Exploring school staff members' understanding about influences on the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean Descent in schools: A Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of Applied Educational Psychology

May 2022

Word Count: 42,535

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Abstract

The current research utilised reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to explore the shared understanding of school staff members regarding the experiences and sense of belonging of students of Caribbean descent in school and the influences over these. The barriers within the English education system for students, who identify as having Caribbean heritage and a 'black' racialised identity, are widely acknowledged in the research and literature across time (e.g., Coard, 1971, Demie & McLean 2017a, Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021). The narratives of young people in the research support this and emphasise the importance of a sense of belonging to the school experience. School staff are indicated as being influential to both the experience and sense of belonging for students. As professionals within the school system, with considerable influence, it was deemed important to gather their understanding and perceptions on how the school context may be shaping young people's experiences to support transformation.

I interviewed eleven participants, who were all teachers or headteachers, to explore their views. Using the reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), I developed three overarching themes: 'Pervasive impact of bias and inequity', 'Willingness, ability and blind spots' and 'fostering positive experiences and belonging' and a standalone theme of 'one size does not fit all', to capture narratives of individuality and intersectionality.

The overarching theme, 'pervasive impact of bias and inequity', captured themes of limited representation in the workforce and curriculum, interpersonal racism, and staff members' biases and racism. 'Willingness, ability and blind spots' brought together shared patterns of the discomfort, reluctance and dismissal that arise in discussions of 'race' and racism, which were compared to literature on the characteristics of 'whiteness'. Finally, the 'fostering positive experiences and belonging' included the perceived positive contributions of support networks, high expectations, staff members' awareness and self-reflection, representation, empowerment, and moving beyond tokenism.

With consideration to the strengths and limitations of the research and the positionality of the researcher, the discussion includes the analytic conclusions and implications. Finally, I outline the possible implications of the research for individuals in education, and the systems around them, including schools and Educational Psychology Services.

Acknowledgements

There are several people I want to thank for their support throughout this process and my time on the doctorate:

Thank you to the participants for your time, engagement, reflection, and candour in this process. I really do hope that your views can help to inform change in the system.

To the tutor team at the University of Nottingham and especially Russell, thank you for your endless guidance and support.

To the Educational Psychology Service, where I am on placement, and Julie thank you for supporting my own sense of belonging and for all your wisdom.

To my wonderful cohort, I cannot thank you enough for your friendship, advice, and all the laughs. We've had lots of obstacles on our journey together, but we've leapt over each one!

Thank you to my family and friends for your check ins and cheerleading, especially my parents who have been the greatest source of support.

A special thank you to Isaac, thank you for being by my side throughout this journey, I would not have been able to do it without you!

Chapter 1 Introduction

Through the current research, I aim to explore the school staff members' understanding of the experiences of students of Caribbean descent in school, as key professionals in the educational system who have a significant impact on the experiences and outcomes of students.

Whilst acknowledging that it is by no means deterministic in its impact on young people (Nicolas et al., 2008), I begin the thesis by exploring the literature and research on the disproportionate barriers to education and inclusion that students of Caribbean descent face at the societal and school levels; alongside narratives of 'black' students and a specific focus on the experiences of students of Caribbean descent in a qualitative synthesis of research (Chapter 2).

Through the methodology section, I will then outline the theoretical assumptions that underpin my research: the flexible qualitative research design adopted, the research participants and recruitment process, and the reflexive Thematic Analysis of interview data.

My analytic interpretations, from the eleven interviews with teachers and headteachers, are provided alongside the literature and research in which they are positioned. In Chapter 5, I summarise my analytic conclusions and discuss the implications of the research, positioning them in respect to an evaluation of the research and my positionality.

1.1 Glossary of terms

Based on my current understanding of the literature, I will provide a description of some of the key terms that I refer to within this thesis and the issues with their definition, conceptualisation, and application.

Differential racialisation	"Differential racialisation" (p.8, Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) is a tenet of Critical Race Theory (see section 2.2.1.1)

	which describes the impact of dominant groups 'racialising' groups or individuals dependent on power, time, and context.
Disproportionality	Typically used to refer to individuals, identified as part of an 'ethnic group', being significantly more or less likely to be identified as having special educational needs than the 'ethnic majority' group or pupil average (Strand & Lindroff, 2018).
Ethnicity	Jenkins (2008), a social anthropologist, carefully summarises features of the relatively ambiguous term 'ethnicity' to include: "complex repertoires which people experience, use, learn and 'do' in their daily lives" (p.15); a sense of shared meanings between group members; a continual and evolving process of identification; and a negotiated identity between those within and outside of the group.
Institutional racism	I utilise the description from Macpherson (1999) which defines institutional racism 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." (p. 49, Chapter 6.4, Macpherson, 1999)
Intersectionality	Mirza (2013) describes intersectionality as the "converging and conterminous ways in which the differentiated and variable organising logics of race, class and gender and other social divisions such as sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity, culture, religion and belief structure the material conditions which produce economic, social and political inequality" (p.6). The impact and

	meaning of these inter-relating and layered identities are suggested to change between contexts and times (Gillborn, 2015; Mirza, 2013).
Microaggression	Observable, yet often subtle, acts of racism in everyday interactions that reflect and perpetuate wider systemic racism (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). Doharty (2017) outlines three types of microaggressions that they term micro-'invalidation', -'insults' and -'assaults'.
Minority	Minority individuals refers to the groups that account for a smaller proportion of the population ("Minority", 2022), therefore, relative to the country it is used in; reflecting Abijah-Liburd's (2018) description, it is does not signify "lesser-ness" (p.14). I will predominantly use the term 'minoritised' to reflect how this identity is at times ascribed to individuals without their consent or autonomy.
Othering	A dictionary definition of the verb 'to other' describes the treatment of a group or an individual as different to oneself based on identity characteristics ("other", n.d.), which typically centres around 'race', gender and/or class (Jenson, 2011). Within wider literature, the role of power and discourse is referenced in this definition. For example, Jenson (2011) describes it as those possessing power defining those who differ to them in a manner to "affirm the legitimacy and superiority of the powerful and condition identity formation among the subordinate" (p.65, Jensen, 2011).
Protected characteristics	Outlined in the Equality Act (2010), the characteristics that are protected from discrimination in law in the UK include identities related to 'race', religion, gender, age, disability, and sexuality.
'Race'	I utilise the term 'race' throughout this thesis as a social, political and 'power construct' (Ladson-Billings & Tate,

	1995; Kendi, 2019), that has tangible impact on people's lives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The concept had initially been created to classify individuals based on physical surface-level characteristics (Hoyt, 2012; Muir, 1993), which had been suggested to reflect inherent differences in physiology and psychology and used to justify oppression and division by dominant groups who benefitted from the classification (Muir, 1993). However, the biological and/or genetic nature of 'race' has been comprehensively discredited (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; DuBois, 2003; Gunaratnam, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Muir, 1993; Yudell et al., 2016) (see section 1.3.1 for more reflection).
Racism	The definition by Hoyt Jr. (2012) describes racism, quite broadly, as a prejudice that stems from a "belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or other races" (p.222).
Representation	I utilise the description by Thomas (2022) who describes representation as the importance of seeing oneself within a context where there is critical reflection on who is being heard, power dynamics, and the impact of the representation.
Unlearning	The concept of unlearning is described by hooks (1994) as an active process of acknowledging and critically reflecting on the historical context and power relations of our knowledge and the implications of power in our society.
Whiteness	I utilise the conceptualisation of whiteness outlined initially by Frankenberg (1997). This description refers to 'whiteness' as a concept rather than a 'racial' or cultural

identity of ‘white’ individuals and as a position of ‘racial’ privilege, a worldview, and a “set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” (p.1, Frankenberg, 1993). I discuss this further in section 1.3.1 and provide brief examples.

1.2 Personal and professional interest in the topic

I believe that education is a valuable resource that has the potential to empower and transform (Coard, 2021). Social justice aims for equal access to education drove me to want to become an Educational Psychologist (EP). More information on my background is explored further in Appendix A.

Through an initial course assignment, however, I became acquainted with the problematic history of the profession and its impact on education. For example, the first Educational Psychologist Cyril Burt, was a proponent of Eugenics, a movement with the aim to reduce the ‘deterioration of the [‘white’] race’ (Lowe, 1998; Sutherland, 1981). Additionally, EPs using culturally-biased assessments of intelligence, equivalents of which are still used (Lokke et al., 1997), contributed to the wrongful placement of West Indian children in schools for the ‘Educationally Subnormal’ in the 1970s (ESN schools) (Coard, 2021).

I feel that we, as a profession, owe it to children and communities to ensure we are supporting equality, challenging racism, and dismantling oppressive systems, rather than further harming and marginalising. This responsibility is written into our ethical codes (British Psychological Society, 2018) and guidance for EPs on anti-racism that spans decades (British Psychological Society, 2006; Desforges et al., 1985; Williams et al., 2020).

The time when I was choosing a research topic, Spring 2020, also coincided with the context of increased awareness of the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement, following the murder of George Floyd, the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ‘black’ and ‘ethnic minority’ individuals owing to social

factors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Kirby, 2020), and experiences on placement that highlighted disparities in experiences and inclusion of students with Caribbean heritage.

When reflecting on my sphere of influence, in this context, I felt motivated to use my privileged opportunity for research to respond to calls for action and transformation in the system and promote “high quality education for all” (p. 64).

I felt apprehensive as a ‘white’ woman researching in this area about the appropriateness, impact and potential detraction from the cause for ‘black’ individuals (Lachman, 2018), and still do (see section 3.4). I have been encouraged on however by:

- Recognising that ‘race’ and racism involves and implicates everyone (Frankenberg, 1997; Reid, 2021).
- Conversations with children, young people, families, communities, and colleagues in my capacity as a Trainee that highlight the importance of transformation.
- Friends and family experiences.
- Being part of an anti-racism group on placement and regionally, and the discussions and impact from this.
- My own personal journey and commitment to anti-racism and interrogating ‘whiteness’, facilitated by resources such as Reid (2021) and professional development (appendix B).
- The limited representation of minoritised groups on EP courses and discussion of ‘race’ and culture in EP research in the UK (Williams et al., 2016).

1.3 Contextualising the research

1.3.1 Reflection on key terminology

In this section I have included further reflection on key terminology referred to within the glossary of terms (section 1.1) and the choices I have taken within the research process.

In the thesis, I include the terms 'black' and 'white' in quotation marks to acknowledge 'race' as a socially and politically constructed description rather than having a biological basis (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; DuBois, 2003; Gunaratnam, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yudell et al., 2016). Whilst acknowledging the problems of the definition of 'race', Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) propose it is necessary to explain social inequity, as gender and class are not enough to explain the differing outcomes for individuals in society.

I have used the term 'racialised' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) to highlight identity as, not simply a choice, but an ascription and negotiation of identity (Jiménez, 2010; Sefa Dei & James, 1998).

In this research, my focus is on pupils with Caribbean heritage. I will use 'Caribbean descent' to represent individuals who identify as descending from people from the Caribbean with the 'racial' identity of 'black', with at least one parent of Caribbean heritage (Demie & McLean, 2017a). Differing terminology is used to refer to individuals with Caribbean heritage; for example, 'black' Caribbean (Demie & McLean, 2017a) the current government ethnic category; 'West Indian' (a previously-used government ethnicity category), and African-Caribbean (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Warren, 2005). NB: the UK government suggest 18 ethnic group categories (White, 2012). The category that an individual chooses, or does not choose, to describe their identity is more complex than the labels may permit (White, 2012).

In this research, I have used the collective terminology used in the literature, research or publication being referenced to allow for cross-referencing and to respect the choices of the author. This includes using the government ethnicity group wording (e.g., 'black' Caribbean, 'white' British). This is not intended as a way of reducing the identity of individuals to these categories or labels.

I will refer to 'whiteness' as a concept rather than a 'racial' or cultural identity of 'white' individuals, although Leonard (2002) acknowledges there is often a link. I will use Frankenberg's definition (1993) of 'whiteness' as a position of 'racial' privilege, a worldview, and a "set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (p.1, Frankenberg, 1993): for example, strategies of evading considering 'race' and identifying with a 'racial' group, efforts to forget legacies of racism, and positioning 'white' as the norm (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002).

I could write extensively on terminology alone, however word limits do not permit. A key reflection is that consideration is needed as terminology can reduce huge populations and identities to a 'non-white' identity, reinforcing a 'white' and 'black' dichotomy (Boakye, 2019), and 'others' individuals who do not identify in the theoretical and dominant "in group" (e.g. diversity) (Mackenzie & Abad, 2021). Additionally, some scholars suggest that reference to 'race' or racialisation of individuals can further embed these notions (Hoyt, 2012).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter overview

To contextualise the research and rationale within its broader socio-political context, I will firstly outline the current ethnic and 'racial' inequalities and disproportionality in the United Kingdom (UK), particularly England. I will

explore explanations of racism and inequality within these systems, such as insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT), throughout.

From this broader context, I will then take a narrower lens to the school system. To foreground the narratives of young people, I will look first to the experiences of 'black' students in schools. The experiences of 'black' students, and students of Caribbean descent, will be my focus throughout, and in the research synthesis (See chapter 2.5).

From these experiences, I will then consider the inequalities, racism, and barriers in the school context related to these experiences. The influence of the school system and staff members will be examined to demonstrate their pivotal role in amplifying inequalities and, equally, supporting change and positive school experiences.

I will lastly explore the concept of belonging, as it is highlighted throughout the literature on the experiences of minoritised individuals and the role of the school system in students' experiences.

2.2 Inequality in the UK

In this section I intend to demonstrate the inequality and disproportionality in the UK, as they perpetuate individual and structural racism. I will focus on the UK context, predominantly England and Wales, whilst drawing themes from other Western contexts, such as the United States.

The Equality Act (2010) outlines the public sector duty to protect all individuals with protected characteristics from discrimination and promote equal opportunities and outcomes for these individuals. The protected characteristics include identities related to race, religion, and gender. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2016) suggest that there are large 'racial' disparities in the UK in areas including work, health, justice, representation in society, discrimination,

and education. These represent how discussions around the systemic and institutional nature of racism, is relevant to the UK context (Gillborn, 2008).

For example, it could be argued that the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on ‘black’ and ethnically minoritised individuals, owing to a range of socio-economic factors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Kirby, 2020), were a manifestation of structural racism and ‘racial’ disparities in the health sector (Razai et al., 2021).

In terms of the criminal justice system, individuals identified as ‘black’ had lower confidence in the police than individuals identified as ‘white’, Asian or ‘other’ (Office for National Statistics, 2021). This mistrust was reported by young ethnically minoritised individuals to stem from unfair targeting by the police (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2021). For example, in 2020 ‘black’ individuals were 9.5 times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police in the UK than ‘white’ people (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2021).

The historical nature of ‘institutional racism’ in the UK is illustrated by the racially-motivated murder of a young person in Britain, Stephen Lawrence, the campaign for justice, led by his parents, and the resulting inquiry into the inadequate police response (Gillborn, 2005). Cole (2004) suggested that the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, in 1999, was the first recognition from the British government that racism existed at the structural and institutional level in the UK. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson, 1999) reported institutional racism in the UK police force. The working definition that they synthesised from previous literature and accounts consisted of:

> “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.” (p. 49, Chapter 6.4, Macpherson, 1999).

The ‘Macpherson Report: Twenty Two Years on’ (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2021) suggests that in some elements, disproportionality is greater now than it was at the time of the report in 1999.

Despite these examples of structural inequity over time, the recent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities report (Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021) argued against a focus on institutional racism, and the role of whiteness, in society as it was perceived to ‘inflate’ and also ‘trivialise’ racism. A critical review of the report (Ogunrotifa, 2022), however, highlighted significant methodological issues, such as an absence of problem definition, exploration with communities, and temporal data, that reduced the report’s credibility and lead to “cosmetic” (p.18) recommendations.

2.2.1 Theoretical perspectives on racism and oppression

In this section, I will outline key theoretical perspectives that aim to conceptualise the inequalities discussed.

2.2.1.1 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Stemming from US legal scholarship regarding civil rights, CRT encompasses key concepts around the discussions of ‘race’, racism, and oppression (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Derrick Bell, is described as the “father of Critical Race Theory” (p.38, Ladson-Billings, 2013) owing to his writings and his earlier contributions (Lynn et al., 2013; Rollock & Gillborn, 2011). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) outlined the features of CRT that they suggest the majority of Critical Race Theorists would ascribe to.

The first feature is that racism is “ordinary” (p.7), in the sense that it is commonplace; and is, therefore, pervasive in society. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) outlined how this pervades both the oppressors and oppressed individuals’ psyches.

Secondly, as ‘white’ dominance serves important purposes for those who benefit from it, meaning that only very few are inclined to dismantle it in predominantly ‘white’ societies (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Referred to as ‘Interest convergence’, a concept theorised by Bell (Ladson-Billings, 2013a), means that the dominant group would only seek ‘racial’ justice if it benefitted or did not harm them.

The discomfort in conversations on ‘race’ and racism is recognised in wider discourses (Ahsan, 2022; hooks, 1994; Reid, 2021). hooks (1994) and Reid (2021) suggested that the necessary ‘unlearning’ raises challenging feelings, such as discomfort, shame, and guilt. Some applied researchers suggested not engaging in these discussions or reflections, due to discomfort, leads to the maintenance of harmful practices and systems (Ahsan, 2022).

The third concept is that ‘race ‘and racism are socially constructed, with ‘racial’ categories being created, adapted, and negotiated as necessary by people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). As mentioned previously (see sections 1.1 and 1.3.1), individuals’ and groups’ ‘racial’ identities are not necessarily a choice, but often negotiated and ascribed (Jiménez, 2010). Kendi (2019) expands that ‘race’ is predominantly a construct of power, as the categories can be utilised to categorise, dehumanise, and exclude to preserve the power of dominant groups. The shaping of this discourse to maintain power is illustrated by Mirza (2015) who outlined how rhetoric, that suggests we are living in a ‘post-racial’ period, may disregard the continued inequality and racism experienced by those who do not identify as ‘white’.

“Differential racialisation” (p.8, Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) and stereotyping of groups depending on different times and in different contexts is another key feature of CRT. For example, some minoritised groups in the UK are positioned as successful or ‘model minorities’ (Gillborn, 2008; Rollock & Gillborn, 2011).

Fifthly, is the notion of intersectionality, which is the inter-relation of, or even conflict between, an individual’s identities in different contexts and times (Gillborn, 2015).

Lastly, the stories and “voice of colour thesis” (p.9, Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) which values and upholds the stories, experiences, and narratives of minoritised individuals.

CRT details the shift that is required for change, from perceiving racism as individual acts of discrimination to systemic issues embedded in society’s history, politics, and culture (Cole, 2004). CRT researchers and frameworks aim to uncover and critically reflect on the established ideas within society that are perpetuating oppression (Bernal, 2002).

As outlined, CRT provides tools and theses to conceptualise and challenge racism. For example, the concept of “interest convergence” encourages activists to find ways to align the interests of the racially oppressed with the dominant group, or oppressors (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Additionally, centring the voices of those that have experienced racism and oppression was suggested by Ladson-Billings and Tate (2017) to interrupt the narratives of the oppressors and to create the cognitive dissonance required for them to gain objectivity about their racism.

One of the key approaches for CRT involves counter-stories that challenge the dominant, often oppressive, narrative told about a marginalised group (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014). For example, the inaccurate, pathologizing narratives around ‘black’ African-Caribbean males in literature which suggest ‘within-child’ causes for increased challenging behaviour, underachievement and disengagement with education (Dumangane Jr., 2016). These counter-stories aim to promote the voices and narratives of typically marginalised groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). They can be generated using first-person personal reflections; third-person narratives; or a composition from the experiences of multiple individuals (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) provide an example of a counter-story they had created from primary and secondary data sources. The two composite characters they generated included a professor and an American university student, who had Mexican heritage, engaging in a dialogue wherein they discuss their experiences of staying silent (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a). The authors suggested that this counter-story illustrated tenets of CRT by illuminating and

critically reflecting upon educational experiences for those with Mexican heritage (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001a; 2002).

Centring the experiences and voices of marginalised individuals is suggested to help challenge systemic, oppressive constructs (Dumangane Jr., 2016). The CRT educational researcher, for example, recognises the voices and experiences of minoritized students as a valid source of knowledge and basis for research (Bernal, 2002).

Another consideration of CRT, pertinent to the current research, is that CRT research is conducted for, rather than on, the target population (Hylton, 2012).

2.2.1.1 CRT in the UK context

Chakrabarty, Roberts and Preston (2012) suggested that CRT is applicable to the UK context owing to the similarities in structural racism to the US context. However, they noted that the UK's history and European influences provided nuance to the application and positioning of it in the UK. For example, Warmington (2012) highlighted some influential contributions that shaped the UK context and history; for example: Bernard Coard's seminal guide for parents, turned published book now in its fifth edition (Coard, 1971); Maureen Stone's autobiographical contributions and commentary on education for the 'black' child (Stone, 1981); and Mirza's plethora of works on racism, whiteness, decolonisation and 'black' British feminism (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000; Mirza, 1992).

The application of CRT to UK-based institutions has been criticised by the government's Equalities Minister, who suggested that these public services should remain politically neutral and that the theory victimises 'black' individuals (Nelson, 2020). However, Ladson-Billings (2013) described the initial backlash she received from centring CRT in her work. She reported that she had interpreted this response to reflect individuals' discomfort when encouraged to discuss or reflect on 'race', rather than on 'diversity'.

2.2.2 Summary

I have outlined the inequality for ‘racially’ and ethnically minoritised individuals in the UK context, which included disparities in health and justice. I conceptualised these racial disparities using insights from CRT. In the next section we will look at the ‘racial’ and ethnic disparities in education and learning (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016).

2.3 Narratives of students’ school experiences

2.3.1 Introduction

Before looking to the narrower contexts of school, we firstly turn to the narratives of ‘black’ students in research that explores their experience of school. The importance of studying individuals’ views of social reality is acknowledged in literature (MacLeod, 1947); as cited in Bronfenbrenner, 1979); and, in particular, the experiences and narratives of minoritised individuals are recognised as important and valid sources of information and basis for research (Bernal, 2002). Personally, the research that included the narratives of young people, and highlighted their agency, became a catalyst for using my position as researcher to better understand the systems to support change.

The research included in this section typically gathered the views of students with African and Caribbean heritage; however, unpublished, or grey, literature that focuses on the narratives of young people of Caribbean descent have been included. The views of students of Caribbean descent on school will be explored further in the research synthesis (chapter 2.6).

2.3.2 Narratives of students racialised as 'black' in research

The research that explored 'black' students narratives emphasised the high aspirations of the students, providing a counterargument to the "myth of low aspirations" (p. 577, Law et al., 2014). Through an interpretative phenomenological analysis following semi-structured interviews with four young people of Caribbean descent in the UK, Abijah-Liburd (2018) derived a master theme of 'wanting to succeed' (p. 79). These included participants acknowledging the value of learning and education in terms of skills and success, whilst also recognising discrepancy between their own aspirations and what schools were offering.

Across the literature, researchers have interpreted the racism present in young people's experiences of school, ranging from the interpersonal to institutional levels. At the interpersonal, direct level this has included experiences of othering, ridiculing, and negative stereotyping about 'race' (Dumangane Jr., 2016; Gosai, 2009; Mngaza, 2020). Supported by Mngaza (2020), Abijah-Liburd (2018) indicated that a sense of othering was experienced in less diverse student populations, included 'culture clashes' relating to how they were viewed, stereotyping by teachers and peers, and feeling that their ethnicity was undesirable.

At the systemic level, particularly in less diverse settings, Mngaza (2020) indicated that racism existed as: discriminatory policies on hair, being stereotyped as threatening, being singled out, lower expectations from teachers, and inadequate or passive adult responses to racist incidents.

Doharty (2017, 2018) reported the experiences of microaggressions related to the demarcated 'black' history month, which was perceived to position it as inferior to the wider 'white' British history taught and embedded in the curriculum. Additionally, she included an excerpt from a Year 8 boy who commented that "Because every time I learn my own unit, it feels like I belong in Africa, not here [in England]" (p.277, Doharty, 2017).

Racism and othering were interpreted from young people's narratives to impact self-concept, feelings of injustice, and sense of belonging in educational settings school (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Dumangane Jr., 2016; Mngaza, 2020). Responses included withdrawal from school and trying to regulate their identity and emotions to reduce stereotyping (Dumangane Jr., 2016; Mngaza, 2020); however, they importantly also included agentic responses of advocating for themselves and for 'othered' peers (Mngaza, 2020).

Several pieces of research have recognised the importance of 'black' students' agency within these experiences (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Dumangane Jr., 2016; Law et al., 2014; Mngaza, 2020). Law and colleagues (2014) and Dumangane (2016) emphasised the importance of meritocratic approaches, such as working hard and relying on self. In Mngaza (2020) this notion was present in part of the researcher's conceptualisation "transcending the need to belong through personal growth" (p.78), which encompassed growth from adversity, self-advocacy and self-reliance. In Abijah-Liburd (2018) agency was expressed through confronting racism, preserving wellbeing, autonomy in aspirations, highlighting the strengths and resilience of the participants.

The narratives also highlighted the value of support networks, particularly family, for aspirations, educational achievement and coping with the educational system (Law et al., 2014; Mngaza, 2020), through encouragement, involvement in school, home-teaching and monitoring performance (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002). Highlighting this involvement, 'black' Caribbean and African students were found to have spent longer hours on home learning than their peers during COVID-19 restrictions (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020).

Rhamie and Hallam (2002) proposed two models for supporting 'black' students' experiences and performance. The first is a home-school model, where families work with supportive schools to increase achievement; the second is a home-community model where success and belonging come from the community, rather than the school, due to low expectations and teacher discrimination. Teachers with high expectations, that value and connect with

students are highlighted as important and protective by young people in the research (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Whitburn, 2007).

2.3.3 Reflections on body of research

The body of research that I outlined above, provided rich data and analyses on the educational experiences of students who participated. I feel this richness was facilitated by the reflexivity evident in the papers and the consideration given to the research, data collection methods, and their interpretations. As a large proportion of the research that I had found comprised of master's and doctoral research in education, psychology and/or philosophy (e.g., Abijah-Liburd, 2019; Dumangane Jr., 2016; Gosai, 2009; Mngaza, 2020), the papers were able to provide a breadth of detail and commentary on these issues.

Several researchers reported the positive impact of sharing aspects of their identity with participants and how this supported rapport building, trust, and insight into the experiences discussed (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Dumangane Jr., 2016; Mngaza, 2020). However, a small number reflected on conducting their research from an 'outsider' perspective to participants, even in aspects of their identity, and how this may have impacted the interviews, their understanding, and interpretations of the data (Dumangane Jr., 2016; Gosai, 2019). However, similarly, I felt the reflexivity and transparency of the authors in their reflections about these topics supported the trustworthiness of the research.

A consideration raised by several researchers was the small sample sizes in their research; however, as the research I was located was largely qualitative, I found that claims of generalisability were not made. The context and descriptions of participants is, therefore, important to consider when reflecting on the interpretations and implications.

2.4 Inequality in the UK schooling context

2.4.1 Introduction

From this broader societal context, I will now turn the focus to schools. Participation in schooling is an integral and compulsory part of life for the majority of five to 16 year olds in the UK (Davie, 1993). It is described as underpinning wider society (Lynch, 2002), acting as a microcosm of the wider socio-political context that they operate in (Battalio, 2005).

Coard (2021) suggested that denying or limiting an individual's education is the "single most powerful tool for subjugating and marginalising"(p.67) them. He describes education as one of the most important forms of wealth, as it offers access to societal capital such as income, contacts, and status. I feel it is, therefore, an essential component of this review to focus on the inequalities within this important aspect of young people's experience.

To highlight the importance of looking at inequality within the schooling context it is vital to note that schools in the UK have a statutory duty to adhere to the Equality Act 2010 ("Equality Act 2010", 2010) (see section 2.2). Relevant to schools, the Act aims to reduce socio-economic inequalities and prevent discrimination within schools' admission procedures and educational practices (Department for Education (DfE), 2014). Where there is a gap between policies on racial equality and practice, including those at the national, local or school levels, there is typically little impact (Willey, 2018) and potentially harm. For example, in a teacher survey about exclusions (Smith et al., 2012), more than 40% of teachers responding felt they had been informed about the Equality Act's requirements and 40% were not sure. By not being discussed or enacted, it is possible to conceive how these policies have limited impact. Willey (2018) posited that an avoidance of confronting the reality of racism and discussing policies reduces the potential impact of 'race'-related policies.

Before exploring the barriers and inequalities in the school context, I thought it would be important to ascertain how conceptualisations of inequality and racism explored above (section 2.2.1) apply to education.

2.4.1.1 'whiteness' and 'race' in Education

Lynn, Jennings and Hughes (2013) described Ladson-Billings as the "mother of Critical Race Theory in education" (p. 608). Ladson-Billings (1998) discussed the tenets of CRT and how these applied to the US educational context. For example, through a focus on how the curriculum perpetuates the dominant perspective; deficit perceptions and language impacting instruction; and assessment being used to segregate marginalised individuals.

Gillborn (2005), in his empirical analysis of UK educational policies, argued that 'racial' inequality and the construct of 'whiteness' is incorporated and maintained within the education system. He discussed the assumptions, held by those in education, that preserve the power inequities and the need for 'white' individuals to deconstruct this structure.

The views of educators as authority figures, on 'race', racism and 'white' capital were explored (Solomon et al., 2005) and their responses indicated how 'racial' injustice may be perpetuated, such as constructing students' success as meritocratic and denying 'white' privilege. From a solution focus, Joseph-Salisbury (2020) recommended that schools need to support teachers' confidence and ability to discuss 'race' and address racism effectively, through enhancing their 'racial' literacy.

2.4.2 Influence of the educational context

I will now explore the disparities in the current British, specifically English and Welsh, education system to highlight its impact on students' experience and outcomes, and barriers to learning. This focuses on the disparities for students

of Caribbean descent in exclusions, attainment, Special Educational Needs (SEN) identification, as well as racism and limited representation. Where these are suggested to be influenced by individuals within the system these will be discussed in chapter 2.4.2 and signposted throughout.

As Coard (2021) expressed, the current issues and inequalities faced were "hatched decades ago" (p.53); therefore, I will make additional references to the historical context of these inequalities.

The different inequalities, although discussed separately, may interact with each other; for example the attainment gap increasing the likelihood of SEN referral, assessment, identification and provision (Artiles et al., 2010) or the lowered expectations that arise from an SEN label (Waitoller et al., 2010).

The term disproportionality is used to refer to the proportion of individuals in a 'ethnic' or 'racial' group experiencing a form of oppression, identification, or exclusion, for example, compared to the percentage of that group within the overall population (Fong et al., 2014).

2.4.2.1 Attainment

The most recent attainment statistics in 2020 and 2021 indicate that 35.9% of students who were identified as 'black' Caribbean heritage, and 39.1 of those with 'white' and 'black' Caribbean heritage, achieved a grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSE; disproportionately below the all-pupil average of 51.9% (National Statistics & Department for Education (DfE), 2021). Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent change to teacher assessed grades, a lower proportion of 'black' Caribbean heritage and mixed 'white' and 'black' Caribbean heritage students attained a grade 5 or above in GCSE English and Maths compared to students with other ethnic identities (DfE & NS, 2018; 2019). This indicates a consistent pattern over time that students identified as having 'black' Caribbean ethnicity achieve at levels below the national average.

The pupils within the homogenised ‘black’ African ethnicity group, however, made greater than average progress, potentially indicating that it is important to understand the needs of the individuals and their diverse cultural backgrounds, rather than referencing this wide range of pupils as a homogenous group (Demie & McLean, 2017a).

It has been argued that the education system does not provide or advocate for students of Caribbean descent as it does for other groups, as statistics suggest that ‘black’ pupils enter the school system performing above or as well as peers (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000).

2.4.2.1.1 Education system role in attainment

I will outline the suggested factors and educational practices underpinning disparities in the attainment of students of Caribbean descent (Demie & McLean, 2017a); as such I emphasise that these discrepancies are related to the system and not to individual or ‘race’-based deficits in learning potential.

Demie and McLean (2017) conducted interviews and focus groups with headteachers, teachers, parents, pupils, EPs and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCos) to gather their views on ‘black’ Caribbean ‘underachievement’. The factors identified to influence included poor school leadership regarding equality, systemic racism, teachers’ low expectations, limited diversity in the work force and curriculum, and limited targeted provision. Some of the recommendations included staff training, celebrating diversity, monitoring progress of ‘black’ Caribbean students, and increasing workforce diversity. Factors related to individual staff members will be explored further in chapter 2.4.2.

Inequality in educational practices, such as ‘setting’, are suggested to be manifestations of low expectations (Coard, 2021) that uphold inequity in schooling (Archer et al., 2018). ‘Setting’, or ‘streaming’, often involves grouping students in core subjects, such as Mathematics and English, typically based

on attainment and measures of performance (Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2018).

