience and status within the school extends beyond the students to their parents. Predominantly, it is the White middle-class parent who can advance their agenda.

[White middle-class parents] have their voices heard louder, just because they are more present ... Often, when I've had some parents who are Black Caribbean ... working class, they are not comfortable in this environment. The institution just feels quite intimidating ... and against them. (Participant C)

Sometimes parents are difficult to contact, so you don't get that strong link with home that perhaps you get with other parents ... If you were able to run data for who's logging into online parents' evenings, they'd probably be quite swayed toward our White students. (Participant A)

As participants disclosed that satisfying parent demands was challenging, it stands to reason that those more present would have their concerns prioritised.

What is a priority for different parents and what parents want us to be as a school can be quite difficult to navigate your time around. (Participant A)

Sometimes we don't listen to the right parents. (Participant C)

Part of the reason participants gave for the lack of BC/MBC parents' presence was the parents' own negative educational experiences. A historical pattern of racial marginalisation produces an antagonism toward an institution seen to be putting its children through the same rejection and destructive processes.

What you'll find is a lot of [BC/MBC] parents have had really poor school experiences. And also ... been excluded ... a lot, and just generally, the culture around the school system isn't something that they buy into. (Participant C)

So, with these situations where parents come up with the child to school, with the perception of ... being very anti-establishment. (Participant B)

For participants, having a good relationship with parents was vital for improving exclusion statistics. Significantly, in terms of preventative action, White children benefit from having engaged parents early on in behavioural incidents.

I know for a fact that if I give a behaviour incident for something small to most of my White students, their parents will probably see that on Class Charts [the online communication platform] and ... the same situation could happen for one of my Black boys, and their parents won't see the small things that build to these big things. (Participant A)

Or getting parents in quicker, which has ultimately had a bigger impact than the suspension itself. (Participant C)

There was a powerful sentiment of gaining the trust back from an estranged demographic of parents by giving them a voice. Preventing exclusion should be collaborative, and Black parents should have input into their children's education outcomes.

I think we've got to get [BC/MBC] parents on our side from the beginning and let them know that we have their children's best interests at heart ... If we can't get the parents on board, we're not going to get the children on our side, either. (Participant C)

So that's my thing. [BC/MBC] parents, I want to get back; I want us to work together again. (Participant B)

In conclusion, all the subthemes reiterate that the Black voice is crucial for re-centring race into the conversation. Emboldening the Black teacher can make the racist policy structures visible. It is important to give Black parents and their children equality of access and status, especially within the exclusion process.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The SSCS and its taskforce are challenging national trends and working towards a more inclusive outcome. However, inadequate resources and not considering IR may undermine their objectives and capacity to carry out their task. The participants all demonstrated strong child-centric values and the desire to support BC/MBC male student inclusion, but also felt their roles required urgent streamlining, support from extra staff and training to meet increasingly diverse student needs. They required adequate time to consider children holistically and make measured decisions. Teachers should not feel they are failing when the resources are not there to support them and the students in their care. Teachers are arguably the most crucial educational resource, but current conditions lead to poor retention statistics, creating further pressures within the system.

Another issue is the institutional perception of exclusion exposed by tensions within participants' opinions. Zero tolerance for nuanced behaviour and context needs revisiting, with the innate characteristics of teenagers adjusted for. Integrally, all rules leading to exclusion must not impact one demographic of students over another. Exclusion as the only sanction is normalised in education but arguably regressive and ineffective, therefore establishing alternatives to exclusion is essential. Staff and students deserve calm, safe learning environments, but not in a way that harms students falling outside behavioural norms. Behaviour is a symptom and requires support rather than punishment. In-house AP and rehabilitation would make for a more affordable, pragmatic, and humane solution to the current system, as identified by the participants.

Additionally, the SSCS must become less of a 'White' space through Black teacher diversity and amplification of their voice to address racist policy structures and practices. Participants recognised that BC/MBC male students and parents must be considered, especially in the exclusion process. Holding focus groups, for example, with the estranged parent group, could determine their needs and what the school can do to repair relationships. An alternative and additional platform (possibly online or anonymous) could enable a diverse 'student voice' and support marginalised children to be heard.