An analysis of survey data from 12,178 secondary schools students, and subsequent qualitative data collection of their views, suggested that 'black' and working-class students were more likely to be placed in lower sets than the 'white' or middle-class participants, who were likely to be in 'top sets' (Archer et al., 2018).

Through their evaluation of this practice, the EEF concluded that it is a practice based on limited evidence, that is not effective in improving attainment and has a negative impact for those in middle and lower sets (EEF, 2018). Archer et al (2018) supported this by reporting that being placed in lower sets has a negative impact on students and, owing to the disproportionality of this practice, proposed that it is a tool for maintaining dominant power relations. As mentioned previously, 'black' and low socio-economic status students were more likely to be placed in lower sets (Archer et al, 2018).

2.4.2.1 Disproportionate SEN identification

Two studies (Strand & Lindsay, 2009, 2012) and analyses (Strand, Lindsay, & Pather, 2006; Strand & Lindroff, 2018) revealed disproportionality regarding the over- and under-representation of some minoritised groups in the referral and identification of special educational needs in the UK. Utilising national data relating to UK ethnicity categories and longitudinal analyses, the 2018 analyses (Strand & Lindroff, 2018) indicated that 'black' Caribbean pupils were over-represented in the SEN figures in several areas including 'Moderate Learning Difficulties' and Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnoses compared to 'white' British pupils. 'Black' Caribbean and Mixed 'white' and 'black' Caribbean pupils were also over-represented for pupils with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs (Strand & Lindroff, 2018).

Strand and Lindroff (2018) reported that both under- and over-representation in SEN identification have an impact on the education and equality of

outcomes for individuals. The authors posited that over-identification potentially reduces access to a broad curriculum, educational opportunities, and appropriate teacher expectations, alongside increased stigmatisation.

Regarding the historical context of inequality in SEN identification, Coard (1971) exposed a scandal wherein West Indian children were being disproportionately placed, and wrongly placed, in separate special schools for the ‘Educationally subnormal’ (ESN schools).

Coard (1971) stated, with information from an Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) report, that in 1970 34% of students in ESN schools were classified as ‘immigrants’, compared to around 17% in mainstream schools. Within that percentage of children in ESN schools, 4 out of 5 were West Indian. In that same report, Coard (1971) highlighted that nine out of 19 ESN schools felt that more than 20% of the children had been incorrectly placed there and that immigrant pupils were four times more likely to be wrongly placed their British-born peers.

To give a brief overview of the context, the educational system, prior to the 1981 Education Act (Davie, 1993) and Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978), had been somewhat segregated, with children who required significant educational support attending health-based facilities or separate schools for the ‘Educationally Subnormal’ (ESN schools) instead of mainstream provision (Frederickson & Cline, 2009).

Coard (1971), who had worked in ESN schools, indicated that these institutions had limited curricula offerings and particularly low academic expectations of the young people attending. Coard (2021) noted the emotional impact of wrongful placement and segregation, and the generational socio-economic impact of limited job prospects.

2.4.2.1.1 Conceptualising disproportionality from SEN identification

Regarding understanding disproportionality in SEN identification, Artiles and colleagues (2010) argued that a clearer understanding and dissection of culture, historical socio-political contexts, and reinforced prejudices and stereotypes must be considered.

Coard (2021) reflected on the biases held by those involved in assessment. These included: the roles of cultural biases which incorporate assessment content and misinterpretations of interactions; language and behaviour within the assessment; middle-class biases which may impose differing values; and the emotional impact for the children from wider inequalities and knowledge of negative impacts of assessment.

2.4.2.2 Exclusions and sanctions

For multiple decades, pupils of Caribbean heritage have been disproportionately represented in both fixed and permanent exclusion (Department for Education (DfE) & National Statistics, 2021; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021; Warren, 2005). The latest statistics on exclusion rates indicating that pupils that identify as Gypsy/Roma, Traveller of Irish heritage, 'white' and 'black' Caribbean heritage, and 'black' Caribbean subgroups, particularly males, were over-represented in the figures (Department for Education (DfE) & National Statistics, 2021), demonstrating consistency over time (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021). These figures are described as "only the tip of iceberg" (p. 7, Gill et al., 2017) as many more students are being informally removed from schools or being taught in Alternative Provisions, or Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), which are not captured in the data. Students of Caribbean descent are disproportionately represented in PRUs, with 'black' Caribbean pupils being almost four times more likely to attend PRUs than the rest of the national pupil population.

Fairness and equality in school sanctions are noted as key to young people subscribing to the school ethos and culture, as opposed to resisting it (Wright et al 2000). This conclusion was made by the authors following a review of the body of literature and a two-year empirical study wherein data was collected from schools regarding patterns of exclusions and interviews with 'African-Caribbean' students who had experienced exclusion from these schools.

2.4.2.2.1 School role in disproportionate exclusions and punishment

Following interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires with key stakeholders in higher-excluding schools, Demie (2021) suggested that limited training for teachers and Educational Psychologists in diversity and racial equality, whole school ethos to inclusion, institutional racism, and limited diversity in the school workforce are all contributing to these disproportionate rate of exclusions. Individual factors are explored further in section 2.4.2.

In a survey of class teachers and senior leaders about school exclusions (Smith et al., 2012), more than a third of respondents cited a 'clash of cultures' as a reason for the increased likelihood for exclusion with certain groups of children.

2.4.2.3 Representation in workforce and curriculum

The Government data indicated that in 2019, 86% of the teacher workforce identified as 'white' British: a greater proportion than the percentage of 'white' British individuals in the 2011 UK working age population (Department for Education (DfE), 2021; Office for National Statistics, 2011). It also indicates that 93% of Head Teachers, and 90% of Assistant, or Deputy, Headteachers, were of the 'white' British ethnic group. These disproportionately high figures demonstrate a lack of diversity in the senior leadership roles in the UK school

context, and representation for students of Caribbean descent (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; Tereshchenko et al., 2021).

Earlier sections (See 2.4.2.1 and 2.4.2.2) have explored the importance of a diverse workforce for the inclusion and attainment of students of Caribbean descent. Reports from a Guyanese headteacher in the research by Demie and McLean (2017a) suggested that parents and pupils valued having them as a 'black' role model and for their knowledge of the school's local context and community, which aligns with the body of literature (Coard, 2021; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021). Whilst recognising the potential value, Maylor (2009) emphasised this would need to be the choice of the member of staff, however, and should not be imposed on individuals who may not have the desire or support in order to do so.

Additionally, as indicated by the young people's narratives (Doharty, 2017, 2018), the current curriculum is reported to have a white, Eurocentric focus, with an absence of all the different cultures, individuals, and histories that comprise Britain (Arday, 2021). Thomas (2022) highlights the importance for students to see themselves represented in their learning and in the texts they read. Joseph-Salisbury (2020) indicated the need to transform the curriculum and to ensure examinations and school resources are representative.

Moncrieffe and colleagues (2020) describe the 'epistemic violence' (p.2) of the Eurocentric curriculum. Calls to 'decolonise' the curriculum and make it more representative recommend critical reflection on the current centring of whiteness in the curriculum and its role in perpetuating dominant narratives (Moncrieffe et al., 2020).

2.4.3 Influence of school staff members

2.4.3.1 Introduction

Educators play an integral role in the learning and development of all students and students' narratives signify their influence in supporting the school experience of 'black' students. Through Critical Race Theory (CRT), the explanations of inequality above, and the further exploration in this section, I indicate how educators may either support, or impede, change in the education system (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; Freire, 1998; Mosley et al., 2020; Parker & Lynn, 2002). I will focus this next section on an exploration of the role of individual educators in the school experiences of students of Caribbean descent.

2.4.3.1 Critical Consciousness

The 'critical consciousness' approach to teaching and education illustrates the degree of influence educators have on students' experience and outcomes. Critical consciousness, or **conscientização**, was developed by Paulo Freire in 1959 (Freire, 1998; Trifonas, 2018). It is a transformational approach to teaching that is considered to most effectively support those who are exploited, dehumanised or their potential is hindered by another person or group in society (Freire, 2005). The process of teachers and their students, or researchers, becoming 'critically conscious' involves witnessing or becoming aware of social injustice, critically reflecting upon this at systemic and intersectional levels, and then taking action (Mosley et al., 2020). The aim is to empower those who are marginalised or oppressed to critically reflect and act, which resonates with the agency and transcendence outlined by 'black' students. Alternatively, educators may perpetuate oppression where they take an authoritative, transactional approach to teaching and learning (Freire, 2005).

2.4.3.2 Teacher expectations

Teachers' expectations are suggested to have an important impact on pupils' classroom behaviour (Committee on Minority Representation in Special Education et al., 2002), academic achievement (Demie & McLean, 2017a), inclusion (Demie, 2021; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021), and sense of belonging and identity (Mngaza, 2020). In her qualitative case studies of effective teachers of 'black' African-American students, Ladson-Billings , also a key author in culturally relevant pedagogy, indicated the importance of high expectations for pupils meeting their learning potential.

Strand and Lindroff (2018) argued that teachers' expectations play a key role in the identification of SEN, such as SEMH needs and learning difficulties. Glock and colleagues (2019) suggested that teachers' lower expectations for, and negative evaluation of, minoritised students resulted in systemic disadvantages.

An array of studies indicate that teachers demonstrate lower academic expectations for some minoritised groups of pupils (Committee on Minority Representation in Special Education et al., 2002). For example, Rollock (2007), in her qualitative exploration of the construction of academic success with staff and pupils, suggested that teachers perceived that 'black' pupils would attain success within the lower grades D to G (approximately equivalent to levels 4 – 9) in their examinations. She suggested that staff perceived 'black' pupils' appearance, behaviour and 'street culture' as a mismatch to their own constructions of academic success.

In an early US study on teachers' expectations of 'black' students, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) reported that teachers who had been told 20 randomly selected children had achieved higher scores on an IQ test described them as happier and more likely to succeed than others in the class. Additionally, these 20 children achieved higher scores on the IQ test following the year, which is suggested to be likely associated with the teacher's higher expectations of their ability and the subsequent impact on their practice. Coard (1971) noted the considerable impact that these high expectations may have on a child's

prospects and school placement. Additionally, Coard (1971) described streaming, discussed above, as an external manifestation of teachers' internal expectations (p.41).

Parents in Bobb-Semple's (1999) master's research shared that teachers' negative expectations for behaviour and traits had a potentially self-fulfilling effect on the children. For example, a mother shared in an interview with the researchers that, as teachers expected the African-Caribbean children to be disruptive, they did what was expected.

2.4.3.2.1 Expectations as stereotypes, bias, and attributions

It is suggested that stereotypes and biases underpin staff members' expectations of students (see Demie, 2021; Reyna, 2000), the impacts of which are explored above.

Given the scope of the review, a brief outline of stereotypes, attributions and their relationship to expectations and practice will be explored.

Stereotypes are described by Steele (2011) as the ideas and beliefs about groups and identities in society, that reflect societal and historical factors. Reyna (2000) suggested that stereotypes can have a descriptive function, in that they describe a category or group of individuals, and an explanatory function, where they explain why groups of people present the way they are perceived to present or why certain inequalities may occur. This second function is linked to attributions, in that it is seeking to find a cause for what individuals experience or how they act (Reyna, 2000; Weiner, 1972).

Attributions are thought to impact an individual's behaviour and may therefore indicate how stereotypes and expectations inform practice (Reyna, 2000; Weiner, 1972). For example, Reyna (2000) suggested that stereotypes teachers hold about minoritised pupils, that have an explanatory function (Sekaquaptewa et al., 2003), have an impact on teachers' perceptions of a

student's deservingness, need for support or punishment, and academic performance.

A "stereotype-eliciting event" (p.90, Reyna, 2000) reportedly activates the attributions and stereotypes around the identity of that person, both descriptive and explanatory (Reyna, 2000). The example Reyna (2000) provides is that if a student from a particular minoritised background fails an exam, then a racialised stereotype of 'laziness' may be interpreted as an attribution that the student failed because of this. This stereotype may be positioned as internal to the student, stable, but within the students' control, which may result in a negative social interaction from that teacher. Interestingly, if the stereotype is attributed as uncontrollable, such as low ability, then although the social interaction may be more positive, such as sympathy, the effect may be that the teacher holds lower expectations for the future.

Teachers holding assumptions and stereotypes about 'black' students are widely referenced in the UK and US research (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Reyna, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001b). A US study, which involved giving pre-service teachers a vignette about a student that responded negatively to a teacher's prompts to work, indicated that teachers who were given a vignette that involved a 'black' student, either through being explicitly told or through a 'stereotypical black name' (p.482), were more likely to believe that the behaviour would recur than the when the students identity was explicitly or implied to be 'white' (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019).

Specific to the UK context, teachers attributed the underachievement of pupils with a dual ethnic identity of 'white' and 'black' Caribbean to difficulties with identity, household structures and peer pressure (Haynes et al., 2006), which may then have an impact on the teacher's approach to that young person.

Steele (2011) suggests that individuals are typically aware of how and in which situations they may be stereotyped by others and the knowledge of this can feel threatening and reductive. This awareness is also reflected in the narratives of some 'black' students in research who reported experiencing stereotyping and lower teacher expectations (section 2.3).

André-Warren (2001) reported that 'black' pupils and their parents attributed classroom behaviour most commonly to racism experienced by the pupil, such as the teachers' racist attitudes. This supported findings from previous masters research, with the same questionnaire tool, which reported that African-Caribbean pupils and their parents strongly attributed difficult classroom behaviour to racial discrimination experienced (Bobb-Semple, 1999).

Researchers' recommendations to educators in this area focus on interrogating their own biases and 'whiteness', and thus racism (Myers & Bhopal, 2017; Solomon et al., 2005). The importance of counter-storytelling from CRT is also emphasised through the implications of these stereotypes and deficit-views (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

2.4.4 Section summary

In the narratives of 'black' students, high aspirations, and agency within contexts of interpersonal and structural racism were evident. From these narratives, I highlighted the value of support networks, particularly those from families and advocating teachers.

Within the school context, I then described and provided explanations for the disproportionality within attainment, exclusions, SEN identification, and limited representation for 'black' students and students of Caribbean descent. I perceived the role of school staff members to be emphasised, particularly the expectations, racial literacy, and training of teachers. I then explored the potential bias, stereotypes and attributions underpinning teachers' expectations.

I would argue that the conclusions from Demie and McLean (2017a, 2017b) and Demie (2019) are important to note owing to the rigour of the studies and their pertinence to my research. They are large-scale qualitative or mixed-method studies, that explore a range of stakeholder views including those of students, parents, school staff members, and educational psychologists. They are transparent in their aims and considerations of the design and terminology

used. The transferability of the conclusions can be determined from the comprehensive descriptions of settings, participants and localities provided in Demie and McLean (2017a; 2017b). While the data collection methods and their purposes were outlined, the analysis of these were not included in the papers. Although this made evaluating the relationship between the researchers' interpretations and the participants' accounts difficult, the thorough data excerpts included helped to illustrate the researchers' process to identify themes and conclusions from the narratives.

The literature in this section I also feel highlights some of the debate in this area, particularly around the nature of teachers' influence. For example, whether low expectations contribute to negative experiences and lower attainment or whether it is more complex due to young people's agency and circumstances (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020).

To illustrate how educators can contribute to oppression or liberation, I briefly outlined critical consciousness, a proposed approach to pedagogy and education. In the next section on belonging, I will elaborate further on the supportive influence of teachers on students' school experiences.

2.5 Sense of Belonging

2.5.1.1 Introduction to section

The importance of belonging was raised in the narratives of 'black' students in the research and literature on inequalities. I will explore the literature on belonging, particularly in schools, how this can be cultivated and its influence on the outcomes for young people.

2.5.1.2 Defining a sense of belonging and its impact

Baumeister and Leary (1995) were pioneers in describing the theoretical human drive for forming relationships and social connection as belongingness or "the need to belong" (p. 497), underpinned by theories, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 2012) and Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982). Maslow (2012) proposed that belongingness, as one of an individual's basic needs, must be fulfilled for an individual to meet their potential. It is also essential for supporting motivation, as suggested by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980, 2000).

Belonging is suggested to require frequent, pleasant interactions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and encompass a feeling of acceptance, or a "sense of belonging" (p.1, Lambert et al., 2013) from social relationships. It has been linked to positive cognitive, affective and health outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and psychosocial and identity formulation in adolescent development (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011).

It is important to note, however, that belonging is a subjective concept, which can have different constructions for different individuals, at different points in time (Cartmell & Bond, 2015). Whilst the importance of belonging has consensus, there are variations in the terminology used and operationalisation of the concept in the literature that are argued to hinder its application to real-world contexts (Allen et al., 2021).

2.5.1.3 Sense of belonging in school

Belonging and connectedness to school have been theorised and researched widely (Allen et al., 2016, 2017, 2018; Arslan, 2019), particularly in the USA and Australia (Allen et al., 2018). School belonging was defined as the student's feelings of respect, inclusion and support in school (Goodenow, 1993), reflecting an affiliation towards school and its values (Allen et al., 2017). The literature uses various terminology, such as school connectedness,

attachment and membership (e.g. Allen et al., 2018; Goodenow, 1993; Mouton et al., 1996).

The sense of school belonging is influenced by personal, interpersonal and organisational factors, including self-efficacy, motivation, relationships with teachers and peers, school policies and ethos, and involvement in school activities (Allen et al., 2016; Osterman, 2000). Supportive adult connection was emphasised as a key contributor, especially for adolescents (Tillery et al., 2013).

Case studies and self-report data suggest that sense of school belonging is associated with increased student motivation, wellbeing, academic achievement, and a sense of agency (Arslan, 2019; Riley et al., 2020).

Pupils that have been excluded from a setting and those with additional educational needs are considered less likely to feel a sense of belonging in school (Allen et al., 2019). Studies have suggested that students who feel less school belonging may seek it from other groups that offer solidarity and membership, of which some are associated with exploitation (Roffey & Boyle, 2018; Timpson, 2019).

The body of literature on school belonging is argued to have difficulty in being applied to real-world contexts and used to inform interventions, as papers have typically focussed on the theoretical concept of belonging rather than studying it within applied settings (Allen et al., 2016). Additionally, some argue that the various terminology used to refer to belonging, such as connectedness or relatedness, makes it more difficult to review the literature and apply it in context (Allen et al., 2018; Cartmell & Bond, 2015). However, researchers have been developing frameworks to support its application (Allen et al., 2016; Allen et al., 2018), such as the use of a socio-ecological framework (Allen et al., 2016). Allen and colleagues (2016) apply Bronfenbrenner's ecological model for human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to illustrate factors that impact belonging from different layers of a child's environment. The original model suggests that there are layered structures and contexts that interact and influence an individual's experience and development, which Bronfenbrenner illustrated as concentric circles (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I will

briefly the outline the layers and contexts within this model for reference. The first layer, the microsystem, refers to the influence of individuals and relationships in the immediate environment on development. The next layer, the mesosystem, includes the actions of, and interactions between, those in the microsystem. The 'exosystem' refers to individuals and relationships that indirectly influence the individual. The macrosystem describes societal, conceptual and cultural influences; and, finally, the chronosystem refers to changes to the systems over an individual's lifespan. Allen and colleagues (2016) describe their application of factors of belonging at the different layers of the ecological model, which includes: relationships with "parents, peers, and teachers" (p.99) in the microsystem; "school rules and practices" (p.99) in the mesosystem; the school community in the exosystem, and societal systems and processes in the macrosystem (e.g., local, and national, initiatives and legislation).

2.5.1.4 Sense of school belonging and ethnic identity

As mentioned previously, belonging can have different meanings for each individual (Cartmell & Bond, 2015); therefore, this section will explore belonging for individuals of different ethnicities, as a high proportion of the research has been focussed on European and western contexts (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Tillery et al., 2013).

Faircloth and Hamm (2005) highlighted variance in the perception of school belonging across adolescents with various ethnicities in the USA. Their review of the literature, in conjunction with Osterman's dimensions of belonging (2000), emphasised a fourth element of belonging in school, 'perceived ethnic-based discrimination' (p.305, Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), which features alongside teacher and peer relationships and engagement with school activities.

Faircloth and Hamm (2005) argued cultural values play a role in the influence of different elements of belonging. For example, teacher support and respect,

as opposed to quality of relationships with predominantly ‘white’ samples, were linked to academic self-esteem for a sample where 55% of participants identified as African-American and 45% as European-American (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Additionally, peer relationships were indicated to be less pertinent for the sense of belonging experienced by participants with African-American and Asian identities (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Booker (2007) added that for the African-American students that participated, having some close friends from the same ethnic or cultural background promoted a sense of comfort and belonging.

A limitation of the body of literature in this area, is that the effect of extracurricular involvement on a sense of school belonging appears to be inconsistent. For example, some research reports positive correlations (Blomfield & Barber, 2011) and others report no significant correlation between extracurricular activities and reported levels of school belonging (Allen et al., 2018). The correlation between extracurricular involvement and a reported sense of school belonging was more pronounced, however, in research involving greater diversity of students (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Further research to unpick the link between belonging and extracurricular involvement, particularly for samples with more diverse backgrounds, may support our understanding of this further.

The results from Chung (2019) indicated that all adolescent survey respondents reported a sense of connectedness to school in the UK. Those with the highest school connectedness were those that identified as Asian or Asian British, and those with the least were for those that identified with the “black/African/Caribbean/black British” ethnic group. Chung (2019) concluded that strength of cultural identity was positively correlated with school connectedness, and that these contributed to improved wellbeing.

2.5.1.5 *Summary of belonging*

The literature I included suggests a sense of belonging is an innately human need that has cognitive, affective and health benefits (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lambert et al., 2013). A sense of school belonging is outlined in the literature to represent feelings of acceptance, respect, inclusion and support in school (Goodenow, 1993), which is influenced by personal, interpersonal and organisational factors (Allen et al., 2016; Osterman, 2000).

Research on belonging has been relatively 'white' and euro-centric and references the requirement for greater focus on students from diverse backgrounds. However, some research has indicated that the teacher, peer relationships, engagement with school activities are relevant to students more widely (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). Specific to students from ethnically minoritised backgrounds, a study suggested that 'perceived ethnic-based discrimination' may play a role, and peer relationships may have varied importance. Chung (2019) indicated that 'black' students, including students of Caribbean descent specifically experienced lower sense of belonging in school than students with different ethnicities. I also perceive that the messages about the need to consider the subjectivity and cultural influences (Cartmell & Bond, 2015) in belonging are pertinent to students of Caribbean descent.

2.6 Systematic Literature synthesis

I felt that identifying and comprehensively exploring research that seeks to elevate the narratives and school experiences of young people of Caribbean descent was important for my research. Additionally, I hoped that the inclusion of young people's narratives from research would help to inform my own research choices and communicate the importance and authority of these voices.

In line with Critical Race Theory, sharing and elevating the voices of those that are marginalised is integral for social justice and to analyse the education system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

2.6.1 Defining qualitative evidence syntheses

Syntheses of data have largely, and historically, been derived from positivist paradigms (Weed, 2005). They were developed as a method to rigorously summarise and aggregate quantitative findings (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). Dixon-Woods and colleagues (2006) report that qualitative evidence syntheses are typically better aligned with interpretive paradigms and methods of synthesis. The authors proceed to explain that the aim for qualitative syntheses is to develop concepts and sets of theories that integrate the concepts across different studies; whilst retaining the context and individuality of qualitative research (Noblit & Hare, 1999a).

Various forms of qualitative syntheses are outlined in the literature, which include systematic reviews, literature reviews, meta-ethnographies, critical interpretive syntheses, meta narrative reviews, realist syntheses and grounded theory approaches (Gough et al., 2012; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Weed, 2005).

2.6.2 Rationale for synthesis

I debated the inclusion of a systematic review of qualitative studies as, on the one hand, they are suggested to reduce the richness and nuance of qualitative research, but also, on the other hand, help to disseminate messages and ensure cohesion in the field (Sandelowski et al., 1997).

I felt that exploring the breadth of literature on the school experiences for students of Caribbean descent, whilst acknowledging the limitations and my

positionality throughout, would be a valuable contribution to my data collection methods and to ground my conclusions in students' narratives.

2.6.1 Focus for the review

The richness and value of the narratives from 'black' students and students of Caribbean descent in grey literature has already provided critical insight into the school context. By grey literature I am referring predominantly to masters and doctoral theses that are available online and/or published outside of journals with reviewing procedures.

I aim to collate the narratives of students of Caribbean descent, specifically, in the publicly available research through this research synthesis. As such I aim to answer the question:

What are the experiences of school for students of Caribbean descent included in the existing literature?

I will answer this research question by identifying studies that explore school experiences with young people. It is intended that the narratives will guide data collection with those in the school system and inform the analysis.

2.6.2 Method for synthesis

I utilised the RETREAT framework (Booth et al., 2018) to aid selection of an appropriate qualitative evidence synthesis approach. The framework encourages researchers to consider their research question; the studies' epistemologies; their timeframe and resources; the reviewer's knowledge; purpose; and the type of data they wish to explore and generate.

I chose to undertake a meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1999b) for the qualitative evidence synthesis. Noblit and Hare (1999a) describe meta-ethnography as an approach to synthesising qualitative research that

maintains its interpretative nature, richness and individuality. It was chosen for this review, as it aligns with the subjectivity and interpretivist epistemology of the current research (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Noblit & Hare, 1988b).

Noblit and Hare (1999a) described that the synthesis depicts the reviewer's perspectives as much as the content of the papers synthesised(Noblit & Hare, 1999a), which I felt was an important consideration for the current research aims.

I also considered taking a more descriptive approach, on the continuum of qualitative syntheses (Estabrooks et al., 1994; Toye et al., 2013), with an aim to remain as close as possible to the young people's accounts and researchers' interpretations. However, a level of interpretation is involved in all qualitative syntheses (Toye et al., 2013) and, owing to the topic of the review, I considered being explicit with my interpretation and positionality important.

A meta-ethnographic approach includes seven iterative and overlapping phases (Noblit & Hare, 1999a). The reflections from the first two phases "getting started" (p.27, Noblit & Hare, 1999a) and "deciding what is relevant to the initial interest" (p.27) are included throughout.

2.6.3 Locating relevant studies

In October 2021, I conducted an initial systematic search of two electronic databases: Scopus and OVID – PsycINFO and PsycArticles. Relevant results from a search on Web of Science were duplicates of the Scopus search.

Whilst qualitative evidence syntheses are not aiming to be exhaustive in order to avoid bias (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006; Noyes et al., 2015), I considered an open and exhaustive search would retrieve as many published and publicly available studies as possible.

I have included the search terms used on all databases in Table 2.1. I combined the group of search terms with an ‘AND’ operation to find studies with all the terms in.

Table 2.1

A table to present the search terms used to locate literature and studies that were relevant to the research question.

Element of research question	Group of search terms
Qualitative design or data collection method	experience* OR narrative* OR view* OR constru* OR account* OR perception*
Experiences relevant to school	school* OR education* OR academi* OR college AND NOT universit* AND NOT "higher education
School-aged students	young OR pupil* OR child* OR student* OR youth* OR girl* OR boy* AND NOT undergrad* AND NOT grad*
…of Caribbean descent	“mixed-race ‘white’ and ‘black’ Caribbean" OR Caribbean* OR ‘black’ Caribbean OR "African Caribbean" OR "afro-caribbean" OR black OR West Indi*
Within the UK	London OR British OR UK OR "United Kingdom" OR Britain OR Wales OR Welsh OR Irish OR Ireland OR Scotland OR Scottish OR England OR "English"

2.6.4 Inclusion decisions

Through the inclusion criteria (Table 2.2) I aimed to ensure that a broad, yet manageable, range of papers were identified.

Table 2.2

A table to show the inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter searches for relevant studies

	Inclusion	**Exclusion**
Participants	Children and young people who are: • school-age • With at least one parent who identifies as being from a 'black' Caribbean background.	Homogenised groups of 'black', African and Caribbean, or 'ethnic minority' young people
Focus and methods	Use of qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups. Study that explores the school experiences of young people described above. Voices/narratives are identifiable and represented.	Quantitative study Personal accounts of school experiences. Young people's narratives are grouped and unidentifiable.
Location	Studies of school experience within the UK	School experiences outside of the UK
Type of article	Primary source	Secondary source
Type of publication	Published literature	Unpublished/grey literature as it is difficult to

		access a large database of these from across institutions. Theses have been included in narrative review instead.

2.6.4.1 *Rationale for inclusion decisions*

2.6.4.1.1 *Participants*

My rationale for a focus on this group of students is included in the initial summary for this chapter (see section 2.6.1). Briefly, I focussed on students of Caribbean descent owing to the inequalities this group faces in the UK education system. Ensuring the narratives of young people with Caribbean heritage are central to my research is important.

I decided to not include research that homogenised the experiences of 'black' students, referring to students of African and of Caribbean descent, to centre the experience of students of Caribbean descent.

2.6.4.1.2 *Focus and methods*

I included qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups or narrative methods, as they would be able to best capture the school experiences of the young people. Whilst the young people identified above did not have to be the only participants in the study, their narratives needed to be identifiable and clearly represented in the papers.

2.6.4.1.3 Location

I am interested in the school experiences of students of Caribbean descent within the UK context, as this is where the wider research is situated. Although school experiences reportedly have similarities across contexts, for example between African American students in the US and 'black' Caribbean students in the UK (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019), there are nuances to the UK context (Warmington, 2012).

2.6.4.1.4 Type of article

I felt it was important to identify and analyse primary data, rather than that from a secondary source, as this would increase the likelihood that the researcher's interpretations, and subsequently mine, were closer to the narratives of the young people.

2.6.4.1.5 Type of publication

I decided that the review would focus on published literature that has been reviewed and easily accessible through data bases.

I considered the inclusion of 'grey literature' as it can reduce publication bias (Petticrew et al., 2008), provide important contextual information (Adams et al., 2016), and possibly provide greater access to primary data excerpts. Additionally, qualitative studies that cannot present clear summaries of methods and outcomes in their abstract, are reportedly less likely to be published (Petticrew et al., 2008). Moreover, Roberts and colleagues (2020) reported racial inequality in the publication process for psychological research. For example, most publications in the US on 'race' have been edited by 'white' editors, who gatekeep publication, or have been written by 'white' authors (Roberts et al., 2020).

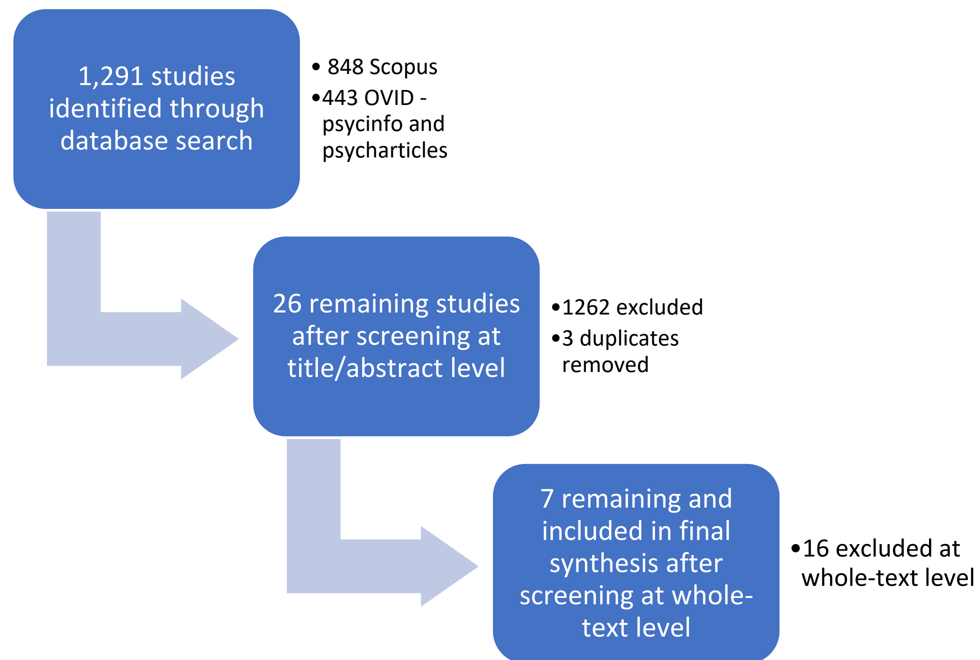
However, the review and peer-review processes can encourage a level of rigour that helps to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research and their methodologies (Given, 2008). Additionally, comprehensively accessing and retrieving 'grey literature' in an area for a synthesis is often a difficult and time-consuming task (Adams et al., 2016), which is a key consideration for a synthesis with one researcher.

2.6.4.1.6 Year of publication

Year of publications had originally been an inclusion criterion, limited to the past 5 years to keep a focus on contemporary studies. However, removing the date range allowed a small number of studies, that I felt provided interesting reflection on the context over time.

2.6.5 Selecting studies

Using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, I screened the results from the searches at the title and abstract level initially. I removed duplicates between and within the searches, and then filtered the results at the whole-text level, again using the inclusion criteria. The process is outlined in Figure 1.



The papers I excluded at the title and abstract level were for reasons such as having a focus on a homogenised ‘black and minority ethnic (BAME)’ population, they were studies outside of the UK, personal accounts, or memoires, not school experiences, and a teacher or parent focus.

Appendix C includes the rationale for excluding papers at the whole-text level.

2.6.6 Reading the studies and extracting data

Following guidance and examples provided by Noblit and Hare (1988), I read the studies multiple times and identified concepts that I felt were core to the papers. Noblit and Hare (1999) describe metaphors, or concepts, as a theme or perspective, which will be inherently individual to that investigation and interpreter. They suggest that the selection of metaphors is key to retaining the essence of a paper, whilst in a reduced form.

A summary of the papers included in this synthesis and the key concepts I identified can be found in the table below (table 2.3).

Table 2.3

Summary of papers and perceived key features included in the synthesis and a comment from the critical appraisal (explored further in section 2.6.7)

Author/ Date	Sample (Relevant to research question)	Methodology/ procedure	setting	Main themes/ concepts	Critical Appraisal comment (see section 2.5.6.1)
Wallace (2019)	13 'black' middle-class pupils and their parents. Middle-class (i.e., parent's self-identification, occupation, and qualifications)	13 students interviews and three focus-groups 14 parent interviews	Large state comprehensive schools in South London, high intake of 'black' Caribbean pupils. Located in 'white' middle-class area on edge of urban area.	• Strategies including using literature • Parent-pupil collaboration • Teachers' influence over experience and curriculum • Friends' support • Seeking recognition and relationships from teachers • Importance of recognising culture • Self-advocacy	Satisfied 6 criteria; however, others were difficult to ascertain (e.g., explicit justification for method and consent procedures)
Chapman & Bhopal (2019)	8 'black' Caribbean pupils aged 13-16 years.	30 interviews	Two rural secondaries 'Predominantly white'	• Peers and teachers' deficit stereotypes • Intersectionality of stereotypes • Pressure to challenge stereotypes • Inequitable policies and practices • Feeling devalued and othered • Low sense of belonging • Strategies limiting learning	Six criteria met, (clear aims, and interpretations) Choices of qualitative method, researcher details, and

Author/ Date	Sample (Relevant to research question)	Methodology/ procedure	setting	Main themes/ concepts	Critical Appraisal comment (see section 2.5.6.1)
					recruitment not explicit.
Wallace (2017)	'black' Caribbean pupils Year 10/11 students 115 in focus groups 30 in interviews	14-month ethnography Focus groups; interviews	London secondary school 'Ethnic minorities' made up 46.2% of school population, 'black' Caribbean identified as largest group.	• Adaptations for teacher relationships e.g., behaviour and speaking • Race-class intersection • parents and supplementary schools coaching • Teachers as gatekeepers • Teachers influencing other teachers • Seeking older peer support	Nine criteria met, e.g., aims, design, recruitment, and ethics procedures.
Lewis (2016)	1 participant – 'Kim', mixed 'white' and 'black' Caribbean	Case study; interviews	Second highest 'black' Caribbean population in Local Authority 4.4% of school population	• Teachers ignored Mixed heritage • Eager to discuss cultural identity • Racial discrimination by peers • Racism ignored by staff • Belonging with same ethnicity peers • Frustrations perceived as behaviour that challenges • Regular exclusions	Nine criteria met e.g., clear aims, relationship between researcher and participant considered

Author/ Date	Sample (Relevant to research question)	Methodology/ procedure	setting	Main themes/ concepts	Critical Appraisal comment (see section 2.5.6.1)
			mixed 'white' and 'black' Caribbean		
Wright et al. (2016)	21 males; 14-19 years; parents of Caribbean heritage	100 interviews (With young people and supporters); visual research methods	Nottingham and London Outside of school	• Family support important • Challenging negative perceptions • Community group and supplementary school support • High employment aspirations • Turning negative experience (i.e., of exclusion) to positive • Valuing school as route to achievement • Being excluded and negative impacts	Six criteria met, including qualitative method, clear findings. Data analysis and ethics not outlined, so cannot comment.
Warren (2005)	15 'African-Caribbean' young men	Interviews	3 secondaries in one London borough	• Feeling rules, sanctions, and teacher approaches were unfair or disrespectful • Teacher negative perceptions/assumptions • Conflict with teacher to challenge inequity, disrespect, or to voice concerns • Teachers influencing other teachers' perceptions • Accepting school rules	Six criteria met, e.g., appropriate aims and relationship between researcher and participants considered (e.g., Power). Data analysis and ethics not

Author/ Date	Sample (Relevant to research question)	Methodology/ procedure	setting	Main themes/ concepts	Critical Appraisal comment (see section 2.5.6.1)
				• Less conflict when good relationship with teacher • Avoiding situations where they could be targeted or inequitably sanctioned • Coaching from mentors to avoid confrontations with teachers • Positive self-identity from 'black' history curriculum • Seeing alternative approaches through inclusive curriculum and modelling • Regulating anger to have voice heard	outlined, so cannot comment.
Fuller (1984)	'black' girls Aged 15-16. West Indian parentage. Five British born, three migrated. Six had two-parent families, 2 in mother-	Interviews. Part of a wider study – researcher spent two terms in school.	Ten-form entry, comprehensive school, London borough of Brent. 25% of pupils of West Indian parentage. Girls in 'Second band of class'; 142 pupils; academic	• Relating to teachers that reflect experience/aspiration • Pro-education not pro-schooling • Identifying as distinct 'black' Caribbean female 'subculture'/friendship group • Rejecting deficit 'race' and gender stereotypes • Pride in 'black' identity and Caribbean roots	Six criteria met including clear aims, conclusions, and data collection. Researcher identity and role not outlined. Data analysis and ethics not outlined, so

Author/ Date	Sample (Relevant to research question)	Methodology/ procedure	setting	Main themes/ concepts	Critical Appraisal comment (see section 2.5.6.1)
	headed families. Six from 'working class homes' (i.e., parent's employment)		curriculum to attain O levels/ CSE exams. Fewer girls and fewer West Indian girls in this band.	• Frustration from positive self-identity and academic self-efficacy vs discrimination • Parental support and guidance • Sense of identity only own efforts/achievements • Determination in face of adversity • Overt racial discrimination	cannot comment.

2.6.7 Appraising the studies

After reading the studies and extracting some of the perceived key concepts, I undertook a quality appraisal of the papers, using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018) for qualitative research, to ascertain their quality and relevance within the synthesis.

The CASP is a commonly-used checklist to appraise primary research (Gough, 2021; Long et al., 2020). Like the Weight of Evidence model (Gough, 2021), the CASP encourages researchers reviewing studies to consider the execution and focus of the study, as well as the appropriateness of the methods. Questions on the checklist include those around transparency of aims and findings, the appropriateness of method and design, relationship between researcher and participant, and the value of the research. Additional criteria and prompts are given for each individual question to support its application. The researcher then assesses whether the study meets the criteria, answering ‘yes’, if the data is not present, answering ‘no’, or if it is indiscernible, answering ‘can’t tell’.

Scores are not recommended for the tool (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018) as it is intended as a reflective aid. However, in the appendices I have included a summary of the qualitative responses for each study (appendix D) and a full overview of the responses to the questions for each study (appendix E). I have also included a short commentary in the table above (table 2.3).

All the studies demonstrated the suitability of qualitative methodology, statement of analytic interpretations, and the value of the research. The two papers that I felt satisfied the criteria most were studies 3 and 4. These both provided extensive detail relating to nine of the ten questions. I ensured the concepts developed from these studies were included in the translation process.

2.6.7.1 Reflections on the CASP tool for the review

I felt that the CASP tool provided a useful framework to consider aspects of the papers; however, the tool uses terminology and constructs that appear more aligned with positivist studies, such as a focus on validity.

The idiosyncratic nature of qualitative studies makes it difficult to fit them to a criterion. Additionally, I anticipate that many of the components that were considered unclear (i.e., answered as 'can't tell') were from details being omitted in reporting due to word count limits for publishing papers (Springer, n.d.)

2.6.8 Synthesis and translation

Noblit and Hare (1999) propose that those interpreting a study must ascertain how the studies fit together, whether they contradict each other, or whether they provide additional information on the same topic. The way in which the studies relate to each other then informs the next stage of analysis or 'translation'.

As advised by Noblit and Hare (1999), I listed the key metaphors, or concepts, identified in the previous stage to determine the relationships between them.

Noblit and Hare (1988a) recommended that when papers are about similar topics then the a 'reciprocal translation' is conducted to synthesise the findings. This translation involves metaphors and concepts from one study being translated into those of another. A single set of metaphors to interpret all the studies is reportedly not always possible, however, the translation process gives a lot of information about the studies themselves (Noblit & Hare, 1999).

Studies that contradict the perspectives of another utilise a refutational translation, which involves examining the ways in which the metaphors contradict (Noblit & Hare, 1999a). For studies where concepts build a picture

of a wider topic, a ‘lines-of-argument’ synthesis is recommended by Noblit and Hare (1999). This involves inferring, inducing or theorising the whole from the parts.

2.6.8.1 Reciprocal translation synthesis

As the studies and their concepts, in this current synthesis, largely support each other and all capture the school experiences of students Caribbean descent, I undertook a reciprocal translation approach. The studies offered different insights into school experiences owing to the differing contexts of the young people in the research. For example, the studies captured the unique experiences of ‘middle-class’ students, mixed heritage students, girls in the 1980s, predominantly white-settings, and school exclusion. The studies represent the heterogeneity of experience and identity for each student within a ‘target population’. However, I interpreted overarching themes and concepts, mostly situated in the school context, that linked these experiences.

I began the reciprocal translation by coding the concepts from each study and recording them using Nvivo 12. As suggested by Toye and colleagues (2013), I coded concepts at both the first order level where authors had included excerpts from participants and at the second order level from the researchers’ interpretations. A large number of the concepts I coded included multiple extracts of data from within a paper study; for example, the concept “enlisting friend’s support” in Wallace (2019) was coded from three excerpts. The concepts for each study, included in the final translation, are outlined in the table in the appendices (see appendix F).

I printed and manually cut up the concepts for each study and began to consider how the concepts may translate, or be compared to that of another. Through these ‘translations’ I started to group the concepts from multiple studies. For example, the concept from Wallace (2019) regarding parent-pupil collaboration, translated with coaching by parents in Wallace (2017), family

support in Wright et al (2016), and parental support and guidance in Fuller (1984).

This was an iterative process in which I restarted and revised the groupings on multiple occassions. I finished when almost all of the concepts had been grouped or translated with at least one other study's concepts. There were two concepts that did not translate into another study, which included: high academic self-efficacy (Fuller, 1984), and accepting school rules (Warren, 2005).

From the cluster of concepts that I had grouped during the process outlined above, I then continued to interpret and translate these groups into broader themes that best capture meaning across the studies. For example, clustering the previously separate groupings of concept around 'peer support', 'friends and relating to others with shared identity', and 'support from parent and outside agents' as I perceived them to have a shared message about seeking other's support with school experiences. These themes are included in the table in appendix F.

This translation had similarities with a second-order interpretation in a meta-synthesis (Major and Savin-Biden, 2010) in that I then combined these translations to create overarching metaphors and named them. For example, I named the overarching metaphor for the groupings of peer, family and outside agency support "support from others" (see Appendix F).

From the translation, I had developed the overarching metaphors of *teacher influence*, *support from others*, *culture*, *responses to situations*, *othering*, and *values*, which I felt exemplified how the concepts around school experiences related and intersected. The early studies by Warren (2005) and Fuller (1984) had concepts that related to the most overarching interpretations.

I will discuss each overarching interpretation and illustrate these with the studies' concepts and themes. A table to show these interpretations and their relationships can be found in the appendices (see Appendix F).

2.6.8.1.1 *Experiencing othering, inequities, and discrimination*

I developed the overarching concept of ‘experiencing othering, inequities, and discrimination’ from across all seven studies. It encapsulated experiences of teachers’ and classmates’ reliance on stereotypes and other people’s perceptions; inequities in behaviour sanctions, practices, and responses; exclusions; overt racism; and the impact of intersecting identities.

The experiences of teachers’ and classmates’ reliance on stereotypes and other people’s perceptions is a concept that was derived from Wallace (2017; 2019), Bhopal and Chapman (2019), Warren (2005), and Fuller (1984). It was a central focus in the Bhopal and Chapman (2019) paper, wherein the limited experience of teachers and classmates in a predominantly ‘white’ setting led to a reliance and perpetuation of deficit stereotypes. For example, one Caribbean student commented that “the teachers don’t quite know how to take us because there are not that many black kids in the school” (p.1119, Bhopal & Chapman, 2019). The negative perceptions of behaviour were exemplified in Warren (2005) wherein a young person commented “she’ll just walk past and assume I’m getting into trouble” (p.250, Warren, 2005).

The aspect wherein teachers relied on others’ perception stemmed from Warren (2005) and Wallace (2017). For example, in Warren (2005) a young person commented that teachers hearing other’s deficit perceptions around behaviours leads to them to start to view Caribbean students in this way too. In a more positive example, a young person in the study by Wallace (2017) commented that positive reputations spread among teachers too.

Inequities in behaviour sanctions, practice and responses was a concept that referred to increased scrutiny for ‘black’ Caribbean girls (Bhopal & Chapman, 2016), racist incidents being ignored (Lewis, 2016), “unfair or disrespectful relations with teachers” (p 249, Warren, 2005), and rules being reinforced “disrespectfully” (p252, Warren, 2005).

Exclusions were part of the lived experiences for the young people in Lewis (2016) and Wright, Maylor and Becker (2016). Lewis (2016) attributed the

regular exclusions as a cyclical process of school staff misunderstanding students' behaviour, which was communicating frustrations with the discrimination they faced. In Wright, Maylor and Becker (2016) the authors outlined the negative identity attributed to the young people as part of the exclusion process and the impact on their educational aspirations.

Overt racism was explicitly referenced in the summaries of the young people's experiences in Fuller (1984) and the young person in Lewis (2016) who listed the names she and her mixed heritage friends were called.

The accumulative impact of intersectionality on the experiences was a concept derived from the young people's accounts in Fuller (1984), Wallace (2017) and Bhopal and Chapman (2019). Fuller (1984) summarised the young girls' accounts regarding a rejection of the deficit perceptions assigned to them owing to their ethnicity and gender. It also included a recognition of higher levels of unemployment, contrasted with the resolute belief in themselves to achieve. Young people in the study by Bhopal and Chapman (2019) reported that 'black' Caribbean boys were often categorised as "aggressive" (p.1122, Bhopal & Chapman, 2019) from wider narratives perpetuated through the media. The students in Wallace (2017) focussed instead on the intersection of ethnicity and class. Wallace (2017) commented on the "cross-class advocacy" (p.918) of the middle-class 'black' participants who explicitly reflected on the aggregative impact on their peers who may not have the 'middle-class' tools, or dominant forms of 'black' cultural capital, to advocate for themselves and their educational experience.

2.6.8.1.2 Support from others

Of the seven studies, six had concepts that related to having support from others in their school experience, whether that be friends, parents, or outside agents.

For Wallace (2019) the support centred around the parent-student collaboration of the young people to support their educational experiences.

For example, ‘middle-class’ parents showing their children how to build relationships with teachers, supplying them with knowledge and literature by ‘black’ authors, and helping to influence the curriculum. Fathers wanting to help, mothers believing in them, and family encouragement were presented in the excerpts in Wright et al (2016) with regard specifically to school exclusion.

Additionally, Wallace (2019) presented young people’s experiences of enlisting friends’ support to advocate for an inclusive curriculum with them. Wallace (2017) similarly presented young people’s experiences of seeking older peer support to “deal with teachers” (p.917) and “learn from people ahead” (p.917) and an active coaching role from parents on modifying behaviour for better teacher interactions.

The young people in Wallace (2017) also commented on the important supportive and coaching role of their supplementary schoolteachers. Wright, Maylor and Becker (2016) also included excerpts from young people that highlighted the help from supplementary schools and outside agents, such as “constructive things to do, like more positive things in my mind” (p.28). A young person in Warren (2005) reported that youth workers from mentor programmes encouraged them to focus on their learning and avoid confrontation with teachers, reflecting “you do your work and you come out, then that’s it” (p.254).

The idea of friendships and peer support from those who shared an identity, such as ethnicity, culture, and/or gender were included in Lewis (2016) and Fuller (1984). Lewis (2016) interpreted a “sense of cohesion with other mixed heritage girls” (p.206) owing to their ability to empathise with each other.

The girls in Fuller (1984) were interpreted as identifying as a distinct ‘black’ Caribbean female subculture, who commented on seeking friendship choices with other ‘black’ female classmates, regardless of academic inclination. As a line of argument translation, the young people in this study also reflected on relating to teachers that reflected aspects of their own aspirations or struggles, suggesting that the empathy and shared experiences are also important for teacher relationships and support.

2.6.8.1.3 *Individual responses to situations*

I perceived six studies to have concepts that reflected student's individual responses to situations, which included challenging stereotypes and inequality, avoidance of situations, and 'middle-class' strategies to seek teacher relationships and an inclusive curriculum.

Wallace (2017; 2019), Bhopal and Chapman (2019), Wright, (2017), Warren (2005) and Fuller (1984) detailed young people's responses to challenge stereotypes. These included self-advocating for inclusion in the curriculum, shouldering the "burden of disproving racial stereotypes" (p.1120, Bhopal and Chapman, 2019), working harder to achieve and disprove deficit stereotypes, and trying to have voice heard through assertion.

Avoidance of situations included "try and get lost in the crowd" (p.1123, Bhopal and Chapman, 2019), "not getting told off for something that someone else started" (p. 255, Warren, 2005), and Fuller's (1984) interpretation that the girls wanted to avoid ridicule for ambitions from peers.

The strategies for seeking teacher relationships, that were recognised as 'middle class', in Wallace (2017; 2019) included reading and sharing "high-brow texts racialised as black" (p.168, Wallace, 2017) with teachers. It also included behaviour modification and codes of speaking that were recognised as 'middle-class' and synonymously 'white'. Some of these behaviour modifications could be avoidance of situations, such as "not to be too loud; not to show anger" (p.916, Wallace, 2017). These were challenged however by Fuller (1984) who were interpreted to not be motivated by seeking teacher relationships, as they did not impact external examinations.

2.6.8.1.4 *Teacher influence*

I perceived the influence of teachers over the school experience, curriculum and educational outcomes to be explicit in Wallace (2017; 2019). In Wallace

(2017; 2019) this involved students recognising that seeking positive teacher relationships, recognition and allegiances improved their educational outcomes, curriculum, and school experience. These were achieved through the cultural capital and behaviour modification mentioned above, with collaboration from parents.

The young people in Wallace (2017) reflected explicitly that teachers were “gatekeepers to success” (p.916) or “referees” (p.917) in the game of school, that can “help [them] get ahead” (p.916). Wallace (2017) suggests this realisation came through a “sharp power analysis of the social actors in the school” (p.917).

Fuller (1984) interpreted the young girls’ narratives to mean that they did not view relationships with teachers to impact their school experience or outcomes. The researcher in Fuller (1984) highlighted that public examinations were marked externally and that girls appeared to insist that success came from their own efforts and performance.

2.6.8.1.5 Culture

The impact of cultural identity being recognised was referred to in Wallace (2019), Lewis (2016), Warren (2005), and Fuller (1984). I interpreted ethnic and cultural identity as a source of pride for the young girls in Fuller (1984). In Wallace (2019), the young people reported improved confidence and engagement in learning from having the opportunity to express their cultural identity. In Lewis (2016), the young person relayed their eagerness to discuss their mixed identity and culture, with very few opportunities to do so. In Warren (2005), the young person identified learning about ‘black’ activists helped to model positive methods to having their voice heard.

2.6.8.1.6 Values

Three studies specifically referred to young people valuing education and holding high aspirations, although I perceived this implicitly across the studies through students' efforts to improve educational experiences and outcomes. Fuller (1984) emphasised the girl's aspirations to achieve educational qualifications and the value of school for this. Their ambitions combined with resisting gender and race-based stereotypes, for example, stating "I've got to look after myself" (p.81) and wanting to achieve so they did not have depend on a husband.

2.6.9 Summary

To answer the question, 'What are the experiences of school for students of Caribbean descent included in the existing literature?', I utilised a meta-ethnographic approach to synthesise relevant literature. The synthesis included seven studies that explored the school experiences of students of Caribbean descent. From the reciprocal translation of these studies, I identified six overarching metaphors that I thought exemplified how the concepts in the studies related and intersected over time. The concepts included: othering, inequities, and discrimination; support from others; influence of teachers; impact of recognising cultural identity and representation; individual responses to situations; and young people valuing education and holding high aspirations.

I felt that the narratives, and therefore overarching metaphors, reflected the literature on the importance of a sense of school belonging. For example, I perceived that the importance of support in school, relationships and connection, influence of teachers, self-efficacy and valuing school were present in the narratives of young people participating in research and within the factors that are suggested to support school belonging in the literature (Allen et al., 2016; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Osterman, 2000). The negative

impact of ethnic-based discrimination on a sense of school belonging suggested by Faircloth and Hamm (2005), also mirrors some of the reflections in the young people's narratives.

2.7 Rationale summary and research question:

I have explored the narratives of 'black' students and young people of Caribbean descent, within the broader societal and school contexts, through the narrative review and research synthesis. The young people's narratives have highlighted the racism, othering, and inequity present in the school experience, through interpersonal acts of racism, stereotyping, lower expectations, targeting policies, and the impact of limited representation in the workforce and curriculum. Despite these, the agency, strengths and aspirations of 'black' students and students of Caribbean descent, is apparent.

From the narratives, I perceived the importance of support from others, particularly families, supplementary schools, and mentors, for navigating the school context and succeeding (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002). Additionally, the narratives outlined the significant influence of school staff, particularly teachers, on the experiences and success of students.

Through a theoretical exploration of racial and ethnic inequalities in schools, such as disproportionality in attainment, exclusions, and SEN identification, I have indicated the influence of school staff, particularly the impact of teachers' expectations and racial literacy, within the literature (Coard, 2021; Demie, 2021; Demie & McLean, 2017b; Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). With links to the ideas in Freire (2005), I have outlined how educators contribute to supporting, or further marginalising, young people from minoritised backgrounds and their experiences and achievement in school.

To ensure "high quality educational for all" (p. 64, Coard, 2021), transformation and change within the current system is required, as indicated by the narratives of students of Caribbean descent and the disparate barriers this group face in education. School staff members, regardless of race, ethnicity

or class, are crucial to this process (Coard, 2021), particularly with their high degree of influence in the school experiences, outcomes, and potentially belonging, for students of Caribbean descent. I consider that an exploration of the current system, through those working within it, would support meaningful transformation (Artiles et al., 2010), by striving for a holistic perspective of the current system. Similarly, Mngaza (2020) recommended gathering school staff perspectives, as part of action research to support transformation within school.

Literature searches suggest there is limited research addressing this, and a gap was identified regarding teachers' understanding of the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent.

Some research has elicited school staff members' views about disparate barriers for students of Caribbean descent, such as achievement (Demie & McLean, 2017b, 2017a) or exclusions (Demie, 2021), or regarding the experience of 'black' and ethnic minority students collectively (Henry, 2021). However, there is none that explore school staff views around their understanding and awareness regarding the influences on the holistic experience of students of Caribbean descent in school. Additionally, there are calls for research on school staff views on school belonging (Greenwood & Kelly, 2019).

As a way of learning more about the current education system and educators' roles to inform transformation, I feel it is important to gather the views of school staff about their understanding of the current system, and the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent.

The review has therefore informed the current research title:

Exploring school staff members' understanding about influences on the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent in school: A reflexive Thematic Analysis.

The current research proposes to explore the following research question:

1. What do school staff members understand about influences on the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent in the context of school?

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction to chapter

Through this research, I am aiming to explore school staff members' understanding of the experiences and sense of belonging for students of Caribbean descent in the school context.

I adopted a critical realist perspective for the research, undertaking semi-structured interviews with eleven teachers and headteachers, and analysing these through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to explore shared meaning and patterns across the group.

In the methodology section, I will outline the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that underpin my research and perspective, the research methods chosen, and the considerations of ethics and my position, and reflexivity, as a 'white' researcher in this field.

3.2 Theoretical and Philosophical assumptions

Braun and Clarke (2022) discuss the importance of considering the meta-theory or "oxygen" (p.156) that underpins researcher's thinking and methods. As research cannot be void of theory and assumptions of the nature of reality, knowledge, and language (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Malterud, 2016), this section will outline the theoretical paradigms and conceptualisations that create the foundations for the current and other research.

As there are some inconsistencies in terminology, I will use ‘theoretical paradigms’ to describe the perspectives that researchers subscribe to, that best reflect their assumptions of reality, knowledge, and language (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). An individual’s *ontology*, assumptions of the nature of reality, *epistemology*, theories of knowledge, and understanding of how language represents these (Hall, 1997) are closely linked, but not causal. The methodological question explores how the researcher can discover what they believe to be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

I will explore the concepts around the representation of language, ontology and epistemology further in the following sections.

3.2.1 Ontologies and epistemologies

Often cited in Western qualitative research reference texts (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Patton, 2002), *realism* and *relativism* represent a spectrum of ontologies, or theories of reality. Realism subscribes to the idea that there is a tangible reality that exists separate to the research (Willig, 2013); whereas relativists reject the notion that there is a single, measurable truth or reality (Baghramian & Carter, 2022).

Relativist research challenges the ‘truths’ of positivist (see section 3.2.1.1) and realist psychology; which invites disciplines, for example those rooted in anti-racism and feminist psychology, to challenge the oppression of these claims (Parker, 2002).

Another ontological perspective is that of historical realism, from the critical theory paradigm (Ryan, 2018), which theorises that realities are shaped by social, economic, political and power contexts, which crystallise over time (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Closely linked to ontology, epistemology is often conceptualised as the nature of knowledge, that is how “we know what we know” (p.134, Patton, 2002). Through Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) summary of the epistemological

assumptions of competing paradigms, I interpreted them to range from objectivity to subjectivity; or from the individual being independent of the reality they are wishing to know to the individual and object being inseparably influenced by each other (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

This spectrum does not quite represent the myriad of epistemic positions, however, as feminist standpoint epistemology, for example, argues for objectivity that is socially situated to centre and validate the experiences of women (Brooks, 2007; Harding, 1992).

3.2.1.1 Research Paradigms

Several texts provide summaries of some of the major theoretical paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2020; Patton, 2014) that are underpinned by the assumptions discussed above and provide the foundations of research. These include positivism, post-positivism, post-modernism, social constructionism, transformative, and pragmatism. To focus the exploration of these paradigms I have included details on positivism and social constructionism in a table. I have outlined the paradigms of critical realism and transformative research in further detail as the stances I have aligned my research with.

Table 3.1

A table to summarise positivist and social constructionist paradigms with considerations for my research

Paradigm: positivism
Ontology: Distinct and identifiable reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Park et al., 2020) which can be accessed through deductive experimentation approach (i.e., theory derived hypotheses, operationalisation of variables and reduction of ‘influences’). Need for replicability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)..

Epistemology: researcher as ‘objective’ and independent of what/who they are researching (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). *Considerations for my research* Researcher’s influence not explicit, as deemed important for culturally sensitivity (Choudhuri, 2005). Arguably perpetuates Euro-centric and Western notion that there is a that there is a single, identifiable reality (Nwoye, 2015, 2021). Does not align with my research aims to explore views (Ashworth, 2015).
Paradigm: social constructionism Ontology: aligned with relativism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); multiple socially constructed ‘realities’ and ‘knowledges’ that are culturally and historically contextual (Burr, 2015). Epistemology: subjectivist or interpretivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), researcher’s role explicit in interpreting and creating data from discourses and language (Parker, 2002). *Considerations for my research* Utilised by disciplines globally, such as African Psychology, to acknowledge multiple realities and challenge Westernised notions of a single reality (Nwoye, 2015, 2021). Considers geo-political positions of how, why and when knowledge is generated to situate it (Mignolo, 2009) However, social constructionists take a critical view of language (Hall, 1997), attending primarily to the function and role of language (Willig, 1999), rather than the experiential view I aimed to take. Although deconstructing discourses can challenge oppressive narratives, it can be difficult to provide acknowledgement of material outcomes and lived experiences (Willig, 1999).

3.2.1.1.1 Post-positivism and critical realism

As a response to the positivist paradigm, post-positivism asserted that an identifiable reality exists; however, the ability for researchers to access this is limited (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Mertens (2020) outlined that post-positivists recognise that aspects of their own and participant's human experience mean that they can only access the reality "imperfectly" (p.15). Those aligned to this paradigm thus limit their claims of understanding truths or realities to probability, as opposed to having 'objective' certainty (Mertens, 2020).

Between positivism and constructionism lies theoretical positions such as contextualism and critical realism (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). These stances acknowledge that not only do individuals make meaning of their experiences in differing ways, but also the impact of social and political contexts on these meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Critical realism provides the view that as individuals or researchers we are only able to perceive a "subset of the actual" (p.190, Bhaskar, 2011). It argues against the 'epistemic fallacy', which Bhaskar (2011) describes as the positivist misinterpretation that reduces reality to what we can observe, know or understand. As such this is described as reducing ontology into epistemology (Danermark et al., 2002). Regarding ontology, critical realism subscribes to both realism and relativism to certain degrees, stating that there is a mind-independent reality and also individual realities impacted by social contexts, language and positioning (Danermark et al., 2002). The critical realist view aligns with the notion that all knowledge is socially constructed and determined (Danermark et al., 2002) and therefore, takes a subjectivist, socially-situated epistemological position.

Exemplified in the research conducted by Terry and colleagues (2018), the critical realist paradigm allows research to explore the participants' experiences and material outcomes alongside the social and linguistic contexts.

3.2.1.1.2 Transformative

Transformative research encompasses a range of disciplines and perspectives that aim to examine and challenge social oppression (Biddle & Schafft, 2015; Mertens, 2020). Mertens (2020) outlines four characteristics that underpin transformative research. The first is that is centres and prioritises the voices, lives and experiences of groups that have been marginalised in society. It encompasses research conducted by, with and for a range of groups, including feminist, LGBTQ+, ethnically and racially minoritised and indigenous perspectives. Transformative researchers position themselves alongside marginalised groups in a society in an effort to facilitate social justice and transformation (Mertens, 2020). Mertens (2020) clarified this does not mean studying only these groups, but also examining the structures and powers that create and reproduce oppression (Mertens, 2020). The other characteristics outlined, include: the nature of inequities in power relationships; results being linked to socio-political action; and the research is informed by a transformative theory, such as critical race theory, or resistance theory (e.g. Warren, 2005).

A transformative approach recognises that whilst reality and experiences may be socially constructed, there are social positioning factors that give privilege to certain constructions over others (Mertens, 2020). The consequences of this privilege are explicitly recognised in transformative research.

The epistemological position of the transformative paradigm is that the researcher and participant have influence on each other, and the relationship between them is culturally and socially contextual (Mertens, 2020).

3.2.1.2 Current study

I considered that taking a critical realist perspective would support me in fulfilling my current research aims; this would facilitate an exploration of school staff members' experiences and perceptions that acknowledges the

subjectivity of realities and perspectives within social, political, and linguistic contexts (Danermark et al., 2002). I felt this would help me to engage with reflexivity and cultural sensitivity to these perceptions and the narratives of young people.

I also recognise that the meaning of social phenomena is somewhat produced and negotiated socially through language, which typically reflects a *constructionist* approach; however, it also supports critical realist principles (Willig, 2013).

In the current research, I aim to centre the experiences of students of Caribbean descent in the English school system and to aid social justice through understanding how those within the school system perceive these experiences and reproduce the narratives. From the data and interpretation, I hoped that considerations and alternative narratives could be offered to aid social equality and justice. Parker (2002) suggests that understanding the system's influence and reproduction of the narratives can align with a critical realist approach. However, it is also pertinent to note, my aims also sit within a transformative research approach, through the examination of the structures and powers that influence the experience of students of Caribbean descent, as a marginalised group (Mertens, 2020).

3.3 Qualitative research methods

Qualitative research captures rich descriptions of phenomena and beings, through the collection of data in the form of words and an analysis of these (Smith, 2015); it therefore serves my aims best in exploring and interpreting how school staff convey their understanding and experiences (Gray, 2018; Mertens, 2020).

I have chosen to employ the qualitative research paradigm, also referred to as Big Q qualitative research, wherein research is underpinned by qualitative values and philosophical assumptions, such as a criticality of traditionally-held assumptions and practices and striving for complexity, richness and uncertainty (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2022). 'Small q' qualitative research,

conversely, utilises qualitative methods to add richness to numerical data (Kidder & Fine, 1987).