By removing a deficit theory, CRT enables a deeper understanding of factors affecting the disproportionate exclusion of BC/MBC male students. Research has shown an 'X factor' of 'race' in Black exclusion. It cannot be explained entirely by the intersectionality of socioeconomic factors and SEN. Without a sensitive but pragmatic open conversation concerning the 'tricky, prickly subject' of IR, no

targeted policy will fully work. Tackling disproportionate exclusions should not be a school choice but a government directive, as it is an unacceptable outcome of the current system. Without a national will for racial literacy and resources, Black exclusion is likely to continue to plague our educational institutions.

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Appendix A: List of Abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
AP	Alternative provision
BC	Black Caribbean
CRT	Critical race theory
DfE	Department for Education
FPE	Fixed-period exclusion
FSM	Free School Meals
HC	Hackney Council
HCEC	House of Commons Education Committee
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
IR	Institutional racism
KS4	Key Stage 4
MBC	Mixed Black Caribbean
NEU	National Education Union
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PE	Permanent exclusion
RRAA	<i>Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000</i>
SEN	Special educational needs
SLT	School leadership team
SSCS	Secondary school case study
WB	White British

Appendix B: Consent Form

RESEARCH INTO DISPROPORTIONATE EXCLUSION OF BLACK CARRIBEAN BOYS.

Researcher: Kate Bonhote / REDACTED INFORMATION

Dissertation: London Metropolitan University/ BA Society, Politics and Policy

- I.....voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on a personal computer with no public access until the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Topic Guide

- ❖ **The role of being a teacher**
 - What got you into teaching?
 - What brings you the most joy in your role?
 - What are the stresses or disappointments affecting your job right now?

- ❖ **Behaviour Policy**
 - What do you think about your school's behaviour policy?
 - What zero tolerance rules exist?
 - What are the challenges in balancing behaviour and learning?
 - Are there any rules you feel students have problems with or play up with that are counter-productive?
 - What do you think could help?

- ❖ **Use of exclusion**
 - How do you feel about exclusion?
 - Can you explain the different exclusions?
 - What do you feel about excluding?
 - On average, how often do you feel you use internal exclusions in a day/ a week?
 - What do you think about referral room?
 - Could you elaborate on why you think that?
 - Do you feel sometimes you get it wrong, and it's hard to come back from with some students?
 - In those instances, are you supported, or what support do you need?
 - Do you feel you have the time and support to consider why that student misbehaves?
 - If you know there is a reason, how are you (or can be) enabled to address individual students' issues?
 - How does the SLT support or hinder you?

- ❖ **Racial literacy**
 - Why did you join the taskforce?
 - Is there anything you have learned that has been surprising (or not) or that you hadn't considered before?

- ❖ *I am now going to ask about bias and racism in a school context. Please let me know if anything makes you feel uncomfortable!*
 - What racist structures exist in the school?
 - Do you feel the role of racism is considered enough in your school's policies?
 - Do you feel unconscious bias training is effective enough?
 - If not, where are energies focused instead?
 - Do you feel it is hard to talk about these issues in general?
 - Do you feel there are any circumstances you think were missed opportunities for improving racial literacy?

- ❖ **Black exclusion**
 - In your opinion, why do you feel Black children with Caribbean heritage are excluded more than any other ethnic group in this school?
 - Do you think other intersectional characteristics also play a role?
 - Do you feel sometimes the onus is too much on schools and teachers, especially to fix the problem?
 - Where do you think the responsibility lies?
 - Do you feel there are any barriers to forming or improving teacher relationships with their Black students?
 - What policies or factors do you feel can be put in place to support better understanding and relationships?

Finally!

- ❖ If you feel we have missed out on any of the practicalities and realities of teaching and classroom management that anyone outside the profession would not understand, please let me know.