I felt that subscription to the qualitative research paradigm would facilitate the reflexivity of myself, my participants and wider communities, that is important for this topic area (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Mertens, 2020; Råheim et al., 2016). As an individual who had previously been taught and emersed in quantitative, positivist research, I recognise that these influences may have started to contradict with Big Q values. I have used supervision and discussions with my tutor and qualitatively minded colleagues to help me to reflect on these influences.

Ashworth (2015) and Larkin (2015) outline a broad range of qualitative research methods, which includes Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Grounded theory, Discourse Analysis and Thematic Analysis.

3.3.1 Theories of language and meaning

A researcher's philosophy on language, and how it represents meaning, underpins their overarching orientation in qualitative research. These orientations guide philosophical assumptions around reality and knowledge and impact the approach a researcher employs. If a researcher perceives that the participants use language to communicate their realities, thoughts and feelings, then the researcher holds an *intentional* conceptualisation of language and representation (Hall, 1997).

In contrast, the view that meaning does not lie within material things or in the individual, but instead is produced and exchanged socially through language, suggests the researcher holds a *constructionist* view of language (Hall, 1997). This constructionist approach underpins a critical qualitative orientation (Braun & Clarke, 2022) which aims to construct and negotiate meaning with a participant and their account.

My focus on participant's experiences, from a critical realist perspective, means that I am taking a somewhat *intentional* view of participants' language (Hall, 1997). This intentional lens acknowledges that participants are using language and dialogue to communicate their perspectives and thoughts and reflects aspects of a material reality.

3.3.2 Choosing a qualitative research method

Regarding my research aims to explore patterns of meaning and understanding across school staff members, from a critical realist and experiential perspective, Thematic Analysis was selected as an appropriate method of analysis.

One approach to thematic analysis, Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clarke, 2022) is situated within the qualitative research paradigm and offers tools and guidelines to explore patterned meaning across a group. Reflexive TA as a method offers theoretical flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2022), as do some other approaches to TA, such as Template Analysis (King, 2012), which allows my own philosophical positioning to guide the research.

One of the key assumptions of reflexive TA, relevant to my own critical realist standpoint, is that the researcher is an active, subjective resource within the research and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The reflexivity of the approach is a crucial aspect (see section 3.4 for more information) that aligns with research with social justice aims and acknowledges a sensitivity to power and socio-cultural contexts (Choudhuri, 2005; Milner, 2007).

In developing the research design and selecting a qualitative research method, I also considered other approaches, such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (in Smith & Osborn, 2015) and discourse analysis (Hall, 1997; Willig, 2015).

IPA was considered as it aligned with the critical realist stance I had adopted (Smith & Osborn, 2015). However, I did not feel that it would support me in my

research aim to explore the shared patterns of understanding across participants as effectively as reflexive TA would.

As those utilising Discourse Analysis typically take a constructivist view of language (Hall, 1997), I did not feel that it would align with the experiential view of language I wished to use to interpret my data.

For the purposes of my research and theoretical position, I felt that reflexive TA was better suited than the other methods discussed; I, therefore, did not pursue these further.

3.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is positioned as a practice critical for qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Yardley, 2008), particularly necessary in order to conduct culturally sensitive research (Choudhuri, 2005; Milner, 2007; Tillman, 2002). It is suggested that a researcher's critical reflection of the influences on their worldview, supports their interpretation and sensitivity to others' understandings and perspectives (Choudhuri, 2005).

A reflexive researcher is described as one that is aware of their subjectivity, acknowledges their influence and the influences on them, and critically reflects on these (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Milner (2007) provides guidance for reflexivity to support a culturally responsive approach to research. Braun and Clarke (2021a) also offer prompts for those engaging reflexively in research more generally. These were utilised to guide my self-reflection.

As a 'white', middle-class, British-born, cis-gendered, able-bodied individual I occupy spaces of significant social privilege and have likely been advantaged from being 'racialised' as 'white'. Whilst I remember having an awareness of my 'racial' identity and how I could be perceived in primary school, this awareness has grown throughout my life with through conversations and interactions with friends and family. My awareness of my impact and complicity

in ‘whiteness’ has been acutely in focus during the last few years and in this research process.

I acknowledge that my ‘racial’ identity will impact my research, through the interviews with, predominantly ‘white’ British, staff members and through summarising literature on the experiences of students ‘racialised’ as ‘black’. I can never understand the lived experience of those who may experience racism and ‘racial’ injustices in society and my blind spots will be significant. I have become increasingly and significantly conscious of my potential for ‘speaking for’ or negatively impacting individuals in Caribbean communities and those ‘racialised’ as ‘black’ during this research process and balancing this with not generating distress for participants through interviews or my interpretations. I have attempted to counter deficit views throughout and spotlight the agency and strength of ‘black’ students and those of Caribbean descent.

The notion of ‘speaking for’ as a ‘white’ researcher can be a form of epistemic injustice (Byskov, 2021; Fricker et al., 2016), where the knowledge and perspectives of an individual in a dominant group are perceived with credibility over individuals in a marginalised. Additionally, these voices then contribute to the evidence and knowledge bases.

Please refer to my personal and professional motivations (section 1.1), background information (appendix A), the extracts of the reflexivity journal (appendix G) and the discussion (chapter 5) for more detail.

3.5 Ethical considerations

My research was granted ethical approval, please refer to Appendix H for the approval letter. As a trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) all aspects of my practice are guided and regulated by the British Psychology Society (BPS) Code of Ethics (British Psychological Society, 2018) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) standards of conduct, performance and ethics (Health and Care Professions Council, 2016).

As ethical considerations influence all elements of the research design and process (Braun & Clarke, 2022), these will be considered across the sections of the methodology. Focus will be given to the ways in which minimising harm, power, right to withdraw and confidentiality were considered, owing to the nature of the topic being explored with participants. Minimising harm within the interpretation and reporting are also prioritised, to consider and reduce potential negative impacts on my participants and individuals of Caribbean descent represented through the research.

3.6 Summary of methodological parameters

In line with my research aims of exploring school staff members' shared perspectives and experiences, I have employed a critical realist and experiential position in my research. I take an *intentional* view, that participant's language is being used to communicate their experiences, with the recognition that their accounts and my interpretations are socially, politically, and culturally situated.

3.7 Research design

3.7.1 Introduction to section

To fulfil my research aims, I recruited eleven teachers and headteachers from across England to take part in the study. Across the next section, I will outline how I sampled and recruited the participants and gathered their perspectives regarding the experiences and sense of belonging for students of Caribbean descent in the school context.

3.7.2 Sampling

Similar to the research undertaken by Gregory and Mosely (2004), I purposively sampled (Patton, 2014) participants to reflect the variety of educational roles in schools that impact teaching and learning and inclusion in school. Additionally, owing to the focus of the research question it was hoped that a range of perspectives could be sought from individuals with diverse experiences.

Within the purposive sampling for job titles, the participants were a volunteer sample who were interested in taking part in the study from the information that had been shared with them through gatekeepers such as headteachers, special educational needs coordinators (SENCos), colleagues, and personal networks. Additionally, to gather more participants, I undertook opportunity sampling, which involved reaching out individually to those who matched the inclusion criteria.

I will outline the inclusion criteria for research participants and the procedures for recruitment further in this section.

3.7.2.1 Inclusion criteria

The views of the school workforce are central to the research question and the educational system. I perceived that they could provide an insight into the school system and how it perceives and understands the experiences of students of Caribbean descent, amongst all students. My inclusion criteria for participants was, therefore, individuals who were directly involved in the education and inclusion of students in both primary and secondary schools across the UK.

From students' narratives and the research around the influence of educators (section 2.4.3), I felt participants would need a knowledge of the impact of teaching and learning, school values and ethos, relationships with school staff,

peer interactions, home-school links, and individual factors for students in school, as these would be explored in the interview. Individuals needed to be working in a school and employed for an educational or pastoral capacity. It was also deemed important to ensure that staff had sufficient experience with children and young people; therefore, only those that had worked with children for over one year were considered.

From this criterion, I judged that the appropriate roles included teachers; headteachers, including assistant and deputy headteachers; and educational support staff. Support staff encompasses titles such as teaching assistants, learning support assistants, mentors, key workers, and behavioural support assistants as they have an insight into the key aspects of the school experience. I excluded roles that did not have direct insight into teaching and learning or pastoral support, such as catering team members.

As well as having the insight required for the research aims, teachers are widely cited in the literature and research of students narratives as being influential to the experiences and educational outcomes for students of Caribbean descent (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Demie & McLean, 2017b, 2017a). Similarly, Headteachers are reportedly key to the school experiences and achievement of Caribbean students (Demie & McLean, 2017b, 2017a).

Owing to the subjectivist epistemological stance and qualitative position that I had adopted for this research, I did not consider the overall 'representativeness' of the sample. By this I mean that I did not think the sample needed to accurately reflect the demographics of the school workforce.

My intention was to explore the understanding of the individuals who volunteered within their own contexts and the context of the interview process. Patton emphasises this preservation of context as a "cardinal principle of qualitative analysis" (p. 563, Patton, 2002).

3.7.2.2 Recruitment process

Participants were recruited through volunteer and opportunity sampling. I initially sampled from within the Local Authority (LA), where I am on my placement, and then nationally.

Within the LA, I shared my research invitation letter (see appendix I) with Educational Psychologists (EPs), fellow trainee EPs, SENCos, and all headteachers in the local region and asked them to distribute these within their professional and personal networks or place them in communal staff spaces.

Similarly, when sampling nationally, I shared the letter with fellow trainee EPs and previous colleagues working in schools, again asking them to distribute these to individuals that would fit the inclusion criteria.

School staff members who expressed interest, in response to the letter, and met the inclusion criteria were then given additional information regarding the research and participation (see participant information document, appendix J).

For individuals who wanted to participate, I sent the consent form (see appendix K) and privacy notice (Appendix L) to review and agreed a time and date to meet. I provided the option to meet either face-to-face or virtually, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the caution being exercised around in-person meetings. I also sent a questionnaire to collect additional information about their experience and school setting (see appendix M and section 3.7.3.1 for more information on this).

3.7.2.3 Sample size decisions

The notion of data 'saturation', or information redundancy, is often recommended or cited for use in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2020). Within the grounded theory methodological approach from which the concept arose (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021), saturation refers to point where no new insights or properties are revealed about the theoretical construct (Morse,

2004), therefore, data collection can end (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). It is summarised, from its use in wider literature, by Braun and Clarke (2021b) as the point at which no new themes can be found in the data. From a systematic review of the literature, Hennink and Kaiser (2021) suggested that saturation was met for interviews with a sample size of between nine and 17.

Saturation is typically aligned with more positivist values and structured methods of data collection, owing to the conceptualisation that themes are 'found' or 'revealed' in the data rather than constructed (Braun & Clarke, 2021b). Additionally, Hennink and Kaiser (2021) concluded that there was little empirical evidence for the features of a study that influenced the point of 'saturation'. I have not, therefore, used it to gauge the number of participants needed for this research project.

Malterud, Siersma and Guassora (2016) offered an alternative notion of "information power" to ascertain the number of participants required. This notion encourages the researcher to consider the study's aims, theoretical underpinnings, quality of accounts and analysis strategy to reflect on how many participants are needed.

In relation to the current research, whilst my aims are broad, the target population, exploration and research question focuses on individual school staff members' understanding which gives it a relatively narrow and idiosyncratic focus. To explore the patterns and variation between the group school staff, however, a slightly larger sample may be beneficial.

Braun and Clarke (2021b) tentatively offered aspects to consider when sampling for a reflexive TA approach. These included: the breadth and focus of research question; data collection methods; identity-based diversity of sample or population, desired or already existing; perspective diversity; expectations from outside agents; purpose of the research project; pragmatic constraints and purpose for analysis. They emphasised, however, that continual reflection throughout the data collection process should consider the richness of the data and that seeking to capture "*different* stories" may require further sampling (Braun & Clarke, 2021b).

Whilst continuing to emphasise the importance of individual reflection, Braun and Clarke (2015) tentatively recommended a sample size for a postgraduate doctorate research project using interviews to range between six and 15 participants.

I, therefore, deemed that my sample size of 11 fit with the recommendations stated in the literature. After six participants, I continually reviewed the sample and the need to collect additional data. By the 11th participant I felt that I had a range of rich, data and ideas in the data set that would facilitate my interpretation of shared patterns of understanding between participants.

3.7.2.4 Participant characteristics

There are 11 participants included in the research from different schools around England. The participants were all current members of school staff that supported the teaching and learning and pastoral aspect of students' school experiences. Nine of the participants were teachers; two primary school teachers and seven secondary school teachers. Two of the participants were members of the Senior Leadership in primary schools (i.e., head teacher, deputy head teacher or assistant head teachers).

The additional characteristics are included below, presented as a group to increase the anonymity of the participants, and protect their personal data.

3.7.2.4.1 Participant roles and experiences related to topic

Participants had been working in schools or teaching from three years up to 25 years. Most had accessed teaching through the Professional Certification (PGCE).

Some participants listed additional responsibilities such as subject lead, form tutors, English as an additional language lead, and enrichment coordinators.

All participants, except one, had taught or supported students of Caribbean heritage.

3.7.2.4.2 *Participant's own description of cultural or ethnic identity*

Ten of the participants identified themselves as "white" and/or "white British", and one participant described their ethnic identity as Chinese and their cultural influences as, largely, British. Two participants indicated that they had Irish heritage. Three participants also described themselves as 'middle-class' as part of their identity.

3.7.2.4.3 *Participant descriptions of current school*

Four of the participants described their schools as being located within a large city; four described their school as being 'just out' or 'near' a city; two described their schools as being in a town or near a town; and one described their school as being in a rural village.

Schools ranged in size from one form entry to schools with around 2000 pupils.

The student populations for five schools were 'predominantly' 'white'. There were schools with higher proportions of diversity, and three schools where the majority group of pupils were identified as 'Asian'.

The staff population in six of the schools were described as mostly 'white' British. There were three schools where participants described the workforce as diverse or reflective of the wider community.

Four participants had read or were aware of their school's racial equality policy, the other seven were not sure or aware.

3.7.3 Data collection measures

3.7.3.1 Questionnaire

As raised in conversation and supervision about the research, I considered that collecting additional information about participants and their schools to contextualise the interview data would be a valuable contribution. I was not striving for a 'representative' sample; therefore, I have used the questionnaire responses to provide characteristics of the participants (see section 3.7.2.4 above).

A questionnaire was utilised to gather this participant information to ensure the interview did not feel arduous (See appendix M for the questionnaire).

The areas I deemed relevant to gather were participants' current roles, previous experience in school and teaching, the regions they had taught in, the diversity of current and previous settings, training background, school characteristics related to the research. As advised by Mertens (2020) I also invited participants to share their cultural and/or ethnic identity through an open-ended question.

3.7.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

I used semi-structured interviews with an 'interview guide' approach (Patton, 2002), owing to the balance a guide offers between systematic data gathering and flexibility to explore particular areas further. The interview guide outlines the general areas to be discussed, which I considered and outlined before starting data collection (see appendix N for interview guide).

In-depth individual interviews are appropriate for reflexive TA, as they are capable of gathering detailed and complex data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2022) do, however, recommend reviewing the interviews

throughout the data collection process to ensure they are eliciting meaningful responses, with sufficient depth.

3.7.3.3 Interview procedure

The interviews were conducted on an individual basis. Two of the interviews were face-to-face. These took place in settings suggested by the participant, which for both entailed a separate room in the school they worked in.

The rest of the interviews took place virtually via Microsoft Teams video conferencing software, owing to participants' preferences considering restrictions for face-to-face contact during COVID-19 restrictions. Additionally, the distance between myself and some of the participants meant that virtual interviews were the only feasible option.

Deakin and Wakefield (2014) reflect that whilst there are differences in areas, such as rapport building, arrangements and ethical considerations, online interviewing offers a helpful alternative to 'in-person interviews' whilst maintaining quality. Although it is important to note that some researchers and writers have noted a lack of 'presence' and containment (Carter et al., 2021; You, 2021). Carter and colleagues (2021) suggested that by making adaptations these differences and weaknesses could be alleviated.

All the interviews lasted between 50 to 80 minutes. I used a password-protected Dictaphone to audio-record them.

I began each interview with an introduction to my role and the research development and aims. I hoped this initial discussion would help to build rapport (Patton, 2002) and ensure participants had been fully informed and had the opportunity to discuss and ask questions before providing consent. I reiterated their right to withdraw in this introduction and explained confidentiality measures, making a plea to participants to refrain from using identifiable names of people or places to aid this process.

The interview schedule guided the discussion for the main body of the interview.

I ended with a verbal debrief (appendix O) which outlined more of the literature and rationale for the study and reminded participants of the right to withdraw their data and provided sources of support (appendix P).

3.7.3.4 Interview guide development

The wider research question, 'What do school staff members understand about the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent in the context of school?', informed the interview guide and the questions within this.

The first section of the interview guide focussed on the question "what do you think school is like for a student of Caribbean heritage? Drawing from your own experience and knowledge" I followed this with questions that unpicked specific aspects of the school experience for students of Caribbean descent, drawn from students' narratives in the research and wider theory.

The next section of the guide focussed on the second research question, asking "what do you think the sense of belonging might be like for a student of Caribbean descent in school?". Again, I followed this with further questions and probes to address different areas of school belonging. These questions were preceded with an exploration on what belonging means to the participant broadly and then related to school.

The majority of questions in the guide were opinion or value-based questions that aimed to explore the perspective and sense-making of the participants (Patton, 2002). Even when asked about a feeling, I framed it as "how do you think …would feel?".

I used additional question types and statements to punctuate the interview and invite further response and reflection (Patton, 2002). Some of the questions I posed as a 'simulation' type question (Patton, 2002), asking the participant to answer as if they were a student and suppose what their experience may be.

Between sections of the interview, I utilised 'prefatory statements' (p.370 Patton, 2002) to summarise what had been spoken about and prime the interviewee for the next topic area.

I used elaboration and clarification probes (Patton, 2002) to encourage expansion on an answer. For example, "…you were saying about the curriculum and option choices, could you say a little bit more about what that might be as an experience?". I framed these either as a fault of mine for not understanding fully or through demonstrating interest to ensure the interviewee did not feel criticised or corrected.

The interview was honed and explored through conversations in supervision with my tutor. I also discussed it with a teaching colleague to ascertain how the topic areas may feel from an interviewees' perspective. They shared reflections around their own experiences and understanding which indicated that these topic areas would elicit depth and contemplation in the answers.

To further assess the suitability of the interview, and supporting questionnaire, I conducted a pilot study. The initial participant was recruited for this purpose. I perceived that the interview guide had helped to elicit valuable and relevant insights, therefore I did not adapt it at this point. I included this interview in the final dataset.

The interview guide was reviewed throughout the process, and I made a few adaptations, such as greater emphasis on the individuality of Caribbean students, equity of rules and expectations, and the curriculum.

3.7.3.5 Ethical considerations in Interview process

To highlight the ways that ethical considerations were made during the research, I will present these as a distinct section. A key consideration for me was that participating in the interview would not cause participants harm or distress.

I was asking participants to discuss sensitive and personal topics pertaining to their own schooling or to their experience teaching or support students of Caribbean descent. I had carefully selected the focus of the interview to address these issues in a sensitive manner. I informed participants of the focus, content and aims of the interview prior to commencing and providing consent. Additionally, I explicitly emphasised participants' right to withdraw from the research study, and the right to withdraw their data, before and after the interview. Throughout the interview, I utilised interpersonal skills to increase the level of containment experienced by participants and support their emotional wellbeing. The interviews concluded with a verbal debrief procedure where I outlined the process to gain further support or and provided details of external sources of support (see appendix P).

I kept ethical issues under review and adapted where unanticipated problems occurred. For example, I had to establish alternative protocol for contact following a participant losing connection, as suggested in the literature (Carter et al., 2021). I adapted the interview guide and in the following interviews participants were asked if they were happy to supply an alternative number to be contacted should the interview cease unexpectedly.

3.8 Rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research

The endeavour to determine trustworthiness, rigour and quality in qualitative research is important to ensure it is valued by stakeholders, fellow researchers and policymakers (Nowell et al., 2017). These can be facilitated by demonstrating the research was conducted in a systematic and deliberate manner (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017). The criteria for trustworthiness often includes its credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Ary et al., 2018; Shenton, 2004), as well as audit trails and reflexivity (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Choudhuri, 2005; Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility refers to the congruence between the participants account and the researcher's interpretation (Nowell et al., 2017) or, from a constructionist

standpoint, that the "reconstructions…that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities" (p.296 Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The transferability is how the research can be generalised, in the sense that the researcher has created a rich description to allow readers to judge this transfer to different contexts for themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). Transparency in the research process, through documentation and consistent decisions, refers in part to the dependability of the research (Nowell et al., 2017) . Finally, a clear thread between the data, interpretations, outcomes and conclusions can be interpreted as the confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017).

The audit trail provides the evidence of the decision making and justifications at critical points throughout the research process and reflexive journaling is a key element of this (Nowell et al., 2017). These are suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to contribute to the confirmability.

Braun and Clarke (2022) express the concern of applying universal qualitative research quality criteria, without a consideration to the specific theoretical and philosophical assumptions for the research.

I have included the applicable measures I took to address these criteria of rigour in the table below.

Table 3.2

A table to show the steps I took to address the how the key criteria for methodological rigour in qualitative research with recommendations from Lincoln and Guba (1986), Nowell and colleagues (2017) and Shenton (2004).

Key Criteria for rigour in Qualitative Research	**Ways addressed in current research** informed by suggestions in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Nowell et al., 2017; Shenton, 2004)

Credibility	• Use of well-established data gathering and analysis methods – reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) • Frequent supervision with fellow researchers and tutor used to develop ideas and interpretations. • 'Prolonged engagement' (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) with the data, through the transcription, familiarisation, and analysis, over the course of a few months. • Describing my background and positionality • Self-reflection, which examined background, identity, and experience generally and related to the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Milner, 2007; Yardley, 2008) (see chapter 1.1, 3.4 and appendix A and B).
Transferability	• Provided anonymised information about participants characteristics and settings they work, have worked, (see 3.7.2.4) to allow readers to ascertain own transferability. • Reported data collection methods and participant characteristics.
Dependability	• Outlined data gathering process and research design in detail, with my reflexive commentary throughout. Evidenced further in appendices (e.g., appendix G) • Audit trails during thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Nowell et al., 2017).
Confirmability	• Positionality of researcher included to increase transparency and to clearly communicate

	possible biases that may impact data collection and analyses. • Indications of theoretical and methodological assumptions and choices (Nowell et al., 2017)

3.9 Analysis

3.9.1 Transcription

Following the guidance for transcription from Braun and Clarke's companion website (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022), I transcribed the interview audio-recordings, an extract can be seen in appendix Q. This process can facilitate immersion in the data and a greater understanding (McLellan et al., 2003), and I perceived that it supported the first 'familiarisation' step of reflexive TA in becoming acquainted with the data and starting to make meaning of it.

In line with the ethical considerations, I anonymised transcribed data, using pseudonyms and redaction to protect identifiable information of participants.

3.9.2 The Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process

As mentioned previously, I utilised reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) to guide the data analysis and interpretation. Informed by my methodological assumptions in the context of this research, a critical realist approach to reflexive thematic analysis was taken, wherein the analysis aimed to explore participants' understandings and experiences through the language used (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Utilising the definition provided by Terry and Hayfield (2020), the data was analysed and interpreted inductively, as it was guided by the data.

Reflexive commentary

Whilst a specific theory was not used to interpret the data, the interpretations will have been guided by awareness of the literature and the messages regarding this area from the literature review and my own personal journey. For example, the emphasis and understanding of 'blind spots' was primarily influenced by a webinar delivered by Jeffrey Boakye. Boakye's ideas are reflected in the opinion piece published on Global Strategy Forum (Boakye, 2020).

Braun and Clarke (2022) offer a six-phase process, alongside techniques and practices, to guide the researcher through a reflexive TA of the data in a systematic and deliberate, yet recursive manner.

3.9.2.1 Familiarisation with the data (phase one)

The six-phase process begins with the researcher, as analyst, familiarising themselves with the data, requiring an immersion in, and critical questioning of, the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

I began the familiarisation phase by first listening to the interview audio recordings and then through transcribing them, which I believe helped familiarisation as I became immersed with the data. Where data evoked an emotional response or stream of thought, I made notes alongside the transcription. Drawing pictures and mind-maps of some of the key concepts that I noted from the data helped me to trace the meaning and recall data and patterns more easily.

Following transcription, I read the individuals' interviews and the dataset, making notes of thoughts, feelings, reflections, and any broader patterns I noticed. I utilised printed hard copies, making notes in the margins, and Microsoft Word files where I added 'comments' to highlighted portions of text.

To encourage critical reflection of the data, I asked myself a set of questions that explored how I felt participants made sense of the experiences and how my positionality might interact with that.

Reflexive commentary about stage one

I found this process thought-provoking, especially as some of the discussions and emotional responses resonated with topics I had become familiar with as part of the research and my own journey of anti-racism and self-exploration. I found the process to also be anxiety-inducing, evoking discomfort about my interpretation and research topic more generally. I found that exploring and explicitly recording these feelings allowed me to feel them without them becoming incapacitating.

Some of the broad patterning noted across the dataset from the familiarisation process included: support networks and how they mitigate negative experiences, humanities being a good forum for representation, and staff with shared heritage as role models.

3.9.2.2 Coding (phase two)

The second phase of reflexive TA suggests that the analyst undertakes systematic coding of the data, to capture their own perspective of the dataset.

My experience of this process was going through each interview with a fine-grained approach. I gave extracts that I felt meaningful or relevant to the research question a code label. I tried ensuring that I had considered each line or extract from multiple perspectives to capture as much patterning across the dataset as possible. I coded predominantly at the semantic level, which involved interpreting participants' accounts from what was explicitly stated. I also coded, at points, at the latent level where I felt that a poignant meaning

had been implied or conceptualised by a participant. I utilised hard copies initially and then moved on to a qualitative data analysis software programme, 'NVivo 12'. I added all the hard copy and Microsoft Word recorded codes on to NVivo 12 (an example is provided in appendix Q and R).

The guidance I had interpreted for coding (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Byrne, 2021; Terry & Hayfield, 2020) was to ensure that codes are specific enough to retain some of the meaning and context. I found, however, that I was staying too closely to individual participant accounts and not conceiving the patterns or codes across the dataset, which resulted in an overwhelming number of codes. I, therefore, clustered and broadened the codes slightly to capture the shared meaning or concepts across participants, which produced a more manageable number of codes.

3.9.2.3 "Generating initial themes (phase three)" (p.78, Braun & Clarke, 2021a)

The third phase of the process involves the analyst beginning to generate and construct the initial 'candidate themes' identified across the broader set of data, gathering all data that can be categorised into these (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Terry & Hayfield, 2020).

I started this phase by printing and cutting out the codes and physically clustering them into groups that had a shared idea or concept. I did this first with the codes that were linked to more than one data set. I then introduced codes that were from one participant, in case they added depth or a different perspective. The provisional nature of these groupings was highlighted by the constant revision and re-grouping. I found that naming the clusters, once I had a clearer idea, helped to clarify what I felt was encapsulated in these. A picture of the board with these groupings are included in the appendices (see appendix R).

This process resulted in clusters or provisional themes around: successes and what was important for a positive school experience and belonging; inequity;

individuality/heterogeneity from young people and from the staff members; and a lack of awareness, or denial, or fear. Within the ‘what was important…’ provisional theme, I had smaller groups within these that felt important, with their own shared idea.

Reflexive commentary about phase three

I found that I had to keep checking that I was interpreting what staff members had been expressing rather than re-interpreting them as phenomena myself. For example, I was grouping ‘peer ignorance’ with othering and inequity as that was what I felt this phenomenon may stem from; however, through reflection from peer supervision, I felt that staff weren’t using it in this manner and instead were referring to a lack of awareness or understanding.

3.9.2.4 “Developing and Reviewing the themes (phase four)” (p.97, Braun & Clarke, 2021a)

In phase four, themes are developed and reviewed by comparing them to coded data and the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Terry & Hayfield, 2020).

As informed by Braun and Clarke (2021a) this phase involved continuously reviewing the provisional themes and clusters. I started by drawing a thematic map of the provisional themes at that stage (see appendix S).

I then read through the coded extracts on NVivo 12 ensuring that they aligned with the central organising concept of the provisional theme and the codes themselves. The structure of the provisional themes and subthemes required further refinement at this stage and I, therefore, kept this in mind when reviewing to see where there may be links or patterns across data extracts

and themes. This process helped to refine the codes and themes, as some data excerpts were discarded or moved to another theme. The boundaries of some themes were redefined or adapted to encompass or discard data extracts.

3.9.2.5 "Refining, defining and naming themes (phase five)" (p.108, Braun & Clarke, 2021a)

In line with the advice from Braun and Clarke (2022), I wrote an abstract for each provisional theme detailing the central concept and the expressions of the theme. This process helped to demarcate the boundaries and locate some of the themes and subthemes. It also helped me to clarify my analytic direction and interpretation, rather than just simply providing a topic summary style name.

Chapter 4 Analysis

4.1 Introduction to chapter

I will outline the themes developed through the reflexive Thematic Analysis to explore the research question *'What do school staff members understand about influences on the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent in the context of school?'.* My aims are to explore school staff views about the experience of students, to gain a better understanding, owing to the impact the school system and staff have on the educational outcomes and treatment of students.

I have integrated my analytic interpretations from participant interviews with the wider theory and students' narratives in research. This includes links to the interpretations, developed from the qualitative research synthesis, which explored students' school experiences (chapter 2.6.).

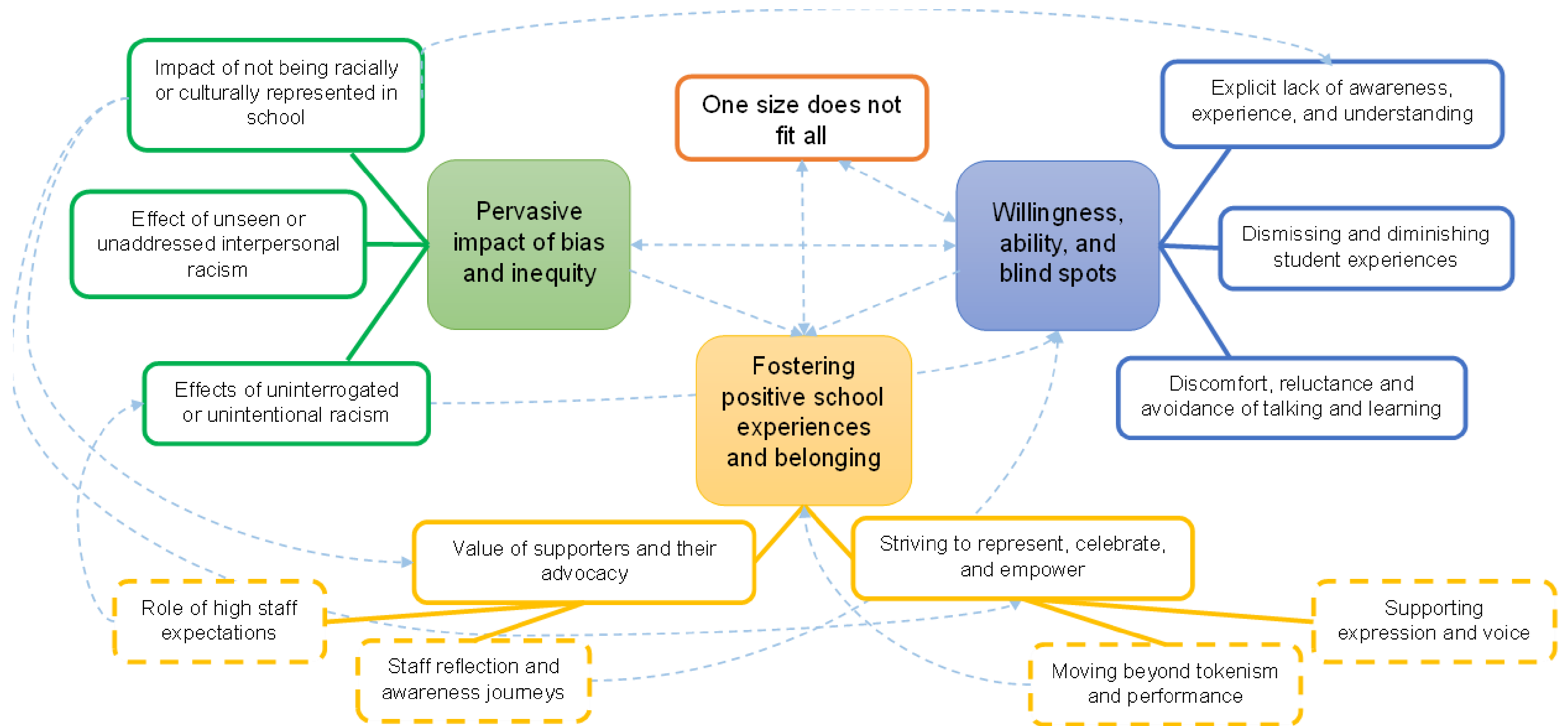
My intended purpose of making links with narratives of students of Caribbean descent and 'black' students are to explore how these may or may not triangulate. I consider the young people's narratives, or the interpretation of them, to be legitimate and valuable sources of information. They will not be examined or invalidated in respect to school staff members' perceptions. Where there may be incongruence, it is interpreted as an area either not explored in the interview schedule or for the education system to gain further skills, knowledge, understanding and confidence in.

4.2 Reporting the analysis (phase six) (Braun & Clarke, 2021a)

From the analysis, three overarching themes, nine main themes, and four subthemes were developed. The themes, their hierarchical structure, and the relationships between them are shown in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

A thematic map to show the three overarching themes, nine themes, four subthemes, and links between them developed through the reflexive thematic analysis.



The solid colour boxes represent overarching themes, the lined boxes represent themes, and the hashed line boxes represent subthemes. They are grouped by colour.

4.2.1 Overarching theme 1: Pervasive impact of bias and inequity

I interpreted three themes regarding limited representation in school, the pervasiveness of interpersonal racism, and uninterrogated bias and stereotyping in participants' perceptions of school experiences of students of Caribbean descent, which had a central organising concept of 'pervasive impact of bias and inequity'. These echo the conclusions made by Demie and McLean (2017a) that racism and inequity exist at the systemic levels, of curriculum and school workforce, and individual teacher factors, such as low expectations.

This overarching theme also aligns with the interpretation made from the narratives of students of Caribbean descent in research in the meta-ethnography (see chapter 2.6.). The concept of 'experiencing othering, inequities and discrimination' interpreted from the literature, similarly detailed student experiences of staff and peer stereotyping, inequity in behaviour management and overt racism.

A link may be drawn with the facet of Critical Race Theory (CRT) regarding the commonplace nature of racism in society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and organisations, such as schools, and its pervasive impact on the psyche.

4.2.1.1 Theme 1a Impact of not being racially or culturally represented and visible in schools

At the school wide level, I interpreted a perceived lack of representation for students of Caribbean descent in the school curriculum, staff, and expressions of culture. Several participants highlighted:

> Erm I would say that erm they are underrepresented […] I think the only point it ever gets really touched on is when we are talking about topics such as slavery which I think is very unfair, because it focusses

> more on the oppression of a group of people rather than their successes and achievements. (Participant 2)

Limited and oppression-focussed representation in the curriculum was expressed across participants as perpetuating inequity and not “championing” students of Caribbean descent (participant 3). Mirroring this, Ladson-billings (1998) argued the school curriculum maintains the dominant perspective in society. A lack of representation and awareness of culture in schools was present in the narratives of young people, particularly regarding less diverse settings (Abijah-Liburd, 2018).

Several participants noted that the limited representation that exists of Caribbean cultures, or cultures that differ from the majority, is not embedded in the curriculum. For example, participants referred individually to representation as influencing the lesson and curriculum plans (participant 4), the texts and literature studied (participant 8), and the “influential figures” studied (participant 2). The embedded nature was referred to as inclusion “all year-round” rather than being “slotted in” as an event (participant 2), and by making it “common day language” (participant 4). The inadequacy of the ‘slotting in’ approach to diversifying the curriculum reflects the narratives of students in Doharty (2017, 2018), which was argued to position ‘black’ history as less than the ‘white’ British histories that dominate the current curriculum. The importance of representation, and embedding this, is explored further in theme ‘striving to represent, empower and celebrate’.

The impact of a lack of representation both in the curriculum and staff was proposed to negatively impact student aspiration, achievement, and belonging. For example, participant 11 links this lack of representation in the staff team to a lack of role models:

> There are no role models right, that’s something that immediately springs to mind, we don't have, not only do we not only have ‘black’ leadership in the school but you don’t have any ‘black’ teachers at all, so you have no-one modelling being in that role (Participant 11)

The limited representation for students of Caribbean descent in the school workforce, especially in senior leadership roles, was noted by many participants and in the wider body of literature (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; Tereshchenko et al., 2021).

The limited representation, both staff and curricular, in some schools was suggested to have a negative impact on students' school experience and attainment and be potentially "isolating" and "socially demobilising" (Participant 2). This reflected responses in André-Warren (2001) which indicated that 'black' parents and pupils, who participated, attributed challenging pupil behaviour to limited representation in teachers and a culturally-irrelevant curriculum.

Beyond a need for greater representation, several participants explored the idea that 'black' or Caribbean heritage staff members act as aspirational figures who demonstrate, model and scaffold achievement for students of Caribbean descent. Demie and McLean (2017a) indicated that staff with a Caribbean heritage help to reduce cultural and linguistic barriers, may choose to act as a role model, and may have a clearer knowledge of the local community. However, Maylor (2009) suggested that expecting 'black' teachers to be role models for 'black' pupils is inappropriate and reduces the complexity of student and teacher relationships, preferences, and motivations.

Additionally, I will explore the idea, presented by a small number of participants, that an unrepresentative staff team, made up of predominantly 'white' individuals, may have homogeneous perspectives and blind spots in 'Willingness, ability and blind spots'. Coard (2021) suggested staff cultural biases and blind spots may manifest as misinterpretations of children's interactions, language, and behaviour in teaching and assessment (Coard, 2021), which contributed to the incorrect placement of West Indian students in ESN schools in the 1970s (Coard, 1971, 2021).

Regarding the demographic of students, participants commented on the potential dynamic and inequity experienced by students in a minoritised group in school as opposed to the majority group. For example:

> I suppose it would make it a more emotionally draining experience if you constantly felt like you were different and didn't fit in (participant 7)

Several participants expressed that it could be an isolating experience for some students in the minoritised group feeling that they stand out, therefore, possibly intensifying the impact of additional inequity and bias. This aligned with African-Caribbean participants experiences of being stereotyped and othered in less diverse schools (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Myers & Bhopal, 2017).

4.2.1.1 Theme 1b Interpersonal racism, 'unseen' and unaddressed

At the student level, participants reported interpersonal racism between students in their schools, described by some as an "issue" (participant 2), echoing the Runnymede Trust report that describes the issue of interpersonal racism in UK secondary schools (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020).

Some participants commented on the nature of this interpersonal racism in their school. For example:

> All of this is hidden because it happens in the corridors […] it happens when adults aren't around (Participant 11)

> I mean it's never ever like 'you're a whatever' ever […] it might just be an off-the-cuff comment while they're watching a video (Participant 4)

Interpersonal racism is perceived by some participants, such as participant 11, as covert. For example, the use of "inciteful" racial slurs (participant 11) written on school property and said to students of Caribbean descent away from others. The notion that there is some uncertainty about the presence, degree, or impact of racism between student was present across participant accounts. I perceived that the uncertainty from staff and covert nature of interpersonal racism contributes to its pervasiveness.

Similar to participant 4, normalised overt comments and racist language were also reported in the Runnymede Trust report (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). The

more overt racism, in the second excerpt, requires staff to identify and respond with a degree of confidence and awareness and have adequate racial literacy and skills (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). I will explore this in greater detail in 'Willingness, ability and blind spots'.

Participants suggested the discrimination between peers, as well as wider inequities, increase with age. For example:

> Well again cos I teach Year One so they are still really young, they're just learning about themselves in the world, so 'race' hasn't become- I don't think they're as aware of 'race' now as they will be in like a year or two years to come (.) (Participant 3)

The perceived notion that children's awareness of race, bias and discrimination increase with age, with less relevance or impact for younger children, was shared by several participants. Additionally, the perception that secondary schools are less inclusive and accepting, with 'race' influencing friendships and experiences of peer racism to a greater extent, was shared across the dataset. One participant, however, reported incidences of racism between peers from year 2 onwards.

Several participants discussed staff members' response to racism, the importance of which I discuss in 'the value of supporters and their advocacy'. Various participants expressed that adults' responses to interpersonal racism in school can be insufficient or inappropriate. For example:

> I think even if you've rectified the immediate wrong that experience can sit with that child for a long time and if they feel that sense of 'Oh well the teacher says this is what happened' or nothing happened or they've apologised and that's it that their experiences aren't valued […] then I think feeds back into that cycle of 'oh well this is the norm' […] do they feel like 'ah well there's no point saying anything if something happens because this is how it might get dealt with'? (Participant 10)

The excerpt above indicates several ways participants suggested staff may respond ineffectually or inappropriately to racism, such as ignoring,

downplaying, or invalidating the experience and impact. These passive or lacking responses were also highlighted by 'black' students and students with Caribbean heritage that participated in other research (Lewis, 2016; Mngaza, 2020).

The indication that school staff are largely aware of interpersonal acts of racism in the school experience for students of Caribbean descent, implies that the lack of response may not signify unawareness. Potential reasons posited for ineffectual responses included, not having the tools or confidence (as discussed in theme 'blind spots and self-preservation'), time demands, and students' intolerance to difference. Even with efforts to address racism, the notion that racism has pervasive, long-term impacts on the young person was shared by several participants.

The excerpt also captures some of the perceived impacts of racism and othering on students of Caribbean descent. Some of these centred around the emotional impact and trauma of the interpersonal racism; however, additional insidious impacts included the damage to trust in others, self-esteem, and self-image. Additionally, the notion that these biased or othering views are internalised as the 'norm' and acceptable is a particularly harmful notion participants reflected on. I interpreted that the participant's perception of 'racism' becoming an expectation for students, reflects the 'ordinariness' which affects the psyche of all described in relation to CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Some participants went further to suggest that these impacts may be observed as disengagement, rejection, of school and its values, lower attainment, and behaviour that was challenging. This somewhat aligned with the narratives of 'black' students in research, which reported withdrawal and attempts to change themselves to mitigate stereotyping (Dumangane Jr., 2016; Mngaza, 2020). Other research suggested that racism may cause frustration and distress and subsequently behaviour that is viewed as challenging by staff (André-Warren, 2001; Lewis, 2016). However, research with young people highlights the agency and success of students, despite racism, which was less of a focus in the dataset.

4.2.1.2 Theme 1c Effects of uninterrogated or unintentional racism

Various topics that participants discussed involved school staff members holding biases and stereotypes that would impact the school experience and belonging for students of Caribbean descent. For example, in the following extract, participant 9 spoke about school staff interpreting behaviours from a boy with Caribbean heritage:

> Behaviours that we saw from him that we'd seen in other children and I saw staff interpreting them differently because he was a 'black' Caribbean boy (Participant 9)

The excerpt exemplifies participants' accounts around school staff members perceiving a student's behaviours differently in relation to their ethnicity and culture. The pervasive impact of these biases and assumptions, inadvertent or not, are argued to maintain the power inequities in the education system (Gillborn, 2005) and directly influence exclusions (Demie, 2021).

The othering and stereotyping of young people with a Caribbean culture, and their families, by school staff and members of the community was raised in the discussions. For example:

> The expectations may well be different, from their home expectations (Participant 1)

Some participants explicitly acknowledged the biases and stereotypes held by school staff and community members, and others were more implicit within the discussions. For example, participants querying the alignment of school values and Caribbean cultures or whether lower attainment stemmed from reading less at home than other students, prior to starting school. These were typically informed by deficit-framed assumptions of the values and views that Caribbean families may differ in some way to families with different ethnicities or cultures, particularly 'white' families. These mirrored the perceived 'clash of cultures' in a 2012 teacher-voice survey, which was indicated as the most likely reason for disproportionate exclusions (Smith et al., 2012).

Counter-narratives to these assumptions, include young people's narratives about parental support for schooling (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002; Wallace, 2019), 'black' Caribbean and African students spending longer hours on home learning, compared with peers, during COVID-19 restrictions (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020) and Stone's (1981) assertion from research that West Indian parents "care enormously" about their children's education (p.251).

Several participants appeared to express the view that school staff holding stereotypes and biases is an inevitability. For example:

> You know I mean everybody would still have bias cos that's part of the human nature isn't it (Participant 9)

This excerpt demonstrates the notion that humans inherently hold and form biases and stereotypes, and school staff are not exempt from this, echoing the research (Reyna, 2000). It was suggested that the biases and stereotypes staff hold impact their interpretation of young people's behaviour and their expectations of them elicited by factors or events such as, perceiving a threat to their control of a class, negative experiences or interactions with students, and the messages in the media. Teachers holding assumptions and stereotypes about 'black' students generally, and students of Caribbean descent, reflects literature and research (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Reyna, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001b). Reyna (2000), for example, suggests stereotypes can influence a teachers' perceptions of pupils' 'deservingness' of support and the suitability of punishment in response to behaviours. The interaction of this with the inherent subjectivity of behaviour management (section 4.2.1.2.1) and teaching practices explored by participants indicates the potential for harm.

From the perceived viewpoint of the students, an awareness of school staff biases was suggested to have a detrimental impact on school experience and belonging. For example:

> I think if students feel like there is a bias there, they'll just not engage, they won't go and seek support if they need to, they kind of disengage from from the situation or or the learning (Participant 10)

> Well it's just gonna be really demotivating isn't it and you're going to lose a lot of level of trust […] you're just gonna be pretty apathetic I would say. I mean I would personally if that was me […] I wouldn't feel comfortable. (Participant 2)

The awareness of staff holding inequitable or negative assumptions was suggested by participants, as demonstrated in the excerpts above, to be detrimental to teacher-student relationships, trust, and belonging, which in turn impacts engagement and learning. The narratives of students of Caribbean descent in research and literature reflect the negative impact emotionally and on sense of self from awareness of bias and racist stereotypes (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Coard, 1971), which may impact academic performance. Again, although acknowledging the adverse conditions, accounts did not credit students' strengths and success within these, as has been demonstrated and emphasised in research (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Nicolas et al., 2008).

Nearly all participants suggested staff members hold similar or higher expectations of the academic ability of students of Caribbean descent, which does not align with the body of students narratives and literature (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Coard, 2021; Demie & McLean, 2017a). However, a large proportion referred to staff members, themselves, and individuals in the wider community, holding different expectations about behaviour and affective factors in learning. For example:

> Behaviour wise I think you might think naturally 'ah they're a personality I need to keep on top of them' but in terms of academia there, I wouldn't say from my experience that they're any less intelligent than any other group of kids (Participant 8)

The excerpt indicates staff members hold assumptions and lower expectations about the behaviour of students of Caribbean descent, which mirrors the literature (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Coard, 1971; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Wallace, 2017; Warren, 2005). Participants discussed the influence teachers have over each other's behavioural expectations, which aligns with the narratives of young people in the literature (Wallace, 2017; Warren, 2005). One participant described this as "branding" (participant 6) a student with

negative expectations, of which the implications could be detrimental and, I believe, dehumanising. The academic expectations of secondary school teachers were also suggested by a participant, and from research on students' experiences (Mngaza, 2020), to be limited by target grades assigned to the student.

I perceived an openness around discussing other people's lower behavioural expectations, in comparison to academic expectations or their own expectations. These may suggest a link discomfort, blind spots, and self-reflection, alongside an acceptance of the stereotypes regarding behaviour and students of Caribbean descent.

The pervasive, negative impact of biases and lower expectations, most participants suggested, were that students "might not be getting the support they need" (participant 6) and staff "running to […] higher punishments quicker" (participant 11) than they might for other students. In the wider research and literature, teachers' expectations are suggested to lead to systemic disadvantages (Glock et al., 2019) and inequitable instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1998) for 'black' students. They are also suggested to manifest as teachers' perceiving higher levels of Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Strand & Lindroff, 2018); perceiving frustration as challenging behaviour (Lewis, 2016); higher exclusion rates (Demie, 2021)and the placement of students' in lower streams or sets (Coard, 2021).

Similar to the impact of bias, lower expectations were suggested by participants in the current study to impact student's self-belief, motivation, confidence, and academic performance. The literature is congruent with the views of battling lower expectations from young people (Mngaza, 2020) and the impact this may have on pupils' classroom behaviour (Bobb-Semple, 1999; Committee on Minority Representation in Special Education et al., 2002); academic achievement (Demie & McLean, 2017b) and sense of belonging and identity (Mngaza, 2020).

In this regard, some participants described teacher expectations, both academic and behavioural, as "self-fulfilling" (Participant 7) on students' achievement and behaviour, owing to the impact they have on self-belief and

feeling supported by adults. The ‘role of high expectations’ is explored further in the subtheme within ‘the value of supporters and their advocacy’. While ‘self-fulfilling’ expectations are widely referenced (Coard, 2021; Demie & McLean, 2017a), the inevitability is challenged by research emphasising students’ agency and resistance in response to expectations and bias (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019; Nicolas et al., 2008).

I perceived, when reflecting on teacher biases or discrimination, participants illuminated the impact of the power imbalance between student and teacher. For example:

> There's there's a huge power imbalance there isn't there? […] children are less likely to flag those issues against teachers so, because they are in a position of authority (Participant 7)

The power imbalance, when considered alongside staff bias, is suggested to significantly impact on the school experience and belonging for students of Caribbean descent. Other research has recognised the power and authority of teachers (Solomon et al., 2005) with a student participating in research describing them as “gatekeepers to success” (p.916, Wallace, 2017). Participants perceived this to limit students in voicing their concerns, particularly regarding those in power, and thus disempowers them further. Some participants also reflected on the additional power imbalance of ‘white’ staff members implementing behaviour management systems and exclusions with students of Caribbean descent.

The danger of silencing through disempowerment is that it may provide fertile soil for bias and inequity to permeate, unchallenged. The importance of having a voice and empowerment in school is discussed further in the ‘Striving to represent, celebrate and empower’ theme.

I have outlined the subjectivity and bias within school staff practices and the impacts of this, highlighted in the interviews and literature, and will now explore its manifestations in behaviour management in the subtheme below.

4.2.1.2.1 Subtheme: Behaviour management as manifestation of bias

The subtheme centres around the presence of bias and inequity in behaviour management implementation by school staff. Several participants acknowledged the subjectivity, biases, and affective factors that affect fair and consistent behaviour management. For example:

> That's the hardest part of being a teacher figuring out where to draw that line (Participant 8)

> When you talk to students that's their big gripe […] it can't because teachers aren't robots and because we are emotional beings (Participant 11).

The subjectivity within these practices highlight how they can be influenced by staff members' biases and affective factors, exemplifying the difficult task of implementing punitive behaviour management 'objectively' and consistently. Additionally, some participants spoke about teachers taking the "easy route" (participant 4) due to fear of backlash from students in the majority group or families.

Regarding the perceived experiences of behaviour management by students of Caribbean descent, participants reported:

> So in an eighty percent 'white' school right, you couldn't write it […] you have a group of eight boys, out of lesson […] and they're all 'black', that's how badly the system is failing (Participant 11)

This participant explored disproportionate targeting of 'black' students and ethnically minoritised students in behaviour management. Participants highlighted that the behaviour system typically targets students who are disillusioned, struggling to access learning, and perceived to be challenging by teachers. These illustrate how teachers' biases and assumptions may permeate the subjective practice of behaviour management particularly for ethnically or 'racially' minoritised students.

Participants conveyed the negative impact of unfair behaviour management on the school experience for students of Caribbean descent.

> Well then you become kind of apathetic and kind of angered by rules and then if you feel that kind of injustice early on that will carry you through as you get older (Participant 3)

Several participants indicated that staff othering or targeting students in behaviour management would be "alienating" (Participant 11) and have an adverse impact on their sense of belonging in school. Similarly, some participants suggested inequitable and biased treatment could disengage students from school and learning; which may lead to a rejection of the school ethos (Wright et al., 2000). Particularly in cases where behaviour management is targeting 'black' students disproportionately, it was suggested to be "demoralising" (Participant 2) and oppose belonging to school.

The potential longer-term impact of inequity on attainment, and the injustice of this, was highlighted by participant 6:

> You then get disengaged with education and that shouldn't be the case because it's the teacher's done that and it shouldn't be that on the education that suffers […] that's what they're taking through […] at the end of the day you didn't get your qualification (Participant 6)

Participant 6 refers to the injustice of the longer-term tangible impact of inequitable treatment being fewer qualifications, compared to the treatment itself, which is untraceable. Within narratives in wider research, young people had expressed that inequitable treatment was like being punished for their racialised identity in school (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019), framing 'black' pupils' behaviour as "atypical and undesirable" (p.91, Abijah-Liburd, 2018).

4.2.1 Overarching theme 2 Willingness, ability, and blind spots

The theme of 'Willingness, ability, and blind spots' centres around a core idea of a perceived lack of awareness and exploration regarding factors associated

with identity, bias, and supporting students of Caribbean descent. I coded and developed themes from discussions at both the explicitly stated and implicit levels. Additionally, I inferred that some extracts represent an intentional and, also, an inadvertent lack of awareness.

I feel considering my own positionality, blind spots and influences in interpretations is particularly important in this section (please refer to appendix A and chapter 3.4 in the methodology).

4.2.1.1 Theme 2a Explicit lack of awareness, experience, and understanding

At the explicit level, this theme involved direct reflection on the difficulty to perceive or understand the experiences for students of Caribbean descent. For example:

> When I when I heard that Ted Talk 'oh God I've never really like placed myself in that position' because I just because I'm 'white' and [identifiable information removed] like I've never been the outsider (Participant 11)

Several participants shared this reflection that their identity, or position of privilege, had meant that they have not faced or felt some of the experiences students of Caribbean descent may have, such as marginalisation or prejudice. Some reflected on the difficulty of understanding the experience without direct observation or conversations with those it impacts, or without experience of supporting students of Caribbean descent. For example, participant 1 had not taught any children with Caribbean heritage and reflected they were "just taking it from somebody that may be from a different background and applying it" and relying on stereotypes "that the media portray".

It is felt that these notions are well summarised by the participants who openly reflected that some thoughts or areas evoked from the discussion had “never really occurred” to them (Participant 7), suggesting that it is outside of their experience and realm of consciousness, indicating a potential ‘blind spot’.

Most participants reflected openly on a lack of knowledge, confidence, or tools regarding certain topics, such as students’ cultural identity. For example:

> I don’t know enough about different cultures and different students like I wish I knew more […] I don’t think I’m the only person sat here that’s a teacher that’s like that has no clue (Participant 5)

Participant 5 reflected honestly on their limited understanding about students’ cultures, which included Caribbean students in the context of the discussion. Other participants had also indicated this perspective for themselves or other staff members in their school regarding students’ home cultures and the Caribbean culture, framing it as a barrier to diversifying the curriculum.

Regarding Caribbean cultures, some participants spoke about individuals’ “misinterpretation and […] ignorance” (participant 2) and a reliance on stereotypes from the media or outdated information, such as a focus solely on “Windrush” (participant 2) and nothing after that.

On the facet of explicit lack of understanding, some participants extended this to students. For example, the following excerpts indicate a pattern of peer racism resulting from ignorance:

> I would say again that it comes from the ignorance, people using the n word, and not really understanding the gravitas behind it for instance (Participant 2)

> Sometimes these children don’t actually know what they're saying (Participant 3)

> They don't know what- they don’t understand what what they’re saying and how that’s necessarily interpreted (Participant 7)

Most of the participants that expressed this idea, clarified a difference between intention and outcome. They recognised the outcome was discriminatory and

harmful; however, they expressed the intention may be from a lack of understanding, ignorance, or absent-mindedness. Some participants suggested that students appropriate Caribbean cultures without having an awareness of its origins or mimic Caribbean accents and express that they do not understand why it is offensive. Mostly participants suggested that students are mirroring outside influences such as families, communities, media, and entertainment, without interrogating or being aware of the origin and impact.

4.2.1.1 Theme 2b Discomfort, reluctance and avoidance of talking and learning

This theme centres around the discomfort experienced when discussing ‘race’ and racism. For example:

> You always wanna do right by everybody but actually like talking about it’s quite hard cos you don’t wanna say the wrong thing (Participant 5)

> I find it hard to get this balance right because I know my kids are so young […] do you shelter them from […] what you know the world is like? (Participant 3)

Both excerpts exemplified wider discussions around there being a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer or approach, and that participants sometimes avoided situations where they were uncertain. The first excerpt outlines the difficulty about saying the ‘wrong thing’ or being perceived as racist. Other participants’ discomfort stemmed from a fear of causing harm, as exemplified by the second excerpt. The second extract explores the uncertainty of discussing topics on oppression and racism, such as the transatlantic slave trade, due to the emotional response it evokes for that participant and an uncertainty of what the right approach would be. An additional discomfort for ‘white’ staff members and students stem from the difficulty of introspection on their own privilege and racism.

The act of people, particularly those with proximity to ‘whiteness’, feeling discomfort in conversations on ‘race’ and racism, and subsequently avoiding these, is thoroughly explored in Critical Race Theory and anti-racist literature (Ahsan, 2022; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2013b; Reid, 2021).

The avoidance of discussing ‘race’ and culture described in this theme aligns closely with the description of ‘whiteness’ as an evasion or willingness to consider racism and ‘racialised’ experiences (Frankenberg, 1997; Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002). Some have suggested that individuals may be uncomfortable or less inclined to engage and dismantle systems of ‘racial’ injustice if they are benefitting from the current system, that is they are proximate to ‘whiteness’ and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Meghji, 2019).

4.2.1.1 Theme 2c Dismissing and diminishing student experiences

The final expression of this theme involves diminishing or dismissing some aspects of the experiences for students of Caribbean descent in school, either intentionally or inadvertently. I made these interpretations mostly from implicit expressions in the interviews.

The discussions with some participants raised perceptions regarding the prominence of students of Caribbean descent as a cultural group. For example:

> I know I’m not really giving much away for like you know Caribbean students and stuff but it’s quite- I mean in terms of them, they don’t really practice anything (Participant 6)

This excerpt involves a comparison between the cultural identity of students with Caribbean descent and ‘Muslim’ students, who the participant clarified as being typically of Asian, Middle Eastern, or North African descent. It was inferred that students with Caribbean heritage were not considered to openly practice a religion, or a religion that differed from the majority group in the UK

(i.e., Christianity) and were, therefore, sometimes overlooked by school staff.

The participant makes a comparison between the cultural identity of students of Caribbean descent and Muslim students, who the participant clarified as being typically of Asian, Middle Eastern, or North African descent. Several participants made this comparison, which I feel may suggest participants were utilising experiences with one societally-minoritised student population, who are perhaps perceived as more visible in schools, to apply to the experiences of another minoritised student population, students of Caribbean descent. In doing so religious and ethnic identities, are conflated under ‘cultural identity’, and thus evokes a sense of homogenisation of ‘other’.

Another facet of the theme incorporates participants strongly emphasising the fairness of the experiences, opportunities, and belonging for students of Caribbean descent. For example:

> They should have the same experience as everybody else. They’ve got the same opportunities as everybody else. (Participant 1)

> I think it is very much the same across the board to be honest (Participant 2)

> That kind of misconception and that sort of inherent belief that they are in trouble because of their colour (Participant 4)

For context, participant 1 was responding to a question about the possible experiences of teachers for students of Caribbean descent and participants 2 and 4 were discussing the equity of behaviour management. As above, several participants emphasised the perceived equity for students of Caribbean descent. This illustrates fluidity in participants’ interpretations of young people’s experiences, even within each interview, as at other points participants had described inequity.

It was interpreted that these excerpts touched on difficult topics, such as disproportionate sanctions, exclusions, stereotyping, or inequitable treatment. Participants may have understandably found these more difficult to reflect or introspect on, particularly regarding themselves or their school. These excerpts demonstrated a response wherein individuals framed an experience

as equitable and objective, positioning those who questioned this as misinterpreting the situation. This perceived objectivity or dismissal of inequity was particularly construed during conversations with participants regarding punitive behaviour management approaches.

The dismissal, illustrated in the excerpts, echoes the "unwillingness to name the contours of racism" (p.32, Leonardo, 2002) described as a facet of 'whiteness'. Additionally, the notion that students of Caribbean descent have the same opportunities, positioning success and failure as a responsibility of the student, reflects themes developed in other research; for example, Solomon and colleagues (2005).

Another area of this possible dismissal was in relation to participants' own cultural identity and its impact. For example:

> Not really ((laughs)) I'm white British, but it is not something that is hugely, enormously important (Participant 1)

> I haven't got particularly any culture (Participant 4)

> Well personally I mean I'm white British ((laughs)) (Participant 3)

The excerpts indicate a notion that some participants, that identify as 'white British', feel it is an unimportant aspect of their identity or that they lack culture. It is interpreted that this view positions being 'white British' as a neutral or default, which may indicate potential oversights of its influence. As Frankenburg (1993) described, 'whiteness' is partly conceptualised as an evasion of identifying with a 'racial' or cultural group. This avoidance positions 'white' as the norm and 'races' that differ from this are othered in relation (Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002). Frankenburg (1993) instead proposes that whiteness is reframed as "constructed and dominant" (p. 243) rather than the default.

4.2.1 Theme 3 One size does not fit all

'One size does not fit all' refers to instances where participants highlighted the individuality and heterogeneity of perceived student experiences. It also encompasses where there was heterogeneity between participants conceptualisations of terminology regarding experiences.

Some participants responded to questions with reflection or cautiousness about conflating the experiences or perceptions of students of Caribbean descent. For example, when asked what the school experience might be for a student of Caribbean heritage, participant 11 responded:

> I think it's really hard to draw generalisations from individual things, like cos I can think of examples of Caribbean students […] you gotta be careful about being clumsy when we're talking about whole groups of people based on race, because maybe their 'race' is a factor maybe it's not in in in what their outcomes are, cos it'll be a whole load of factors coming in won't there (Participant 11)

The participant provided contrasting examples of one student of Caribbean descent who they described as "bright", but who had seemingly adverse home circumstances and lower literacy levels and was later incarcerated. The second student of Caribbean heritage described was applying to Oxford University. The variance between the experiences and outcomes described in the excerpt indicates the importance some participants placed on not homogenising pupil experiences based on 'race' or ethnicity.

Participants also explored the individuality of students, potentially, in their preferences and responses. For example:

> There might be some children who […] if they had erm a platform would really run with it and enjoy it and I think others would feel like 'oh I don't know what to do' […] so almost like it's a task that we're giving them (Participant 10)

The excerpt above was in response to being asked about the impact of opportunities to express cultural identity in school. As indicated in the excerpt, the heterogeneity of students of Caribbean descent was described by participants through an exploration of student preferences and motivation to express cultural identity.

Some participants specifically reflected on the intersections of identity and the impacts of these. For example:

> So not only was he you know of Caribbean heritage but but also had all those other things that were very challenging and difficult for him to overcome (Participant 9)

Participant 9 was referring, in this excerpt, to a young boy who was in Local Authority care and the accumulative impact of the intersecting aspects of his identity. The excerpts from participants 11 and 9 expressed the difficulty in unpicking heritage from other factors within a holistic individual. Similarly, other participants reflected on how aspects, particularly gender and socio-economic status, may interact with cultural background and affect the student's experience and how they are perceived by themselves and others. The intersection or overlap of racial, class and gender identities impacting students of Caribbean descent is examined in the wider literature (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Wallace, 2017). For example, Chapman and Bhopal (2019) 'black' Caribbean boys being perceived as 'aggressive' and girls feeling excessively scrutinised. Students in Wallace (2017) were perceived to feel that they were more likely to be homogenised based on 'race' and their class-based identity disregarded (Wallace, 2017).

Another key reflection made by several participants was that 'Caribbean heritage or descent' encompasses individuals with very different identities and cultural experiences. For example, students whose families have lived in Britain for multiple generations and may identify as having a British identity are conflated with students who are first- or second-generation migrants from Caribbean countries.

In some cases where participants expressed their caution about conflating

students' experiences based on 'race' and culture, it could be interpreted as a discomfort or unwillingness, particularly in instances where they had been more comfortable to consider other identity factors. There may, therefore, be a potential link between some of these responses and the 'Willingness, ability, and blind spots' overarching theme.

Another aspect of the theme 'one size does not fit all' refers to the participants themselves and their interpretations of the questions. For example:

> Lydia: how important would you say cultural identity is to your school?
>
> Participant 7: I think in terms of… it's a really tricky question cos you say cultural identity and […] I don't think of that as kind of like ethnic background

The excerpt exemplifies differences across the dataset in how participants conceptualised and interpreted terms within the discussions, particularly belonging and culture. Participant 7, for example, interpreted culture as the organisational culture of the school, others as the composition of cultural and ethnic identities in the school population, and another as the arts and achievements of a group, for example poetry or literature. One participant contextualised this idea of unique interpretations well, by highlighting the importance for individuals to construct what culture means to them personally.

Regarding belonging, the variance in how it was conceptualised across the participants included: a feeling of safety and happiness, unmeasurable and unquantifiable, a human need, shared values and interests, space to be authentic, and being included and valued by others. These conceptualisations are included across the other themes. These different constructions of belonging reflected the notion, suggested by Cartmell and Bond (2015), that different individuals may have different understandings of belonging at different times.

4.2.1 Overarching theme 4 Fostering a positive school experience and belonging

The overarching theme of **fostering a positive school experience and belonging** encapsulates two main themes of 'the value of supporters and their advocacy' and 'striving to represent, celebrate and empower'. Across all the interviews, without specific prompting to do so, participants conveyed what they felt is important to support the experience and belonging for students of Caribbean descent in school. From within this broader cluster, two key concepts were interpreted and developed. These themes capture solution-focussed and celebratory ideas of what is working well and how adults could encourage these.

4.2.1.1 Theme 4a The value of supporters and their advocacy

Throughout the discussions, many participants spoke about the importance for students of Caribbean descent to have a support network and advocates. For example:

> I think it is just really important that they know that there is that network of support […] and you would hope that that would outweigh the one kid that said something (Participant 4)

Participant 4 spoke about the importance of the support network in school as a response to interpersonal racism from peers. The idea that supporters, including staff, peers, and friends, act as protective factors to the school experience and belonging of students was shared by several participants and students' narratives in research (e.g., Law et al., 2014). It also aligns with the experiences synthesised in the meta-ethnography (See chapter 2.6) in the concept, 'support from others'. This included friends' support (Wallace, 2017, 2019), parent-student collaboration (Wallace, 2019; Wright et al., 2016) and coaching from supplementary schoolteachers and youth mentors (Wallace,

2017; Warren, 2005; Wright et al., 2016). Supplementary schools and outside agents were not mentioned in the participant interviews.

These notions for support reflect the need for belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), particularly in education, which reportedly comes from peer and teacher relationships (Allen et al., 2016; Osterman, 2000).

Many participants hypothesised that the people who can act as advocates for students of Caribbean descent provide significant support. For example:

> Knowing that […] people have your back and there are people in the world who will stand up for you (Participant 3)

The positive impact of people that stand up for you and 'have your back' was shared across the participant group, providing a perceived comfort, safety, and hope, especially in the face of adversity in schools (see 'striving to represent, celebrate and empower' theme). This advocacy was thought to be particularly important for students who may struggle to articulate for themselves, such as young children or those who have been excluded.

Family support and advocacy

Most participants specified the importance of family advocacy for students' school experience and achievement. For example, participant 11 spoke about a mother of Caribbean heritage at parents' evening:

> She meant business with him, her son, and she meant business with you, and she wanted to know 'do you know my son? do you know what he's capable of? how can he get better?' (Participant 11)

Where parents, carers or families were considered by participants to advocate for the student this typically involved standing up for the student to school staff and supporting or preparing them for negative experiences in school. This student-parent collaboration is documented in research that explores young people's narratives (Wallace, 2017, 2019; Wright et al., 2016). In Wallace (2017; 2019) parents provided their children with 'black' literature to influence the curriculum and taught them how to build relationships with teachers. As

one participant articulated, in the current study, families are perceived to have an understanding of their child's lived experiences to support advocacy. Some participants explicitly recognised the impact of this parent or carer advocacy on themselves and other staff in school, as they reported it made them more diligent and meticulous in their approach with that student.

Whilst participants in the current study explored how familial advocacy supports school belonging, reflecting literature on belonging (Allen et al., 2016), Mngaza (2020) discussed how families supported students to transcend the need to belong in school, where they may be facing adversity.

Parent and carer engagement in education was also suggested as a supportive factor for students' learning, achievement and self-image. For example:

> Parents that are involved in the school […] read the reports, turn up to parents evening, those kids achieve more, hands down and they're more engaged (Participant 8)

This excerpt suggested that family engagement manifests through communication and involvement with school, which positively impacts on students' experiences and outcomes. Most participants were interpreted to feel that students mirror their family's views on education, thus increasing the importance of their positive example. Law, Finney and Swann (2014) also emphasised the importance of familial support networks for educational achievement and students' aspirations. This home-school alliance was interpreted to the child-family advocacy explored above.

Friendship group support

Most participants raised the importance of friends for student of Caribbean descent, particularly as advocates. For example:

> if they are experiencing racism or bias or prejudice actually somebody who they trust sitting with them in that space is saying 'yeah I know that's happening what can we do about it?' (Participant 9)

Similar to the excerpt, friends are positioned, and across the current dataset, as being integral to the sense of school belonging, to a sense of safety, and protection from adversity. This sense of safety is particularly important for school environments, as learning requires a degree of vulnerability, as stated by some participants. Peer support is considered in the literature to foster a sense of school belonging (Allen et al., 2016; Osterman, 2000). In Wallace (2017) friends and peers were enlisted for their advocacy to transform curriculum content.

Interestingly, Faircloth and Hamm (2005) suggested that peer relationships may be perceived differently by different individuals, and as a result may not always contribute to a sense of school belonging. This mirrors the central organising concept of the 'one size does not fit all' theme.

School staff support and advocacy

There were specific approaches and roles that were suggested to provide support for students of Caribbean descent, for example:

> I think having staff members who can relate […] 'it's not just er my year six teacher telling me that I need to concentrate in SATs because that's just what they do and that's their job' (Participant 10)

The excerpt illustrates the nurturing approach many participants signalled as important to supporting the experiences of students of Caribbean descent. These included showing care and interest, beyond school, and making students feel special. Participants suggested demonstrating curiosity and having relationships with students' families helps to communicate this care and enhance the supportive relationships. Some participants highlighted that, especially in secondary, the staff that have this type of relationship are those in pastoral roles, such as form tutors. The importance of supportive adult relationships in school is highlighted throughout the literature, particularly around school belonging (Allen et al., 2016; Osterman, 2000; Tillery et al., 2013). Specifically, from young people's narratives in the research, Abijah-Liburd (2018) highlighted adult connection as a key protective factor for the

school experience. Young people's excerpts in Wallace (2017; 2019) highlighted the perceived influence of teacher relationships on achievement in school.

The responsibility of school staff members to respond supportively to interpersonal racism and discrimination was stressed by most participants. For example:

> It's really important I think that they understand that that's not the view of everybody […] I think it is just really important that they know that there is that network of support (Participant 4)

Similar to the excerpt, participants outlined the importance for the victim of interpersonal racism to be heard and know they have a support network. Participants also spoke about the importance of consequences or explicit discussions with the person who was overtly racist. As mentioned in the 'pervasive impact of bias and inequity' theme, hidden or underhand peer racism limits the ability for staff to respond in this way and may, therefore, have a more insidious effect on the school experience.

Nearly all the participants suggested that school staff also have an additional role and capability of supporting the supporters. For example:

> The more interaction with the community and the school the better understanding there is […] so if you were from Caribbean descent and your school had no awareness of the community or city, then yeah that's going to make it harder (Participant 8)

Participants suggested, as above, that schools play a role in supporting wider community involvement in school, which in turn supports students' belonging. Relationships and collaboration between school staff and families were framed as reciprocally beneficial and supported students across contexts. Some participants suggested these relationships could be developed through involving community members in events, providing emotional support, and having school staff members from the local community. The importance of this relationship is highlighted by Coard (2021) who indicated that teachers may be experiencing the generational impacts of inequality and racism; therefore,

by supporting families and their access they are supporting the student.

More specifically, some participants recognised the importance of providing space for family members to voice their concerns and ask questions such as "'is my child always getting in trouble because of their kind of background or their race?'" (participant 10). Similarly, participants positioned support as encouraging staff to face their assumptions and build authentic relationships with families.

Support from those with shared or similar heritage

All participants indicated that students and adults in school that share a similar ethnicity or cultural background would have a positive impact on the school experience and belonging for students of Caribbean descent. This existed across the groups outlined above.

The facet of this theme has similarities with the themes 'Impact of not being racially or culturally represented and visible in schools' and 'Striving to represent, celebrate, and empower'. The importance of representation for student aspirations, experiences and belonging, further highlights the othering impact that a lack of visibility and representation in schools may have.

Several participants felt that having friends with a shared heritage would have a positive impact emotionally and on school belonging, describing the potentially "empowering" impact (participant 2). The sense of comfort and belonging from friends with shared heritage was also reported in Booker (2007) and Lewis (2016). The notion of empowerment possibly reflects the importance of having advocates who understand you, allow you to voice concerns, and help you to make change. It again emphasises the importance of wider representation, awareness of culture, and discussions about 'race' and racism, explored in other themes. Although many participants discussed this, one participant reflected on how it might feel if they were the only person in their school with their cultural background.

Participants emphasised the importance of students' relationships with staff with a shared heritage. For example:

> A lot of the kids that are Caribbean sort of go up to him and do express their feelings and thoughts to him, maybe more than they would do to anyone else because […] like I said they've developed that relationship and connection (Participant 6)

> My colleague who is in the pastoral role, [..] he would stick up for a student, obviously in the right case, and he would go actively go and tell that teacher you know 'what's going on here?' (Participant 6)

Participant 6 spoke about their colleague who has Jamaican heritage and the perceived positive impact he has on the school experience for students of Caribbean descent. Most participants recognised the positive impact of having staff who shared cultural heritage and acknowledge the culture in school. The idea, explored by several participants, was that Caribbean staff members may advocate best for students for the same factors that help advocacy more widely, such as good relationships, holistic understanding of the student and a possibly better understanding of their lived experiences. Staff with a shared heritage, or staff from other minoritised groups, were suggested to have a greater insight into the possible barriers for students of Caribbean descent. The account from participant 6 exemplified these positive impacts that staff with shared heritage may have in terms of relationships and advocacy with other staff members. Several participants noted the importance that minoritised staff members, or those with Caribbean heritage, are supported themselves to be able to advocate most effectively. For example, this was suggested as being through open communication with senior leadership teams and their own feelings of safety in school.

4.2.1.1.1 Subtheme of 4a: Role of high school staff expectations

The positive impact of staff having high expectations of students on achievement and relationships, was highlighted by participants. For example:

> Erm I think expectations the teachers have of students is huge because they are so often […] self-fulfilling prophecies (Participant 7)

Participants indicated that teachers holding high academic and behaviour expectations of students has positive impacts in these areas. A link was often made by participants between high expectations and higher levels of support and advocacy from the teacher and better learning environments. The current research reflects wider literature that promotes raising staff expectations for the emotional and academic outcomes for students of Caribbean descent (Coard, 1971; Demie & McLean, 2017b; Ladson-Billings, 1989; Wright et al., 2000).

4.2.1.1.2 Subtheme of 4a: Staff reflection and awareness journeys

All participants raised the importance of staff reflection to better understand students, themselves, and their influence, countering the lack of awareness in 'willingness, ability and blind spots'. For example:

> I think recognising a sense of the children's cultural identity you know is is important […] and I think […] building individual kind of awareness of 'am I making assumptions here? is there a conscious or unconscious like bias that's influencing the way I interact with this child or this family?' (Participant 10)

School staff having an awareness and reflecting on their own culture and identity, as well as students, was indicated as important to supporting students of Caribbean descent by many participants. This was suggested to be important for a belonging by students of Caribbean descent in research (Abijah-Liburd, 2018). Some participants felt that having greater awareness

and understanding of the Caribbean cultures and histories, especially in Britain, may be important for staff to support students and to challenge assumptions and misconceptions. This greater awareness of culture and identity is suggested by participants in the current research to aid school staff in identifying their thoughts, assumptions, and biases and how these may interact with their support or behaviours.

Becoming 'critically conscious' requires becoming aware and reflecting on social injustice and uninterrogated ideas in society, to then take informed, transformative action (Bernal, 2002; Mosley et al., 2020). This links this theme with the consequences explored in the 'effects of uninterrogated or unintentional racism' theme, reflecting Chapman and Bhopal (2019) who said:

> "Without investigating how schools cultivate and reinforce racist school practices, educators are likely to re-inscribe racial deficit explanations of the student cultural and community" (p.1125)

Some participants felt that this awareness and reflection could be best developed through staff training, particularly training that helps them to understand their own identities, privileges, and biases. These reflect the recommendations for schools by Demie and McLean (2017a) and Joseph-Salisbury (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020) to support the emotional literacy and training of staff.

4.2.1.2 Theme 4b Striving to represent, celebrate and empower

This final theme has a core idea of helping students to feel heard, seen, and valued, through representation in the curriculum and school workforce, having their voice heard, and celebrations of their culture and identity.

Many participants reflected on the importance of celebrating diversity and difference in schools. For example:

> I think if a school values diversity and celebrates diversity […] it is easier I think to feel that sense of belonging because it's easier to see other people being embraced in that community (Participant 9)

The excerpt demonstrates the idea that if a school celebrates difference for all, it may support students from minoritised groups to feel valued: a recommendation made by Demie and McLean to promote achievement of 'black' Caribbean students (2017a). This school ethos distinctly differs from the culture of intolerance raised in the 'pervasive impact of bias and inequity' theme. Narratives within the research suggest that students reduced their cultural identity expression, where they feel it may not be celebrated, to reduce stereotyping (Dumangane Jr., 2016).

Participants also suggested that opportunities to express cultural identity may support a sense of pride, empowerment, and acceptance. For example:

> I think that kids would feel that they would be able to express themselves, be themselves, not have to fit in to what is already there (Participant 5)

Participant 5 had explained that students in their school had communicated a desire to express their cultural identities and learn about each other's. Opportunity to share cultural identity were emphasised as important in students' narratives in wider research (Lewis, 2016; Wallace, 2019) and to support school belonging (Chung, 2019). Participants in the current research suggested that the opportunities for this in their schools were through friends; hairstyle choices; and creative subjects such as food technology. Barriers included the nature of peers in the majority group; for example, where difference is seen as a negative. Participants noted the limited opportunities in some of their schools for students to express cultural identity independently; however, several participants indicated that humanities subjects were typically a good forum for discussions and exploration of culture.

The importance of representation was explored in discussions on the curriculum and extracurricular activities. For example:

> Our curriculum, for example, reflects [.] our community […] like it's making active choices down to the literacy text that they're not all erm you know written by ‘white’ dead men (Participant 10)

Participants explored the inclusion and decolonisation of the curriculum as a method to ensure that a broader range of students, such as those with Caribbean heritage, are reflected and represented in what they learn, in line with the literature (Arday, 2021; Thomas, 2022) and research (Abijah-Liburd, 2018). Most participants suggested this may be empowering, support school belonging, and make learning more meaningful and engaging. Ensuring students understand the purpose and relevance of what they’re learning to their individual interests and aspirations, was emphasised by participants as supporting representation and engagement in curricula.

As well as for expressing identity, participants suggested that humanities subjects lent themselves to providing a representative and decolonised curriculum. Several participants mentioned that recent increases in diversity in the curriculum had resulted from school staff members’ increasing awareness of topics related to ‘black’ students and students of Caribbean descent, thus expanding the ‘Staff reflection and awareness journeys’ subtheme. Extra-curricular activities were largely suggested to support belonging and a positive school experience, especially where the options were relevant and appealing to students. The belonging and sense of achievement fostered in these activities were suggested to support school belonging, particularly where these were celebrated by school staff.

As discussed in the ‘pervasive impact of bias and inequity’ theme, the importance for representation in the student and staff populations was outlined by participants. For example:

> looking at erm the staff kind of makeup and trying to kind of have that reflect our community as well a lot of our staff members particularly, its support staff kind of are from [area name] (Participant 10)

As in the excerpt, some participants reflected the importance for schools to consider how their staff population may better represent minoritised and

Caribbean communities. Research with ‘black’ students, and students of Caribbean descent specifically, frequently concluded that diversity and being ‘one of many’ in the school population supported a sense of belonging and reduce likelihood of bias (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Mngaza, 2020).

For students of Caribbean descent, participants in the current study suggested that representation in the staff population may be empowering and support belonging and achievement. This included the interpretation that Caribbean staff members may be viewed as role models or aspirational figures. Additionally, the positive impact of support and advocacy from staff with similar or shared heritage, which was explored in the earlier theme ‘the value of supporters and their advocacy’, may enhance the power of this representation.

4.2.1.2.1 Subtheme of 4b: Supporting expression and voice

A recurring pattern within this theme that I feel warrants further exploration is the importance of having a voice in the school system to enhance the experience and mitigate from negative experiences. For example:

> And work together to make sure that if you are in a minority […] that you have the voice to say actually ‘that's not okay to say that or do that or for me to experience that’ (Participant 9)

The notion that students have a route to express concerns or highlight inequity and discrimination is framed as critical by some participants. Some students were recognised by participants as having less opportunity to voice their concerns in schools, particularly younger students, or those who are minoritised or othered. Additionally, the situations which lead to a lack of voice are included in the ‘pervasive impact of bias and inequity’ themes largely as the examples given by staff stemmed from exclusionary processes. Therefore, opportunities and invitations to voice concerns would be key for the students facing these disproportionately. These opportunities included: anonymised questionnaires, form tutors, Personal and Social Development Education

lessons, and restorative conversations. The research by Abijah-Liburd (2018) highlighted in the student's narratives the notion that space to voice concerns supported students of Caribbean descent to cope with challenges of racism and adversity.

Some participants spoke about the value of encouraging students to be critical thinkers as a form of empowerment. For example:

> I would hope that as well as kind of having a positive impact on [...] learning behaviours [...] it would help them be reflective in terms of you know their own sense of identity but also [...] reflective and aware of where they fit in in society, how society views them, how society treats them (Participant 10)

In this excerpt participant 10 had been exploring the importance of encouraging criticality in learning; for example, through questioning how narratives are presented or represented and promoting discussion to question their own and others' viewpoints. They then extended this criticality to its impact on students of Caribbean descent more widely. Other participants also explored this notion of encouraging holistic critical thinkers to help students advocate for themselves and recognise injustices. This critical thinking aligns with bell hooks' (hooks, 1994) and the 'critically conscious' pedagogy recommended by Freire, which one participant explicitly recognised. The encouragement for students to advocate for themselves and to be agentic are described as protective factors for the experiences of students' of Caribbean descent in school (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Wallace, 2019).

4.2.1.2.2 Subtheme of 4b: Moving beyond tokenism and performance

This subtheme explores the idea of policies and action needing to be embedded and implemented effectively, as was highlighted by participants across discussions. This largely involved discussions around the impact of

school values being reduced if they are not enacted or embedded. For example:

> [OFSTED] said it was really useful because of obviously the diversity of our school to make such a celebration of it, by making it just common day language that we talk so why are we using the words culture? Why using the words moral and spiritual? it kind of embeds that in them (Participant 4)

Participant 4 explained how their school values, that encouraged celebration and respect towards diverse cultures, are enacted, embedded, and communicated with students and adults in school. This involved a focus in each lesson and across school activities; an approach that was promoted as important by other participants. Participants also reflected that the impact of school values or policies are limited when they are simply written or espoused, hence the focus on moving beyond tokenism to action in this subtheme. Allen and colleagues (2016) indicated that whole-school ethos can support belonging if these were communicated in artefacts. Without enacting and communication visions and policies, participants and wider research suggested that they have little impact (Smith et al., 2012).

Additionally, when considering the impact of representation in the curriculum, some participants challenged the influence of isolated celebrations of culture or inclusion in the curriculum. For example:

> I'd say that [Black History Month] is something that is almost slotted in and not really thought of all year round […] it should be something that is actually taught or included across the whole year (Participant 2)

The importance of embedding inclusion and celebration in the curriculum and across the school years was raised by some participants. This links with the theme 'impact of not being culturally or racially represented or visible in schools'. This was interpreted as a need to move from isolated events or tokenistic gestures to considered and embedded inclusion and representation. However, some participants commented on the wider systemic barriers to diversifying and decolonising the curriculum as an individual within the system:

for example, the “archaic” (Participant 2) structure of the school system that prioritises producing ‘academics’, and the enforcement of a rigid curriculum without scope for adaptation.

The importance of decolonising and transforming the curriculum, as opposed to tokenistic inclusion, are widely referenced in the literature (Arday, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Thomas, 2022). As explored in the ‘Impact of not being racially or culturally represented and visible in schools’ theme, simply slotting in representation can be perceived as tokenistic and othering (Doharty, 2017, 2018).

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction to chapter

In this chapter, I will summarise and discuss the themes developed from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis of interviews with members of school staff, presented in the previous chapter, in relation to the research question:

- What do school staff members understand about influences on the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent in the context of school?

My aims in this research were to gather views of school staff about their understanding of the experiences and sense of belonging for students of Caribbean descent in school and the influence of the school system, to learn more about the current barriers and inform transformation of the system. My rationale for these aims and question stems from the narratives of students that indicate disparities in the English education system, which align with an expansive body of literature, spanning decades, that has called for transformation to address these inequities.

School staff members are argued in the literature to impact the attainment and inclusion for students of Caribbean descent, through their relationships (e.g., Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Wallace, 2019), advocacy, expectations (e.g., Coard, 2021), and 'racial literacy' to effectively discuss 'race' and address racism (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020).

Additionally, owing to their role in the sense of belonging for students from various ethnic backgrounds, I wanted to explore teachers' perspectives on supporting belonging for students of Caribbean descent, as recommended by Greenwood and Kelly (2019).

My analytic conclusions will continue to introduce new interpretations in this chapter, particularly regarding wider systemic and socio-political contexts that the analysis is positioned within.

I will then reflect on the strengths and limitations of the current study, methodology, interpretations, and my positionality. I will explore implications from the current research, located within wider research, for Educational Psychologists (EPs), schools and their members of staff, and Local Authorities and policymakers.

5.2 What do members of school staff understand about the experiences, belonging and support needs of students of Caribbean descent in schools?

5.2.1 Experience of bias, discrimination, and inequity

Through my analytic interpretation the school experience and sense of belonging for students of Caribbean descent appears to be understood by staff members to include bias, inequity, and discrimination from adults and peers.

This included a lack of representation and visibility in the school workforce and curriculum. Lack of representation and diversity in the school workforce aligns

with the national picture (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; Tereshchenko et al., 2021) and was suggested by participants and researchers in wider literature to impact aspiration, achievement and a sense of belonging for students of Caribbean descent. Unrepresentative curricula and tokenistic inclusion were considered to negatively impact and not "champion" (participant 3) students of Caribbean descent by participants and young people in research (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Doharty, 2017, 2018; Wallace, 2019). Theorists suggest these curriculum uphold dominant discourses that may maintain inequity (Ladson-Billings, 1998), particularly when delivered without critical reflection (Freire, 2005).

Interpersonal racism was highlighted by several participants as being experienced by students and staff members of Caribbean descent from students, especially in secondary schools and typically hidden from adults. These reports align with accounts of 'black' students (Mngaza, 2020), students of Caribbean descent (Lewis, 2016), and other teaching staff (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020) in research. Participants, and wider research, also indicated inappropriate responses to racism, such as ignoring or minimising the experience, and the negative impact on students' school experience, and sense of self, safety, and belonging. The importance of support networks in mitigating the negative impact of racism, explored later, further illustrates how inappropriate responses may be harmful.

The inequity stemming from staff members' biases and stereotypes were explored by participants and wider literature (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019; Reyna, 2000). These included negative and deficit perceptions of Caribbean students' behaviour and Caribbean families. The wider theory provides an indication of how biases and stereotypes are reinforced, maintained, and influential on teacher practice (Reyna, 2000). Students' awareness of these adult biases were suggested by participants and wider literature, to have negative impacts on wellbeing, relationships, trust, belonging, and learning (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Coard, 2021). The manifestations of bias are suggested to include lowered expectations (Demie & McLean, 2017a), inequitable support, overidentification of Special Educational Needs (Strand & Lindroff, 2018), being placed in lower ability sets

(Coard, 1971), inequitable punishment, and higher exclusion rates (Demie, 2021).

Owing to the power held by staff, the impact of these biases and manifestations are perceived to be amplified, particularly as it creates barriers to young people challenging these views.

The research that has gathered young people's views has consistently identified strength, agency, and resistance from the narratives (e.g., Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Dumangane Jr., 2016; Nicolas et al., 2008), providing challenge to both deficit views and sympathy.

Staff reflected on the inherent subjectivity in behaviour management and how that naturally leads to inequity. Interestingly, although they noted the subjectivity and inequity of this practice and the lower behavioural expectations and assumptions for students of Caribbean descent, participants did not directly reflect on how these teacher-related factors interact for themselves. Participants suggested that unfair behaviour management would have a negative impact on students' sense of belonging, engagement in school and subsequently their attainment, regardless of 'race' or culture. The reluctance from some participants to reflect on the equity of behaviour management approaches, ties in with the 'Willingness, ability, and blind spots' theme.

5.2.2 Impact of staff and student blind spots and reluctance on school experience

Participants accounts also indicated that 'blind spots' in staff members' and students' awareness and skills, alongside reluctance to explore matters of 'race' and racism, may negatively impact the school experience of students of Caribbean descent and limit support received from staff. There was a conscious reflection from participants on their limited experience, confidence, knowledge and 'blind spots' from privilege and 'outsider' status to the group they were discussing. Participants suggested that peer racism and

discrimination, for example, may stem from ignorance and uninterrogated influences from wider communities and media.

Widely examined in the literature (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Reid, 2021), the discomfort that stems from discussing matters of ‘race’ and racism, interrogating our own identity, and the subsequent avoidance was explored through participants narratives. Participants suggested that this fear stemmed from not wanting to, ‘get it wrong’, be perceived as racist, or cause harm. Additionally, some literature argues that the discomfort in discussing ‘race’ or racism aligns with the strategies employed in the cultural practices of whiteness, such as avoiding considering ‘race’ and identifying with a ‘racial’ group, and dismissing the legacies of racism (Frankenberg, 1993; Gillborn, 2005; Leonardo, 2002) (see section 1.3.1).

There were some indications that the inequitable experiences of students of Caribbean descent were minimised or misinterpreted, possibly stemming from this discomfort explored above. For example, there were some narratives within the data set that suggested Caribbean students have the “same experience […] same opportunities as everybody else” as indicated by the quote from participant 1. These contrasted with the body of literature and narratives from young people of Caribbean descent in research. However, these were interpreted more latently as minimisation or reluctance to reflect, stemming possibly from the discomfort explored above.

5.2.3 The individuality of experience

Participants explicitly acknowledged the heterogeneity and individuality of the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent and adults supporting students. This was highlighted regarding preferences to express cultural identity and linked to factors, such as strength of cultural identity, intersectional identities, home circumstances, and pupils’ feelings towards education. These conversations may have also indicated the ‘blind spots’ staff members felt they had regarding the ‘racialised’ experiences of students in

school. The importance of considering individuals and intersectionality is widely referenced in the literature, especially where identities are homogenised; for example, 'black' being conceptualised synonymously with working-class (Wallace, 2017, 2019).

5.2.4 Support to foster positive experiences and belonging

Finally, participants explored the ways schools and staff members may foster positive experiences and belonging for students of Caribbean descent, reflecting themes, such as: the value of advocates, staff holding high expectations and staff members' self-reflection. It also included notions of representation, celebration, and empowerment, through supporting voices and moving beyond tokenistic and performative action.

Advocates were those who could effectively support the school experience for students of Caribbean descent. These included family networks, outside professionals, friends, and types of school staff, but interestingly, not young people themselves. Families and individuals with a shared heritage, from across the groups listed, were suggested to advocate effectively from having a clearer understanding of students lived experience, cultural background, and the systemic barriers.

It is interesting that through exploring who may advocate and support students, the emphasis of the answer remains on supporting 'them' rather than transforming the system or considering wider inclusion. Participants tended to focus on how support networks could aid students in the current school systems. However, this does not consider how advocates may need to help students transcend an institution where they face inequity (Mngaza, 2020). Additionally, the focus on other individuals to support or protect young people from the oppressive context, potentially negates the agency and active contribution of young people themselves (Nicolas et al., 2008).

The importance of holding high expectations, as explored in the challenge of low expectations above, is widely referenced in the literature as being vital to

support students of Caribbean descent in schools (Coard, 2021; Demie & McLean, 2017a). However, Joseph-Salisbury (2019) challenges the notion that low expectations have a 'self-fulfilling' impact, arguing that this is a deterministic perspective that does not credit students' agency and influence.

School staff self-reflecting and raising awareness on issues of culture, 'race' and racism was considered important by participants to support the experiences of students of Caribbean descent, and address some of the issues explored in 'blind spots'. Recognising the influence of their identity, privileges, and biases and increasing racial literacy were suggested to support more equitable and sensitive practice; which mirrors the wider literature (Bernal, 2002; Demie & McLean, 2017a; Joseph-Salisbury, 2020; Mosley et al., 2020).

A school culture of celebrating diversity and difference, with opportunities offered for students to express cultural identity, and representation in the workforce and curriculum were considered important for supporting the experience and belonging for students of Caribbean descent. Where staff were able to support students to voice their concerns, advocate for themselves, and critically reflect on their learning participants felt this was important to empower students, help them to identify discrimination, and cope with adversity.

Lastly, participants highlighted the importance of school systems moving beyond tokenistic and performative action regarding school ethos, policies and inclusion in the curriculum, reflecting students narratives and literature (Doharty, 2017; Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). Participants explored the greater impact of enacted policies and vision, rather than those that remain unread or simply written. Additionally, embedding representation in the curriculum was endorsed, reflecting literature which suggests this is needed to meaningfully transform the current learning to be inclusive of all students (Arday, 2021).

5.3 Evaluation of current study

I completed an evaluation of the aims and rationale, methodology, interpretations and analysis of the current study to consider its value and relevance for different stakeholders (Nowell et al., 2017). I feel it is important to include this in order to contextualise my analytic interpretations and their implications for the reader, while also providing limits to my claims. This evaluation includes reflections on strengths, limitations, and areas for further development, alongside wider researcher reflexivity.

5.3.1 Critical reflections of positionality and challenges

I encountered a range of challenges undertaking research in this area that have impacted my positionality in this research and my approach to analytic interpretations. I will include my reflections about the challenges and how I responded to these in this section. An ethical consideration and challenge that considerably impacted my approach to my analytic interpretation is outlined in section 5.3.1.1.

One of the key challenges and dilemmas I faced was the continuous deliberation on whether it was appropriate for me as an academic from a dominant group (e.g., racialised as 'white') to engage in research regarding a marginalised group. This issue is also present in the literature (Chadderton, 2012; Freire, 2005), particularly where the contribution is simply trying to 'elevate the voices' of those who are oppressed in society (Macedo, 2018). I was concerned about the epistemic injustice (Byskov, 2021; Fricker et al., 2016) of 'speaking for' students of Caribbean descent and being perceived with credibility instead of those who have lived experience and greater insight to transform the system.

I felt and had also read that 'white' individuals' sympathy could detract from the action of 'black' individuals (Lachman, 2018) and thus I wanted to ensure that my research was purposeful, ethical, reflexive, and aligned with social justice aims.

To conduct research as an 'outsider' with 'outsider' participants with cultural sensitivity and humility, several researchers have suggested the requirement to engage in meaningful reflection and reflexivity (Choudhuri, 2005; Milner, 2007; Tillman, 2002). From the frameworks for reflexivity and cultural-responsiveness in research (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Milner, 2007), the literature review, and my own personal anti-racism journey (See appendix B for example sources), I interrogated my 'racial' identity and proximity to 'whiteness'. Through conversations and supervision, I have been able to recognise some of my influences on the research and interpretations. Some of the adaptations I have made to address or consider the power and influences:

- Throughout, I have used a first-person narrative and included reflexive commentary to make sure that my voice, interpretations, and influences are explicit and not disguised as objectivity.
- In addressing concerns of epistemic injustice (Byskov, 2021), I try to be clear through my language that I am not speaking for students of Caribbean descent about their experiences, I am explicitly interpreting the interpretations of their narratives. Throughout the implications I highlight the need to speak to individuals directly.
- Focusing the research aims, analysis, and implications on the school system (Mertens, 2020), and aligning with insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and 'whiteness' studies.
- Discussing the research with scholars and professionals with Caribbean heritage and those actively engaged in groups on anti-racism and cultural change helped to shape the research, particularly in the early stages.
- Remaining cautious that I did not 'evaluate' or query the narratives of young people 'racialised' as 'black' or of Caribbean descent in research with respect to school staff members' perspectives. I hoped this positioned young people's narratives as trusted and credible sources of information (Bernal, 2002). Additionally, within theme development, for codes that were considered deficit views, these were coded latently, for example, as biases or blind spots.

- Prioritising the inclusion of research from 'insider' researcher perspectives and young people in literature reviews; however, I do recognise that completing and writing the research centres my voice, another 'white' voice. Also, by synthesising and utilising students' narratives I was again re-centring my voice and interpretations. Given the requirement to complete research on the EP doctorate, however, it feels inescapable and is perhaps another indication for the need for greater representation on EP courses.
- I plan to collaborate with individuals from Caribbean communities and/or those engaged in anti-racism, following the submission, to enhance the relevance and cultural responsiveness of the implications before dissemination.

I also experienced several challenges with sensitively navigating conflicting narratives, beliefs, and conceptualisations within the literature and narratives. For example, a large proportion of the literature advocated for the discussion of 'race' and 'racial' identity, owing to the continued impacts of this in today's societies and systems (Ladson-Billings, 2013). However, there is also a significant amount of literature that recommends, while continuing to recognise racism, not using 'race' to identify individuals or groups (Hoyt Jr., 2012; Muir, 1993). I aimed, therefore, to include and represent these multiple viewpoints and narratives within the thesis and focus on the importance of reflecting on and dismantling 'racism'.

5.3.1.1 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations were critical throughout the research process from design to interpretations and conclusions. I outlined these in the methodology chapter (chapter 3).

An important ethical challenge I faced within the analysis specifically was minimising harm to participants and individuals of Caribbean descent

represented through the research. For example, it involved finding a balance between coding to represent the experiences of participants experientially and semantically, whilst also considering more latent notions of biases that may be impacting their perceptions of students of Caribbean descent, so as not to contribute to deficit narratives. I attempted to address this balance through self-reflection, journaling, and reflective discussions with a research supervisor and peers.

5.3.2 Critical reflections on sample

My participant sample of nine teachers and two headteachers all the met the criterion of school staff members who had direct involvement in the education and inclusion of students in both primary and secondary schools across the UK.

I recruited participants based on the inclusion criteria, outlined above, using a volunteer sample of participants who responded to the research invitation letter.

I did not consider the ‘representativeness’ of the sample of this research to be applicable, owing to its qualitative nature (Patton, 2002). I instead included the characteristics and contexts of participants (section 3.7.2.4), collected through a questionnaire, to support the transferability of the interpretations (see section 3.8). However, by accumulating the characteristics to support the anonymity of the participants, I recognise this may have reduced the detail provided for each participant and, thus, transferability for the reader.

I also recognise that researchers who employ other epistemological and ontological positions, such as a positivist stance, or those undertaking quantitative research, may view an unrepresentative sample as a limitation of my research. For example, it may be considered to reduce its generalisability to applied contexts. However, these parameters are not applicable to conducting or evaluating qualitative research (Patton, 2002).

Although I attempted to recruit participants with a broad range of ethnic and 'racial' identities, by reaching out to networks for minoritised groups, for example, ten of the 11 participants identified themselves as "white British" and none identified as having Caribbean heritage. The participants were all, therefore, providing an 'outsider' perspective on the experiences of young people of Caribbean descent. At times this exacerbated the concern that I, as a 'white' researcher was encouraging individuals to hypothesise, stereotype, or generalise about a group that they might likely consider as 'other' to themselves.

However, in line with my motivations, the importance of 'white' individuals deconstructing their thinking, racism, and the structures that uphold power inequities is argued to be necessary (Gillborn, 2005; Lachman, 2018). As we are all implicated in racism and 'whiteness' (Frankenberg, 1997), I feel it is part of my responsibility as a 'white' professional in education and in research to help understand the system that is maintaining oppressive barriers for 'black' students of Caribbean descent.

5.3.3 Evaluation of research methodology

I consider Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021a) as an appropriate method for analysing the shared patterns of meaning across participant interviews. The approach provided methodological flexibility, allowing me to take a Critical Realist perspective, considering language to be used intentionally by participants to communicate their views and experiences. It also allowed the explicit reflexivity, important for this area, on my own and participants' subjective perspectives and potential influences.

The strengths of the semi-structured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis, I felt, were the breadth of participant's responses and reflection and the richness elicited from these. Additionally, the honesty participants answered with, was unanticipated, particularly given the topic area. Some of the challenges came particularly from the virtual nature of the interviews,

wherein my ability to check-in and read non-verbal signal was slightly reduced. I perceived that the verbal debrief, when the recording had ended, was an important resolution for participants to share how they felt and discuss the research in a less pressured environment.

Although the research methodology aligned with the aims and epistemological position of the research, at several points during the research journey other methods were considered. For example, participatory action research with members of the Caribbean community directly informing the process was considered as aligning with critical consciousness (Freire, 2005) and CRT (Hylton, 2012).

Participatory research was not utilised, owing to caution at the start of the research journey about wanting to balance centring views of students of Caribbean descent and not putting the onus of the research opportunity on to communities, especially within the context of 'racial' injustices and COVID-19 in Spring 2020 (see section 1.1.). I feel that the research helped to unearth some of the established ideas within the current system and the views of those working in it, which may be helpful in understanding how oppression is being perpetuated (Bernal, 2002).

I hoped that the interviews provided opportunity for the interviewees to critically reflect on the system and their role (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). On a few occasions, following the interviews, participants reflected on the difficulty, but necessity of the discussions we had had. Additionally, several spoke about actions they were going to take forward, simply from having the conversation. For example, one participant explained they were going to look at what their school are doing to celebrate students of Caribbean descent, and another suggested taking it back to students in their school. In some cases, participants asked to discuss the literature about disparities or wanted to find out what young people in the research had shared.

As a relative 'novice' to reflexive thematic analysis, and semi-structured interviewing, there were initial challenges and areas for development. Regarding data collection, this included confidence in interviewing which increased with each one. This may have been illustrated by the pilot interview

being shorter in length and questions inviting less reflection and discussion than other interviews. However, the pilot interview was included owing to the evocative interpretations drawn from it and patterning with other interviews across the dataset.

A sample size of 11 participants was located at the higher end of recommendations, for the scale and purpose of the study (Clarke et al., 2015), which was felt to contribute to the richness of data collected and mitigate the limited experience of the researcher. Additionally, the application of interpersonal skills and humanistic approaches taught on the Doctorate of Applied Educational Psychology (DAEP) supported the interview technique.

Regarding experience and skills in Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the detailed guidance provided by Braun and Clarke (2021a) and regular discussions with an informed supervisor and fellow doctorate students undertaking the Thematic Analysis supported the application of the approach.

5.3.4 Evaluation of research rigour and trustworthiness

Using reflexive Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), a well-established analysis method with current guidance (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and application (Byrne, 2021), I was able to maintain and evidence the connection between participants' narratives and my interpretations. The process of reviewing codes and themes, against the original dataset, was particularly helpful for this.

Alongside peer and tutor supervision, the prolonged and immersive engagement with the data and reflexive journaling, helped to provide credibility to my research and its conclusions. I aimed for transparency and a clear thread between the data, interpretations and conclusions through outlining the research process with detailed reflexive commentary and evidence in the appendices, which I feel enhances its dependability and confirmability.

Regarding the transferability, qualitative research, taken from a Critical Realist perspective, explicitly recognises the subjectivity of individuals. Therefore, my interpretations and subsequent conclusions, represent only mine. I presented my positionality and reflexivity within the thesis to enhance transferability and transparency; however, it is likely another researcher or reader may make different interpretations.

The interpretations do not represent individual participants views, nor are they representing the views of school staff members in the UK. They are a unique interpretation of some of the shared patterns I perceived in participants' understandings, perceptions, and experiences. The transferability of my interpretations are, therefore, at the discretion of individuals who may wish to utilise them and their implications, if they feel they are applicable to their own context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017; Patton, 2002).

As an example, participants predominantly self-identified as white-British or having white-Irish heritage. The interpretations of their shared experiences and understandings are not representative, and are likely not transferable, to all the individuals that work in the school system. Conversely, there were participants who worked in inner city, suburban and rural settings, therefore, those within a range of school settings may be able to take something from it. They may not transfer to specialist settings, however, as these were not represented in the participants' experiences.

5.3.5 Original contribution

Owing to the exploratory aims, data collection, and inductive, reflexive interpretation, I feel this study is unique. My analytic interpretations and conclusions largely support existing literature; I felt it was important to position my interpretations and conclusions alongside discourses in wider literature regarding 'race', ethnicity, and culture. Where there were contradictions, the narratives of students in research were prioritised, such as an omission of student self-advocacy and agency.

However, the ways in which this study is an original contribution to the wider body of literature includes:

- Collecting the views of teachers and headteachers around the holistic experience of students of Caribbean descent in school, rather than a facet of the school experience or disparity, such as ‘achievement’ (Demie & McLean, 2017a). Other research has explored perceptions about school experiences, but of minoritised students collectively (Henry, 2021).
- The additional focus on belonging, was novel regarding school staff member’s views on belonging and in relation to students of Caribbean descent.
- Teachers and headteachers from around England with different experiences and working in varied settings.
- The positive examples of practice in their schools shared by participants (e.g., ways to embed culturally relevant school values, encouraging critical reflection, gathering pupil voice, and having conversations about ‘race’).
- Barriers specific to their schools and practice and own support needs for supporting students, that may be seen as relevant by stakeholders.
- Bringing ‘blind spots’ of staff members into consciousness, triangulated with literature and theory.
- A focus on ‘whiteness’ and racism in the school system and its potential impact on students of Caribbean descent and other marginalised groups.

5.3.6 Quality of research summary

As described above, despite limited experience, I feel that the strengths of the research were that the qualitative methodology was credible, confirmable, and dependable owing to measures such as supervision, audit trails, and reflexive journaling. I make no claims to the transferability of the data, owing to the

subjective nature of research and the sampling method; however, I have provided descriptions of participants and evidence within the thesis for individuals who wish to use the conclusions to refer to judge its transferability to their context. I have considered and reflected my position as a ‘white’ researcher carefully, practicing self-interrogation, transparency, and focussing the lens of my research on the systems and the agency of young people. It is important to consider, however, the implications and recommendations I make as a ‘white’ researcher are limited, without the direct insights and input of the individuals who this affects most, that is students of Caribbean descent, their families, and communities.

5.3.7 Summary of analytic interpretations

Interpreting the conclusions, considering the evaluation above and a particular focus on affecting change in the system, participants’ shared recognition of bias and inequity for students of Caribbean descent in the school system and impact of this is important. This consciousness may help to ensure that transformative movements, such as decolonising the curriculum, making the school workforce more diverse (Department for Education (DfE), 2018) and “high quality education for all” (p.63, Coard, 2021) are, at minimum, understood by some of those needed for transformation. I perceived the agency and responses to racism from interpretations of the young people’s narratives in the research, which I felt were missing from participants shared understanding. These ‘blind spots’ are potentially where there needs to be additional focus for the implications. The ‘Willingness, ability and blind spots’ theme further illustrates literature on bias and ‘whiteness’, providing focuses staff, self-reflection, awareness, and skills.

The importance of gaining the views and preferences of young people and individuals from minoritised backgrounds was highlighted by participants’ shared narratives and the ethical consideration to ensure those with socio-historical power are not ‘speaking for’ those with lived experience of marginalisation.

The importance of supporters, such as family and individuals with Caribbean heritage, largely align with the messages I interpreted in the research (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002; Wallace, 2019). Additionally, the positive impact of school staff members who have high expectations, advocate and connect with students is shared in the participants and wider research (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Coard, 2021; Demie, 2021). However, I query whether these ways of fostering positive experiences are going far enough to transform the system, rather than merely accepting and including within the current system.

5.4 Implications of current research

A critical consideration for qualitative research methods is the impact and importance of the research (Yardley, 2008). In this section I will signal the proposed impact and importance in application, drawing on the interpretations, conclusions, and wider literature to suggest possible implications for individuals and systems involved in education. As mentioned previously, the implications will be limited by my own blind spots, therefore, consultation with interested individuals with lived experience or advocates would be preferrable.

'Race' and racism involves and implicates everyone (Frankenberg, 1993; Reid, 2021) not just minoritised individuals; therefore, the responsibility to address bias and racism lies with all individuals.

5.4.1 Implications for my practice and personal journey

Contemporary authors in anti-racism, such as Thomas (2022) and Reid (2021), have indicated reflecting inwards as a necessary starting point. My research journey started with my own personal examination of my thinking, bias, and whiteness, something I have continually had to do.

I have included some of my reflections on the implications of this process personally and in my practice (appendix T).

5.4.2 Implications for schools

5.4.2.1 Increased and embedded representation

As the school curriculum is thought to maintain inequity through promoting dominant perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1998), an inclusive and 'decolonised' curriculum are critical for policy makers and school staff. Considering ways to move beyond the current isolated inclusion, to transforming the curriculum would be important.

Some of the barriers suggested by school staff included the government pressures, performance indicators and rigidity of the curriculum enforced by regulatory bodies. As highlighted by participants and wider literature, however, the current curriculum could be expanded by teaching staff to encourage critical reflection with students about what they are learning (Freire, 2005). For example, one participant illustrated how they encourage this critical thinking through asking pupils to reflect on how a narrative is presented and represented, who is telling it, and what are alternative experiences and narratives. Some participants reflected active choices to make their curricula more representative, such as a considered choice of literacy texts, books available to students, recognising 'black' individual's achievements throughout the curriculum, and varied options of extra-curricular choices to ensure they better represent the communities they serve.

School leadership finding ways to diversify their workforce is important, considering whether leadership, teaching, support and administrative staff are representative of the communities they serve (Department for Education (DfE), 2018).

A predominantly 'white' workforce was suggested to have cultural biases and 'blind spots' which may maintain inequity in assessment, learning and belonging (Coard, 2021). A diverse workforce was proposed to be important for raising expectations of 'black students' (Coard, 2021) and to act as role

models (Demie & McLean, 2017a). Schools should be cautious, however, about imposing these roles and expectations on minoritised staff members or for students in their school (Maylor, 2009).

For those working in settings with less cultural or ethnic diversity in student populations, an awareness that the limited diversity may increase the likelihood of stereotyping and othering (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Myers & Bhopal, 2017) and amplify the impact of any discrimination faced.

5.4.2.2 Addressing and interrogating racism

As highlighted by a participant, school staff have a role in supporting students to interrogate their 'race' and tackle racism. Confidence, resources, and wider student cultures were listed as barriers; therefore, staff required support for their 'racial' literacy and skills, to discuss 'race' and respond effectively to racism (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020).

Addressing covert racism may take a systemic approach to embed discussions of 'race' and racism, particularly in secondary schools (Abijah-Liburd, 2018; Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). As one participant suggested this may be through embedding discussions of 'race' and promoting cultures of celebrating diversity.

School staff members' cultural and racial biases are suggested to maintain inequity for students in education (Gillborn, 2005), largely through their manifestations in staff members' practice and approaches.

Biases, stereotypes and deficit views appears to have powerful ramifications. They are indicated to influence a teacher's perceptions of 'deservingness' of support and suitability of punishment (Reyna, 2000); lower teachers' academic and behavioural expectations (Demie & McLean, 2017a); lead to over-identification of Special Educational Needs (Strand & Lindroff, 2018); and contribute to being placed in lower ability sets (Coard, 1971). The impact of

these practices creates barriers to equitable education for students facing these. Lower expectations are especially pertinent, as they are suggested to influence the ensuing phenomena listed, thus shaping the educational environment (Demie & McLean, 2017a) and creating additional, inequitable barriers to education.

The need to address staff members' biases at the individual and systemic levels is crucial to ensure oppression and harm are not being maintained. The idea that biases are an inevitability for humans only increases this as it indicates how widespread it could be. As indicated by participants, professional development opportunities regarding interrogating 'whiteness', 'race' and racism would be invaluable.

Engaging in this personal and professional interrogation and development work may support with the fears stemming from 'getting it wrong' posited by participants. Reid (2021) suggested that the discomfort and feelings that arise in self-interrogating are necessary when dismantling our own and systemic racism. An interrogation of the characterisations of whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993) and how they present also helps to provide objectivity. For example, querying beliefs that all students, regardless of 'race' or cultural background, have the same opportunities, as it may be stemming from the discomfort arising from these reflections.

Although staff members' are influential and may contribute to the systemic racism, they are suggested to be facing the results and generational impacts of racial and ethnic injustices from the system on students and their families (Coard, 2021). Schools supporting staff, to then support staff is therefore integral.

5.4.2.3 Supporting and understanding students

As suggested in the wider literature, and highlighted in the participants interviews, support networks and advocates for students are important for the school experience, belonging and coping with adversity (Allen et al., 2016;

Deci & Ryan, 2000; Law et al., 2014). This includes families, friends, school staff, and outside professionals, such as supplementary school teachers (Wallace, 2017; Wright et al., 2016) and mentors (Warren, 2005). Across the groups of supporters, having people who 'fight your corner' and stand up for you are suggested to provide a sense of comfort, security and hope. Participants expressed that the teachers who have a nurturing approach, good relationships with students and their family, and make a child feel special and seen may play a valuable role.

Schools supporting those who can advocate for students will be important, such as parents, carers, members of staff, particularly those with a shared heritage, and fellow students; for example, by opening discussions, providing space to reflect on the impact of 'race' and racism, and supporting their relationships and belonging to the school.

Articulated by Stone (1981) and still relevant to students' narratives in the research today, school staff should consider this quote when considering access.

> "schools and teachers must accept that West Indian parents care enormously about their children's education and they must take some responsibility (at least) if parents hesitate to come to their schools or are hostile and uncooperative when they do" (p.251)

Self-interrogation and an awareness of the barriers are integral. With this as a foundation for work in education, seeking to understand and learn about individual's experiences, needs, and preferences appears to be crucial. This includes the views of various stakeholders, including students, families, staff, and the wider community of schools.

Staff training was suggested by participants, and in the wider research with young people of Caribbean descent (Abijah-Liburd, 2018), to support understanding of the experiences, identities, and cultural background of young people with a Caribbean heritage and other minoritised backgrounds.

Caution is advised when considering terminology to refer to groups of students, as was highlighted further by this research. As Boakye (2019)

emphasises, the language used to refer to minoritised (within the UK) groups of individuals typically reinforces a dichotomy of 'white' and 'other' or 'black'. This terminology inherently positions 'white' as the 'norm' (Leonardo, 2002), thus homogenising individuals who do not identify with this 'default'. For example, within the interviews the notion of 'cultural identity' conflated the experiences of students from various ethnic, racial, cultural and/or religious backgrounds who were not 'white'.

5.4.3 Implications for EP practice

First and foremost, Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) need to continually prioritise their engagement in self-reflection and personal anti-racism journeys to interrogate their own biases and implication with the systems of oppression that impact students of Caribbean descent disproportionately.

In line with the literature described above, ensuring high expectations are modelled and practised and promoting self-belief for students is vital, particularly students who identify as 'black' or of Caribbean descent. From the recommendations from Coard (2021) regarding cultural biases, and linked with adults' biases and blind spots in the current study, consideration of the assessment approaches utilised with groups of students, to ensure their administration and is culturally sensitive and not causing harm. Transparency, regarding positionality and role of bias and power, in the reporting of assessments is integral and aligns with ethical responsibilities (British Psychological Society, 2018). Additionally, being reflective and cautious of the language used in written and verbal communication to ensure deficit-views and oppression are not being introduced or preserved.

Similarly, striving to ensure practice maintains the cultural integrity of stakeholders (Tillman, 2002) through seeking to listen, learn and understand lived experiences of students, families and communities.

In individual casework, identifying individuals those advocate most effectively for students and gathering students' views is important to ensure students' rights and interests remain at the centre of the work. EPs themselves could advocate for students within broader systemic processes and using knowledge of interpersonal skills and assertive communication to sensitively challenge those in positions of relative power, where deemed necessary.

When working with staff in school, EPs are well-equipped to use consultative skills and organisational change approaches to support transformation at the whole-school level. Having an awareness that staff members lack confidence or skills and have blind spots regarding 'race' and racism may help to inform possible areas for strategic development. Ultimately, supporting and advocating for those with least power in the school system is important for individual or systemic work. When supporting children indirectly through adults, a knowledge of the importance of staff expectations and biases on attainment and exclusions may guide EP's decision-making.

5.4.4 Implications for government and policy makers

School staff members who participated in the research indicated the wider systemic barriers to effective support for students of Caribbean descent in schools. For example, participants expressed restrictions on teaching hindered delivery of a representative curriculum. This indicates change to the curriculum is required at the wider system level (Arday, 2021). The diverse curriculum supports the belonging of students who are not currently represented but also to support all children with regard to 'race' relations and unlearning racial stereotypes and biases (Arday, 2021). Funding would be required to support teachers' knowledge and awareness of the diverse identities and histories within Britain and effectively deliver a diverse curricula (Arday, 2021).

Additionally, greater representation in the school workforce is considered important for modelling achievement (Coard, 2021; Thomas, 2022), should

that staff member choose to do so (Maylor, 2009), and will require government-level initiatives and funding.

5.4.5 Implications for future research

The implications described in the previous sections offer avenues for future research that may be beneficial in the field of Educational Psychology and Education more broadly.

A possible second stage of the research, should time have permitted, would have been follow-up interviews with participants to explore the knowledge, skills, and resources they felt were required to effectively and equitably support students' experiences and belonging.

Research that interrogates the ways in which 'whiteness' permeates the profession and practice of EPs and explores how the profession may continue to perpetuate oppression and harm would be invaluable. Equally, capturing the strategic developments and change occurring within some EPSs to gain a richer understanding of this and disseminate it further would be beneficial for the profession.

The interviews highlighted a few schools that are engaging in systemic development related to race, racism and cultural identity. Capturing this systemic work would be valuable in sharing good practice between schools.

Exploring students' views on the school staff perceptions and suggested ways to support students of Caribbean descent may help to evaluate their applicability and suitability for the current context. One participant suggested taking the interview questions and using them to facilitate discussion between students and teachers; while consideration may need to be given to the power dynamics involved in this process, an exploration of the views would be enlightening.

Some research has indicated disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students from minoritised backgrounds, exploring these impacts

following the pandemic may be important for informing educational intervention and considerations. Some research has indicated 'black' Caribbean and African students spent longer hours on home learning, compared with peers who identified as having different ethnicities (Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020). An appreciative exploration of the family support and engagement, even more generally, could help to capture the strengths and further challenge 'deficit' narratives.

5.5 Conclusions

The research I have undertaken and explored in this thesis has aimed to explore the shared understanding of a group of eleven teachers and headteachers from across England, regarding the perceived influences on the experiences and sense of belonging for students of Caribbean descent in schools.

I took an exploratory, qualitative approach utilising semi-structured interviews to gather participant data and a reflexive Thematic Analysis to interpret patterning across participants' accounts. I developed three overarching themes from the dataset which included: 'the pervasive impact of bias and inequity, 'willingness, ability, and blind spots' and 'fostering positive experiences and belonging. There was a standalone theme called 'one size does not fit all'.

My analytic interpretations suggested that participants perceive the school experience for students of Caribbean to be impacted by bias, inequity, and racism. This included the impact of not being visible or represented, interpersonal racism, and staff's uninterrogated biases and assumptions.

Notions of limited confidence, discomfort, reluctance, and dismissal were interpreted from discussions around 'race', racism, and cultural identity and the impact of the school system.

The importance to consider and understand a student individually, owing to nuance of identity, individual preferences and identities overlapping and intersecting were encapsulated in the 'one size does not fit all' theme. This individuality was extending to staff members who demonstrated how terminology could be interpreted differently and in socially situated contexts.

The value of representation and celebration of diversity and the value of support networks are highlighted in the narratives. Additionally, the high importance of high expectations on the experience and belonging were highlighted. However, an appreciation of the agency and power of students to transcend these systems is required. This theme also raised questions of whether these notions are transformative enough to change the system and provide "high quality education for all" (p.63, Coard, 2021), or whether they promote 'acceptance' and 'tolerance' within a somewhat unchanged system.

I feel this research has been able to provide additional insight into the sense-making of a group of teachers and headteachers regarding the perceived barriers and support required for students of Caribbean descent when navigating the school context, with a valuable focus on school belonging. These insights have importantly highlighted the work and introspection required for those working in education and government systems, to fulfil their duties to all the young people they serve.

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Chapter 7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A; my background information

Unpicking my identity slightly, my British identity comes from being born and raised in Britain, with a father of British heritage. Culturally, I have strong influences from my roots in the West Midlands. My maternal grandparents, who were Hungarian and Austrian, migrated to live and work in the UK. These influences on my mom, my aunty and uncles also shaped my cultural identity growing up.

My sense of the importance of social justice, stems from my experiences as a woman and my relationship to class or socio-economic status (i.e., education, income, occupation). As a 'white' woman, I have experienced different sides of power and marginalisation in different situations. Regarding socio-economic status, I have felt the injustices of wealth disparity.

Regarding my 'white' 'racial' identity, I had some limited awareness of this from primary school and how it could position me socially; however, I recognise that this is from a place of privilege. My childhood made me value cultural influences greatly and I loved sharing my mom's heritage and experiencing my friends'.

Regarding my motivation for anti-racism in particularly, the context of Spring 2020 with the increased coverage of ‘racial’ injustices in the wake of George Floyd’s murder and the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement, at the time of COVID-19 restrictions, was a wake-up call. It catalysed my focused anti-racism journey and the awakening to the pervasiveness of ‘race’ and ‘whiteness’. It spotlighted and reframed previous experiences, observations, and conversations I had with friends, family, colleagues, and students from ‘racially’ and ethnically minoritised backgrounds. It raised discomfort and feelings of guilt for possible ignorance and complicity. It also opened new conversations with friends, friends’ families, and family that we hadn’t had before.

This journey is something I will be on for life as there is so much to learn, unlearn and interrogate.

7.2 Appendix B; examples of personal and professional development

- the Educational Psychology Race and Culture Forum webinars on ‘whiteness’ in education and taking action towards ‘racial’ equality and social justice
- Trainee EP initiative for cultural change events (e.g., on ‘Autism, ethnicity and culture’ and ‘an Introduction to African psychology’).
- ‘black’ and Ethnic Minority Educational Psychology (BEEP) event
- Webinar event with Nova Reid.
- Webinar event delivered by Jeffrey Boakye.
- TEDx talks e.g., Ben Lindsay, Nova Reid, Aisha Thomas.
- Two Grenada forward ever events with Bernard Coard and guest speakers and one with Bernard Coard and David Neita.
- Email exchange with Bernard Coard and advice.
- Discussions with two EPs with Caribbean heritage about my research.

- Literature from ‘black’ and Caribbean authors, such as Maureen Stone, Bernard Coard, Claude Steele, Jeffrey Boakye, Aisha Thomas, Nova Reid, Akala, and Reni Eddo-Lodge and more to go
- The ‘Life between Islands’ exhibition at Tate Britain.

7.3 Appendix C; papers excluded from synthesis, after screening at a whole-text level

	Author	Date	Title	Reason for excluding
1	Henry, W. L.	2021	Schooling, education, and the reproduction of inequality: understanding Black and Minority Ethnic attitudes to learning in two London schools	Cannot clearly identify narratives Focus on young people identified as ‘black’ rather than Caribbean specifically
2	Lewis, K., Demie, F.	2019	The school experiences of mixed-race ‘white’ and black Caribbean children in England	Pupil’s narratives merged with teachers Secondary data - Theses findings
7	Joseph-Salisbury, R.	2017	Black mixed-race male experiences of the UK secondary school curriculum	Black mixed race but not specifically Caribbean
9	Stockfelt, S.	2016	Economic, social, and embodied cultural	Schools in Jamaica

			capitals as shapers and predictors of boys' educational aspirations	
11	Law, I., Finney, S., Swann, S.J.	2014	Searching for autonomy: Young black men, schooling, and aspirations	Able to separate some excerpts in quantitative questionnaire, but not in second qualitative study Themes around the 'black' experience as a homogenised group
12	Ball, S.J., Rollock, N., Vincent, C., Gillborn, D.	2013	Social mix, schooling, and intersectionality: Identity and risk for Black middle-class families	Interviews with parents/ families
14	Graham, M., Robinson, G.	2004	"The silent catastrophe": Institutional racism in the British educational system and the underachievement of Black boys	Secondary data, narratives not explicit
15	Youdell, D	2003	Identity traps or how Black students fail: The interactions between biographical, sub-	Discourse analysis about how they are perceived rather than narratives

			cultural, and learner identities.	
16	Douglas, J	2019	Book Working effectively with African-Caribbean young women: An intersectional approach.	Narrative overview rather than study
17	Lewis, Demie	2019	The school experiences of mixed-race ‘white’ and black Caribbean children in England.	Duplicate
18	Crozier, G	2005	'There's a war against our children': Black educational underachievement revisited.	Parents perspective
19	Weekes, D	2003	Keeping it in the community: Creating safe spaces for black girlhood.	Experiences of 14–29-year-olds About community not school
20	Graham, M., Robinson, G	2004	"The Silent Catastrophe": Institutional Racism in the British Educational System and the Underachievement of Black Boys.	Duplicate
21	Carter, S. P.	2007	"Reading all that ‘white’ crazy stuff:" Black young women unpacking whiteness in a high	US based ‘black’ homogenised experiences

			school British literature classroom.	
22	Gersch, I. S., Nolan, A.	1994	Exclusions: What the children think.	Not specific group
23	Mirza, H. S.	1993	The social construction of black womanhood in British educational research: Towards a new understanding.	Not school experience focus
24	Strand, S., Winston, J.	2008	Educational aspirations in inner city schools.	Mixed methods questionnaire Not specifically black Caribbean experience
25	JSR	2017	Black mixed-race male experiences of the UK secondary school curriculum.	Duplicate
26	Haynes, J., Tikly, L., Caballero, C.	2006	The barriers to achievement for White/Black Caribbean pupils in English schools.	Could not unpick pupils from parents/teachers

7.4 Appendix D; a summary of the qualitative responses for the studies in the qualitative synthesis using *CASP tool for qualitative research (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018).*

Questions from the CASP checklist	Wallace 2019	Chapman & Bhopal 2019	Wallace 2017	Lewis 2016	Wright, Maylor and Becker 2016	Warren 2005	Fuller 1984
1 Clear statement of aims of the research?	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y
2 Qualitative methodologies appropriate?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3 Was the research design/ approach appropriate to address the aims of the research?	CT	CT	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y
4 Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT
5 Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y
6 Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	CT	CT	Y	Y	CT	Y	CT
7 Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	CT	CT	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT
8 Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Y	CT	Y	Y	CT	CT	CT
9 Is there a clear statement of findings?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
10 How valuable is the research?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

7.5 Appendix E: The questions on the Critical Appraisal skills programme (CASP) tool and the responses for each study included in the meta-ethnography

Questions from CASP checklist (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018)	1 Clear statement of aims of the research? 2 Qualitative methodologies appropriate? 3 Was the research design/ approach appropriate to address the aims of the research?

	4 Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? 5 Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? 6 Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? 7 Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? 8 Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? 9 Is there a clear statement of findings? 10 How valuable is the research?
Paper	**Answers to checklist**
Wallace 2019	(Data from wider project) 1. Goals – to address gaps in literature around cross-generational deployment and transmission of 'black' Cultural capital and mobilisation of cultural capital in school. 2. Sought to gain perspectives from young people about mobilising 'black' cultural capital 3. Not justified ethnographic study or shared further details of wider ethnographic study 4. Recruitment strategy not included. Some discussion around appropriateness and classification of ''black' middle class' was included. 5. Data collection outlined and described (including timings, location, recording, interview themes) 6. No mention of their role or position within. Spoke about iterations of analysis. Thoughts and reflections are shared within footnotes. 7. Confidentiality/anonymity discussed, not mentioned explanation to participants 8. Data analysis: rounds of coding mentioned, iterative coding scheme, interview extracts used to highlight trends and themes, 9. Findings very specific to research aims and question, not all findings shared 10. Valuable – look over again, but considers contribution and alignment to previous literature, possible routes forward

Chapman and Bhopal 2019	1. Goal – explore experiences of African American and ‘black’ Caribbean students in school and draw themes across. 2. Sought to explore experiences with research participants. 3. Not mentioned why they chose qualitative or interviews. 4. Spoke about the school that participants were recruited from but not recruitment strategy. No mention of discussions/decisions around recruitment. Decisions around comparison between African American and ‘black’ Caribbean voices. 5. Clear how the data was collected, recorded, and transcribed. No justification for interviews. Topic guide for interview mentioned. Saturation not mentioned. 6. Not mentioned about who the researchers were 7. No mention of ethical issues 8. Thematic analysis, no mention of researchers’ role, description of stages of TA, 9. Not clear if more than one analyst for second study, findings are included, most combined with comparisons with literature. 10. Discussed findings contribution to literature and implications for future research and for schools.
Wallace 2017	1. Clear statement of aims – to explore ‘black’ cultural capital used by ‘black’ students. 2. Yes – seeks to explore racialised experiences and analyse 3. In my opinion yes - Can’t tell if they have justified research design/explored options 4. Recruitment strategy – participants selected owing to school having a high proportion of ‘black’ Caribbean students, middle class (from parents’ self-identification, degree earnings, housing and professional occupation), second-generation ‘black’ Caribbean from screening questionnaires, focus group and then invited to interview, 5. Clear about how data was collected, referenced to literature and research aims, explicit a 6. Referenced to their identity and position as researcher 7. Yes – informed consent from parents and additional consent, anonymity 8. Data analysis from tapes and transcribed data. Used nvivo8, modified grounded theory approach, excerpts to support findings, no reflection on their influence, themes derived from data included 9. Findings are explicit, but empirically analysed alongside literature, excerpts of interview data,

	10. Considers contribution and implications for research/ways forward
Lewis 2016	(Data from wider research project) 1. Goal – assess how mixed heritage students coped with diversity and to what extent schools support them. 2. Explore experiences, justified use of interviews and qual data 3. Justified use of interviews and qual data 4. recruitment sample outlined, headteacher and form tutor identified group - the benefits and limitations of this was explored. 5. setting was a school setting - relevant to the experiences explored. Explicit about development and content of interviews. interviews recorded and transcribed. 6. Not referred to in the article. 7. Ethical issues considered including anonymity, parental consent, feelings of comfort for pps. 8. Thematic analysis with stages including repeated reading, familiarisation. Themes were shared. Further data analysis of case studies, using frameworks, were included. 9. Findings from case studies, following analysis with framework, included. Discussion of case studies in response to research questions. 10. Very - recommendations for the use of framework as resource for teachers, links to existing literature, links to policy and practice.
Wright, Maylor and Becker 2016	1. Can't tell - description of study and its outcomes but not initial goals/aims. literature positions the possible aims of the research and its importance. 2. Aim to explore experiences 3. interviews selected, aims to empower, and engage the young people at 'core of research design', visual research methods (participant photography) 4. 'snowballing' sample method through contact within 'black' community groups, 'black' organisations, supplementary schools, and 'black' churches. 5. Yes – use of interviews, and visual methods - three over 2 years. interviews included views of self, sources of support, coping strategies, views, ambitions. 6. Can't tell - researchers role/influence not referred to explicitly in the article - considered choices to make young men feel comfortable. 7. No explicit mention of ethical considerations (i.e., issues of consent, confidentiality), impact of study considered through research design.

	8. Can't tell - Not explicit how data was analysed. 9. Yes - findings combined with existing literature. 10. Valuable - direction for further research/attention, implications for policy/systemic levels and notions of success.
Warren 2005	1. goals - to explore concept of resistance and power through young men's narratives of school. 2. aim to explore experiences. 3. in my opinion yes, it involved discussions with the young men. 'Objective and rigorous' methodology not thought to be appropriate by LEA. 4. Can't tell - students selected by programme coordinators, 'self-selecting sample' 5. Can't tell - discussions and narratives were not defined or explicitly reported. 6. recognition of 'authorial' voice and impact on analysis. attempt to present narratives as close to pps as possible. shared their own views about school 7. ethical issues not explicitly mentioned 8. can't tell - Not explicit how data was analysed. very explicit about their position and impact on analysing the data/narratives. 9. Yes - used to illustrate literature in separate section. 10. Valuable - contribution of study to understanding around notions of resistance and power explored and highlighted.
Fuller 1984	'black' girls in a London comprehensive school 1. Yes – goal of research to examine West Indian girls' experiences, centred within literature and also personal reflection around hypothesis that being female could have implications for subcultural response to school (E.g. subordination, disaffection) 2. Seeking narratives and experiences 3. In my opinion yes - Can't tell if they have justified research design/explored options– embedded in discussion around larger study, perhaps included in that study? 4. Recruitment strategy unclear – described pps but not how they were recruited. Within school while she was employed by Social Science Research Council Research Unit of Ethnic Relations so may have been linked to that but not clear. 5. School setting described and relevant to research question, interviews, not justified methods chosen, not much detail on interview 6. Written from first person perspective however no explicit mention of role or influence 7. No mention of ethical consideration 8. No mention of data analysis

	9. Findings are explicit and lengthy, seems only one analyst, evidence for and against hypotheses, discussed in relation to research aims 10. Implications discussed, new areas mentioned, comparison to other groups from larger study

7.6 Appendix F: Translation of the studies' concepts into broader metaphors and overarching interpretations.

Overarching interpretations						
	Teacher influence	Support from others (i.e., peers, friends with shared identities, parents, and outside agents)	Importance of cultural recognition	Individual responses to situations	Experience of Othering, inequities, and discrimination	Individual: value of education and aspirations
Themes across studies						

	Teacher influence over experience curriculum and outcomes	• Peer support
		• Friends/relating to others with shared identity
		• Parent and outside agents
			Recognition of culture	• Challenging stereotypes and inequality
				• Avoidance of situations
				• Middle class Strategies to seek teacher relationships and curriculum
					• impact of Intersection
					• Reliance on stereotypes and other's perceptions
					    o Reliance on stereotypes and other's perceptions
					    o Teachers influencing each other
					• exclusions
					• Inequity in behaviour sanctions, practices, and responses
					• Overt racism
						• Valuing education
						• High aspirations

Concepts within each study						
Wallace 2019	Seeking recognition and relationships from teachers ('white' middle class) to support	Peer support: enlisting friend's support Parent: parent-pupil collaboration in influencing teachers, school experiences and	Recognition of culture impact on wellbeing	Challenging stereotypes: self-advocacy influence curriculum Middle class strategies: 'middle class' strategies (i.e., using literature and passion)	Reliance on stereotypes: dominant versus deficit perceptions	

	experience - Teacher relationships support experiences teacher influence over curriculum and teaching	curriculum		recognised by peers and teachers and used to influence power dynamics, schooling, and teachers - ‘black’ literature (cultural capital) and passion recognised by teachers and classmates - cultural capital shifting dynamics		
Wallace 2017	improved outcomes and offset negative through seeking positive teacher relationship teachers as gatekeepers	seeking older peer support coached by parents and supplementary school - parent active role in school experiences		employ cultural capital while asserting racial identity as defence against stereotypes adaptations for teacher-relationships, especially white, and better outcomes and less negative - modifying behaviour for ‘white’ teachers - 'polite' codes of speaking	recognising race and class intersection on experience and outcomes knowledge that reputation with some teachers spreads	
Bhopal and Chapman				pressure to achieve and work harder to challenge stereotypes and racism attempts to 'not stand out' in response to stereotypes and othering	Intersectional impact on stereotypes or experience - ‘black’ Caribbean boys stereotyped as aggressive or violent - ‘black’ Caribbean girls felt increased scrutiny from teachers	

				strategies limiting learning opportunities	peers and teachers' relying on and utilising intersectional deficit perceptions and stereotypes of academic performance and behaviour from lack of experience - teachers and peers rely on stereotypes and generalisation owing to lack of experience and knowledge - racially stereotyped academically and behaviourally by teachers - anxiety from stereotype classmates perceive as 'cool' feeling devalued, othered and low sense of belonging - 'black' Caribbean girls felt increased scrutiny from teachers - classmates perceived as feeling threatened inequity in school discipline policies and practices	
Lewis 2016		belonging with same ethnicity peers	eager to discuss cultural identity mixed heritage negated by teachers		frustrations perceived as behaviour that challenged regular exclusions racist incidents ignored by staff racial discrimination from peers	

Wright et al 2016		Community group and supplementary school support family support important for positive experiences		challenge negative perceptions **turning negative experience of exclusion into a positive**	being excluded and the negative impact of this	valuing school as route to achieving aspirations high employment aspirations
Warren 2005		coaching from mentors to avoid confrontations with teachers	seeing alternative approaches through inclusive curriculum and modelling positive self-identity from 'black' history curriculum	**conflict with teacher to challenge inequity, disrespect, preconceptions or to have voice heard** - **conflict with teachers outside of classroom around clothing and disrespect** avoiding situations where they could be targeted or inequitable sanctioned regulating anger to have voice heard	teacher negative perception and assumptions teachers influencing other teachers' perceptions feeling rules, sanctions, and teacher approaches were unfair, disrespectful, or unnecessary	
Fuller 1995	Challenge: Not motivated by student-teacher relationship	Identifying as a distinct 'black' Caribbean female subculture or friendship group loyalty to 'black' peers same gender and	expressing pride in 'black' identity and Caribbean roots	rejecting deficit perceptions and stereotypes of race and gender hiding ambitions to avoid ridicule Challenge	rejecting deficit perceptions and stereotypes of race and gender determination in face of adversity - threat of high unemployment levels Frustration from positive self-identity vs discrimination	pro-education not pro-schooling valuing education and qualifications

		ethnicity friends, regardless of academic ability or orientation line of argument: **relating to teachers that reflect aspects of own struggle or aspiration** parental support and guidance		Not conforming to 'good pupil' stereotypes	overt racial discrimination	job ambitions to increase independence

7.7 Appendix G; extract of reflexivity journal

Following interview in December 2021:

An interesting interview, taking some time to reflect after. Felt that their understanding came from other's views and messages in society, but generally they talked about listening and being curious with students. Noticed again the pattern where the interviewee says that Caribbean students do not have a distinct culture, but then referring to their cultural influences explicitly later.

There were some views about family engagement that conflicted with what other participants had said and made me feel uncomfortable. Should sensitive unpicking be part of the interview process? I tended to provide literature or signpost people after the interview but wonder how much impact that has.

They said afterwards that they think their school could account for cultures better and reflect on the importance of that particularly in diverse settings, such as [city name].

A lesson for next time is around time management - I started running out of time, which meant that the exploration of belonging was cut short.

I felt with this interview I followed their lead a little more and expanded on discussions, which I'll take forward into the next.

7.8 Appendix H; Ethics approval

School of Psychology
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

SJ/tp

Ref: **S1320**

Wednesday 19th May 2021

Dear Lydia Dyer and Russell Hounslow,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'Exploring what school staff members understand about the experiences and sense of belonging in schools of students of Caribbean descent.'

That proposal has now been reviewed and we are pleased to tell you it has met with the Committee's approval.

However:
Please note the following comments from our reviewers;

Reviewer Two:

I'm happy to approve this with minor revisions without further submission. My comments are:

- Remind participants at the start of the interview that they do not need to answer sensitive questions
- Add privacy notice to application and provide the information to the participants

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice. The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

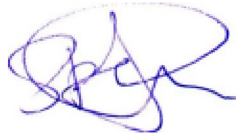
The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

tel: +44 (0)115 846 7403 or (0)115 951 4344

Yours sincerely



Professor Stephen Jackson
Chair, Ethics Committee

7.9 Appendix I; Research invitation letter

School of Psychology

Research Invitation Letter

The University of Nottingham

UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Ethics Approval Number: S1320

Researcher: Lydia Dyer (email: lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Russell Hounslow (email: russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) undertaking a Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Nottingham. I am on

placement with the EP Service in the Local Authority and as part of my studies I will be carrying out a piece of research.

I am writing to invite you to take part in research that is looking to explore how members of school staff understand the experiences and sense of belonging of students of Caribbean descent in schools.

Exploring and supporting the experiences of all our students is not only an important area of research but an equally important focus for many schools. It is hoped that participating in this study would benefit you by:

- Helping you to support and advocate for all pupils in your school. Research tells us the importance of educators in impacting the experiences of pupils from marginalised groups.
- Aiding our understanding and practice with marginalised groups by reflecting on our own views and position.
- Reflecting on school structures and practices to help understand how they are perceived by those from cultural backgrounds that differ from the majority.
- Receiving feedback on the anonymised outcomes of the research.

Interested participants will be asked to take part in individual interviews with the researcher, at a time and place that is convenient for you.

If you would be interested in taking part in this research study, or you have any further queries, then please contact me via email at lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk . Alternatively, you can contact the EP service directly.

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to Russell Hounslow at russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this invitation and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Lydia Dyer

Trainee Educational Psychologist

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

7.10 Appendix J; Participant Information Document

School of Psychology

Participant Information Sheet

Ethics Approval Number: S1320

Researcher(s): Lydia Dyer (email: lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk)

Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement at West Northamptonshire County Council

Supervisor (s): Dr Russell Hounslow (email: russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk)

Thank you for registering your interest to participate in the research I am undertaking as part of the Doctorate of Applied Educational Psychology with the University of Nottingham and in collaboration with the Local Authority.

Before deciding if you would like to participate, it is important that I outline the research in more detail and what it will involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

The research is titled: "Exploring members of school staff's understanding of the experiences and belonging in schools for students of Caribbean descent."

Participation in this study will involve an interview, lasting up to one hour, at a time and place that is convenient to you (*or virtually via Microsoft Teams*). Interviews will be informal and will aim to explore your views about how students of Caribbean descent experience – or might experience – school and a sense of school belonging. Interviews will be audio recorded and will be later transcribed for analysis after which it will be destroyed. Any information that you share will not be attributable to you at any point during the study.

You do not have to take part in this study. However, if you do participate you can decline to answer any question(s) and you can withdraw parts of your data or entirely from the study at any point. You can withdraw from the study by contacting myself or my supervisor, please see contact details below. NB: It will not be possible to withdraw once data analysis has begun.

Full ethical considerations and further details of the study will be shared with you before you provide consent to take part.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact me via email at Lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk. Please contact me if you have any questions or queries regarding this participant information sheet.

Any enquiries for my university supervisor can be directed to Russell Hounslow at russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk

Your participation in the research would be greatly appreciated and will aid furthering our knowledge in this area.

Lydia Dyer

Trainee Educational Psychologist

7.11 Appendix K; Consent form

School of Psychology

Consent Form

Title of Project: "Exploring members of school staff's understanding of the experiences and belonging in schools for students of Caribbean descent."

Ethics Approval Number: S1320

Researcher(s): Lydia Dyer (email: lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk)

Trainee Educational Psychologist on placement at West Northamptonshire County Council

Supervisor(s): Dr Russell Hounslow (email: russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk)

The participant should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO

- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO

- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily? YES/NO

- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? YES/NO
  (At any time and without giving a reason)

- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with YES/NO

  other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected.

- I give permission for audio recording to be used during interviews YES/NO and for these to be used within the study.

- Do you agree to take part in the study? YES/NO

Signature of the Participant: ___________________________________Date: ________________

Name (in block capitals) ____

I have explained the study to the above participant, and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: ____Date: ________________

7.12 Appendix L; Privacy Notice

Research participant privacy notice

Privacy information for Research Participants

For information about the University's obligations with respect to your data, who you can get in touch with and your rights as a data subject, please visit: www.nottingham.ac.uk/utilities/privacy/privacy.aspx.

Why we collect your personal data

We collect personal data under the terms of the University's Royal Charter in our capacity as a teaching and research body to advance education and learning. Specific purposes for data collection on this occasion are for a doctoral thesis that aims to explore member of school staff's understanding regarding the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent in schools.

Legal basis for processing your personal data under UK GDPR

The legal basis for processing your personal data on this occasion is Article 6(1a) consent of the data subject

Special category personal data

In addition to the legal basis for processing your personal data, the University must meet a further basis when processing any special category data, including personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life or sexual orientation.

The basis for processing your sensitive personal data on this occasion is Article 9(2a) the data subject has given explicit consent to the processing

How long we keep your data

The University may store your data for up to 25 years and for a period of no less than 7 years after the research project finishes. The researcher who gathered or processed the data may also store the data indefinitely and reuse it in future research. Measures to safeguard your stored data include audio recordings being taken and stored on a password protected device, stored in compliance with GDPR on a password protected computer, and deleted once transcribed. Transcribed data will be entirely anonymous (e.g., using pseudonyms) to protect identifiable information. The right to withdraw data is therefore possible until the point of transcription.

Who we share your data with

Extracts of your anonymous data may be disclosed in published works that are posted online for use by the scientific community, however, participants will not be identifiable. Your data may also be stored indefinitely on external data repositories (e.g., the UK Data Archive) and be further processed for archiving purposes in the public interest, or for historical, scientific or statistical purposes. It may also move with the researcher who collected your data to another institution in the future.

7.13 Appendix M; Participant Questionnaire

Pre-interview Questionnaire

Researcher: Lydia Dyer (email: lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Russell Hounslow (email: russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk)

Please read and answer the following questions. There is space at the end for additional comments.

Role

- What is your current role in school? ____________________
- How many years have you been in this role? ____________________
- How long have you been working in schools or teaching? ____________________
- What regions or areas have you taught or worked in previously? ____________________
- What did your training background and route to your current role entail? ____________________

School characteristics

- How would you describe the diversity within the school? Are there students/staff of different backgrounds in the school?
- Are there students or staff of Caribbean descent?
- Does the school have a race equality policy that you know of?
- What does the school have in place to meet the needs of students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds?

Own cultural background and experiences:

- What, if anything, would you like me to know about your own cultural and ethnic identity?/How would you describe your own cultural and ethnic identity?

Pre-interview Questionnaire

Researcher: Lydia Dyer (email: lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor(s): Dr Russell Hounslow (email: russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk)

- Have you taught, or supported, students from Caribbean backgrounds?

___

- Have you worked in schools with greater or less diversity than your current setting?

___

___

Please use the space below for additional comments.

7.14 Appendix N; interview schedule

Interview guide

This is a guide for the questions that are likely to be asked during the interview. These may be further informed and refined through the review of literature.

Introduction:

- Describe my role as a trainee EP and researcher.
- Describe research aims and explain focus on research around the experiences and belonging of students of Caribbean descent.
  - Explain context of inequality data.
    - Focus on 'black' Caribbean and mixed race 'white' and 'black' Caribbean
  - Explain purpose of focus on school staff as the solution.
- Explain right to withdraw.
- Explain how and why the interview will be recorded.
- Explain measures to anonymise data and maintain confidentiality.
  - Participants will be asked not to use the names of members of staff or children from their school to maintain anonymity. For example, "In the interest of maintaining anonymity and security for others, it is important that you do not use the names of students, teachers or schools during the interview. In essence, anything that would make a person identifiable. If you want to refer to someone, please use letters or a pseudonym instead".

- If the interview gets cut off – ring school number – WhatsApp
- The participants will then be given time and space separately to provide written informed consent.

School information:

- Could you tell me a little bit about the school that you work at?
    - Can you tell me a little about your school?
        - How would you describe the diversity within the school?
        - Are there students/staff of different backgrounds in the school?
        - What is that like?
        - Are there students or staff of Caribbean descent?
    - How important is cultural identity in your school?
    - How important is cultural identity to your students?
        - Why? How do you know this?
    - How important is it to the staff?
    - How important is it to you and your role?

Exploring understanding of the experiences of students of Caribbean descent:

Throughout the discussion In terms of broader common themes, whilst still recognising that this is just one aspect of a young person's identity/individual

- What do you think school is like for a student that is of Caribbean heritage? (drawing from your own experience/knowledge)

Prompts for areas of interest and what I may want to explore further (see table below)

- For example, discussion may include "What might the experience of school staff be for a child of Caribbean descent?", and then discussing areas further (e.g., "you mention teacher's understanding, could you tell me more?" or "You mentioned about teacher's having expectations of achievement, what do you think the experience of a young person of Caribbean heritage may be of this?")

	Areas of school experience	**Further areas to explore**	**Possible ways to explore these (questions and sentence stems)**

<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="6">School level</td>
<td>School values and ethos</td>
<td>Experience of:
• The school's view of diversity
Response to discrimination</td>
<td rowspan="7">What might the experience of students of Caribbean descent be of … X?

How do you think a student of Caribbean descent views …?

What might be the experiences of X?

In terms of X, how do you think that this could be perceived?

Research suggests X is important, how do you think this might be for a student of Caribbean heritage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and learning</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community of school</td>
<td>Experience of:
Community values (compared to school's, compared to home)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School demographic</td>
<td>Experience of:
• Diversity in student and staff population
White-majority student and staff population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents of racism</td>
<td>Experience of:
The impact on wellbeing and esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with behaviour management policy</td>
<td>Experience of:
• rules and expectations
• enforcement
reward and consequence systems (e.g., punishment, isolation, exclusion)
equity of these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support for Aspirations and perceptions of learning</td>
<td>Experiences of…
• Role models in school
• Education and careers options
• Subject option choices
• Work experience
• Assessments and marking</td>
</tr>
</table>

		• Interests and ambitions aligning with school • Low expectations and responses to that (E.g., proving others wrong) The impact of home educational aspirations	How might X have a positive impact? How might X be an issue? What are the issues? What makes you think that? How do you know that?
School staff	Experience of school staff	Experiences of: • Relationships • Teacher expectations (what they think that child will do) of academic performance and behaviour • How do you think a student of cd views Teacher's understanding of matters of 'race' and racism • Being othered • Teachers that share heritage with the student • Fairness of treatment • Influence over educational outcomes • Influence over other teachers	
	Relationships with other students	Experience of: • Wider peer group • Same ethnicity peers • Being othered • Influence of disaffected peers • Fitting in • Incidences of racism or discrimination from peers	
	Home-school link	Experience of: • Parent/carer relationship with school • Support from parents for school	

	Sense of identity	Experience of: • Having the opportunity to express sense of cultural, ethnic, religious identity in school • How other's view and understand this • Influence of cultural background on school experience	
	Overcoming challenges	Experience of: • Voicing concerns or difficulties	
		Challenging or avoiding stereotypes	

Exploring belonging

- what comes to mind when you hear the phrase 'belonging'? (Or how would you define the word belonging?)
- What about belonging in school?

Discuss importance of belonging on the school experience and previous research relating to students of Caribbean descent.

- What do you think the sense of belonging might be like for a student of Caribbean descent in school?

Provide prompts for discussion about factors affecting school belonging (see table below)

  - For example, "How might…[factor]…impact the feelings of belonging of a student of Caribbean descent?"

Factors affecting school belonging		**Possible ways to explore these (questions and sentence stems)**
Broad area	**Areas to explore within**	
Teachers	• Relationships with teachers	

<table>
<tr>
<td>“What do you think the impact is of teachers on the belonging of a student of Caribbean descent?”</td>
<td>Teacher support
Staff valuing participation
Understanding their cultural identity
Incidences of racism – what might be the impact of teacher’s response to negative treatment or racism?
Teaching and modelling acceptance
Staff training, skills and understanding</td>
<td rowspan="7">How might X impact belonging?

How might X contribute to the feeling of belonging?

You mentioned X, could you tell me more?

How do you think that might help?

Why do you think that?

How might this differ for peers from other backgrounds?

How might this differ for peers in the majority i.e., ‘white’ peers?

“How might X support/challenge a sense of belonging?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents

“How might parents impact belonging at school…”</td>
<td>Parents’ relationship with school
Parents’ view of school
Parents’ belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers

“What role could peers play”</td>
<td>Feelings of acceptance and respect from peers
Being othered
Same ethnicity peers
Disaffected/negative peers
Interactions with majority population of the school
Sharing interests and values
Incidences of racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School policies</td>
<td>Feeling at threat of exclusion
School rules
Behavioural consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>Feeling safe
Identifying with school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>How might extracurricular activities impact belonging? Positively? Negatively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School’s ethos/vision</td>
<td>Feelings of pride in the school</td>
</tr>
</table>

Neighbourhood	• Community's attitudes • Acceptance of culture and diversity	

Close:

- Summary of what has been discussed.
- Ask if there is anything they would like to add or say.
- Explain next steps.
- Ask if interested in a 'phase B' interview or discussion, to explore how they could support the experience and belonging of students of Caribbean descent.

Finish interview

- Provide debrief procedure.
- For those requiring/wanting additional support – signpost to support including National services (e.g., Citizens Advice Bureau), staff networks, trade unions, and those within their own organisations.

7.15 Appendix O; Verbal debrief

- The researcher will indicate that the interview has finished. will explain that the interview has finished.
- The topics that were discussed will be summarised and the constructs written down together will be shown to the participant.
- The researcher will ask the participant how they found the interview process and if anything had arisen that they wished to discuss.
- The researcher will provide details of support, if required, and remind the participant that the researcher's and their supervisor's details are provided, should the participant wish to contact them following the interview.
- The next steps of the research process will be explained to the participant.
- The opportunity to ask questions or add any information will be offered again.
- The participant's right to withdraw their data from the research will be reiterated.
- The participant will be asked if they would like to review the analysis of the data once this is completed.
- The participant will be thanked for their time.

7.16 Appendix P; Sources for support

Sources for Support

Support for general research-related queries and topics discussed

- Contact the researcher, Lydia Dyer directly at Lydia.dyer@nottingham.ac.uk
  or via West Northamptonshire Educational Psychology Service.
- Contact the researcher's supervisor Dr Russell Hounslow at russell.hounslow@nottingham.ac.uk

Support for equality and discrimination

Regional support:

- East Midlands
  - Northamptonshire Rights and Equality council – discrimination support. info@northamptonshirerec.org.uk
- West midlands
  - Rights and Equality Sandwell – free advice, information and support for those living in Sandwell https://rightsandequalitysandwell.co.uk/

National support:

- Citizens Advice
- Equality Advisory and Support Service
- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)
- Civil Legal Advice (CLA)
- Trade union – National Education Union for members and general advice for non-members
- Equality and Human Rights Commission - https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/contact-us
- Equality Advisory Support Service - https://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/
- https://www.stophateuk.org/

Support for mental and emotional wellbeing

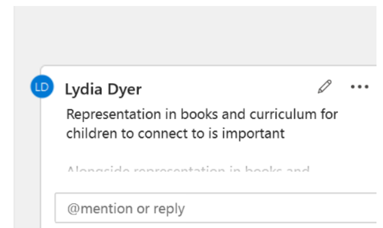
- Samaritans – a national mental health charity offering a free helpline service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Mind– a national mental health charity providing information, advice and support

- Rethink – a national charity offering advice and information relating to mental health and wellbeing
- National Bullying Helpline – a national charity with a helpline that is available 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday
- Black Thrive – a Lambeth-based partnership dedicated to reducing inequality and injustices experienced by 'black' people in mental health services
- Black Minds Matter UK – a charity supporting 'black' people to access mental health services
- The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network – a network offering resources and information relating to mental health and wellbeing

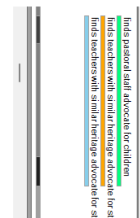
7.17 Appendix Q; extract of data coding on word and NVivo 12

and recognise 'on this is his journey this is what he did' but from an early age trying to kind of get that sense of but you know as as a kind of historical figure how is his story or his history represented and who who is telling this story and what are the other experiences of- that go alongside this kind of version of history I guess and and promoting the discussion and thought so it you know so that they will go on to be able to learn about and read about other things and question it critically or look at it critically anyway from their own viewpoints and I think that comes across not just in terms of like that topic in terms of like you know their online learning and and lots of other things being able to look at things and go 'hmm this is what I think'

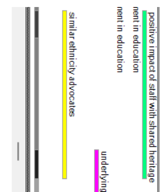
Lydia: so yeah those kind of valuable skills applied throughout, yeah I really like that idea, and in terms of the so for for a student that was experiencing that and that had that criticality how do you



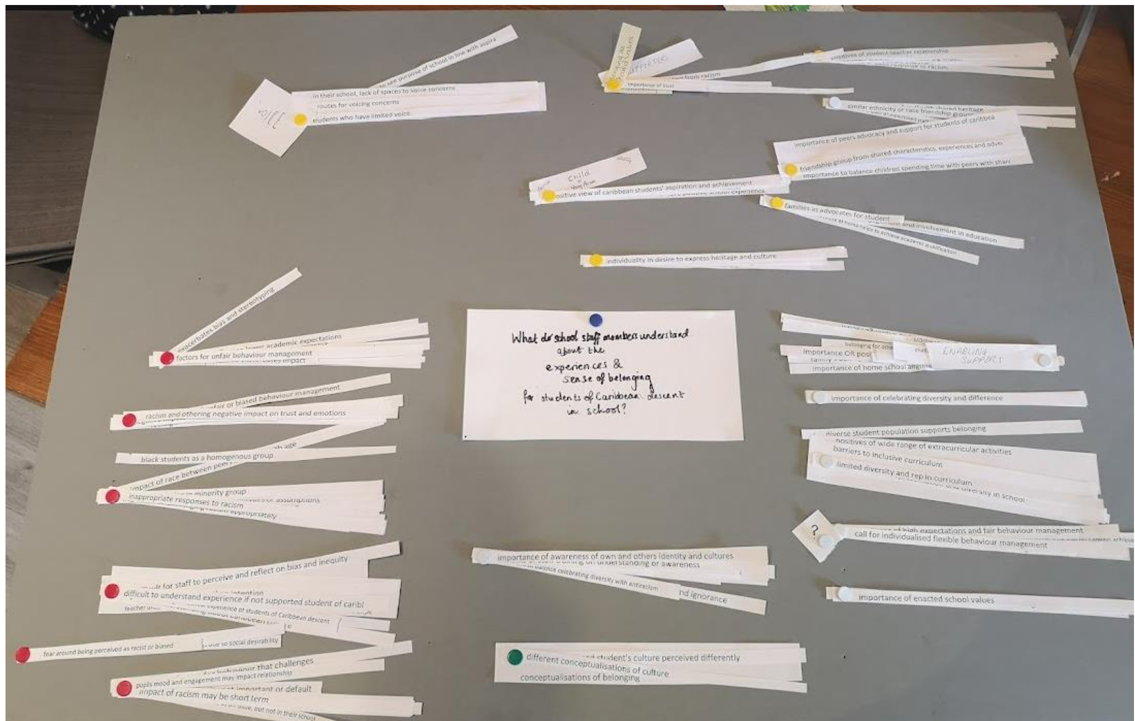
out that student, that doesn't really happen that often, but I do feel like, especially talking from my perspective as my colleague who is in the pastoral role, he would he would stick up for a student, obviously in the right case, and he would go actively go and tell that teacher you know what's going on here or whatever and it wouldn't always be the case of the students so if there is a negative experience happening at our school he'd like to think that the students can definitely go and speak to their head of year but also you know if they did have that negative experience I think it would have a horrible impact because if it's happening in that subject it might be happening in another and then



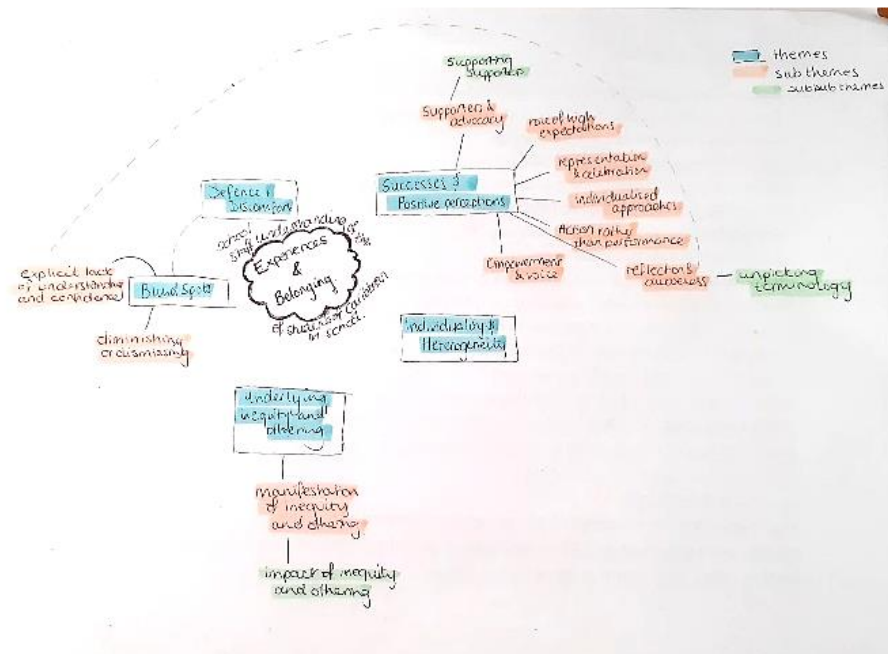
out that student, that doesn't really happen that often, but I do feel like, especially talking from my perspective as my colleague who is in the pastoral role, he would he would stick up for a student, obviously in the right case, and he would go actively go and tell that teacher you know what's going on here or whatever and it wouldn't always be the case of the students so if there is a negative experience happening at our school he'd like to think that the students can definitely go and speak to their head of year but also you know if they did have that negative experience I think it would have a



7.18 Appendix R: Picture of the provisional clusters and themes at stage three of the reflexive Thematic Analysis



7.19 Appendix S: A thematic map of the provisional themes and subthemes produced at the start of phase four of the reflexive thematic analysis



7.20 Appendix T: the implications for me personally and in practice

Reflexive commentary:

From what I have learnt throughout this research process, and my own personal and professional journey, it is vital to turn the focus inwards before looking to others.

I have found the whole research journey has continually pointed me back to educating and examining my own thinking and biases and interrogating whiteness. Throughout the journey the notion that anti-racism is less about 'helping others', than it is turning the lens back on myself, on the systems I am in, and recognising how we may be complicit and implicated.

In terms of application, I have already taken so much forward into my practice. The research and literature have informed actions as a member of my EPSs anti-racism group. This has included, for example, utilising the audit questions, developed by Abijah-Liburd (2018), to catalyse discussion in team meetings; facilitating a focus group discussion to explore EPS members understanding of 'anti-racism'.

In casework, the importance of the assessment approach, use of verbal and written language and modelling of high expectations was illustrated in casework with a student with Caribbean heritage.

I am, however, only at the start of this journey. There are more and continuous reflections and self-interrogations needed. There is more to learn. This thesis reflects my current point of self-reflection, knowledge, and awareness; however, this will evolve.