Behind the academic underachievement of Black Caribbean children in the United Kingdom

Examining the prevalence and impacts of structural barriers and teachers’ low expectations in the schooling of Black Caribbean children in the United Kingdom

By: Shewit Yemane

Bachelor Thesis - Human Rights
Supervisor: Christina Hansen
Submission: 17th of October 2023
Malmö University – Department of Global Political Studies
12 credits
Keywords: Academic underachievement, Education, Black Caribbean, systemic racism, systemic barriers, discrimination, teachers’ low expectations, self-esteem,

Wordcount: 13411 (Excluding abstract, bibliography, list of contents and frontpage)

ABSTRACT
This thesis aims to understand the prevalence and impacts of structural barriers and teachers’ low expectations in the academic underachievement of Black Caribbean children in the United Kingdom. In doing so, this thesis has utilized the following two theories: systemic racism and self-efficacy. Systemic racism has helped uncover the structural and subtle yet discriminatory barriers within UK schools’ institutions while self-efficacy illustrated the ways in which teachers’ low expectations can hinder Black Caribbean children’s self-esteem and motivation and in turn their academic achievement. The chosen method has been qualitative content analysis which has provided this thesis with the common themes, patterns, and problem areas within the literature. This research process has revealed that systemic racism and teachers’ low expectations have negative impacts on the academic achievement of these children. Combining the elements of structural barriers and teachers’ low expectations has also revealed that Black Caribbean children’s right to education is being undermined.
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ABBREVIATIONS
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child
UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights
ICERD – International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
UK – United Kingdom
DfE – Department for Education
GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education
SAT/S – Standard Assessment Tests
WGEPAD – The working group of experts on people of African descent
UNESCO – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
CHAPTER 1

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE TOPIC

The United Kingdom has a long history of immigration, and one group of migrants are known to have helped rebuild the United Kingdom after World War II in 1948. This group of migrants were African Caribbeans, also referred to as Black Caribbeans. Britain was in a vulnerable state after World War II and in need of recovery McDowell (2018). Furthermore, Britain needed workers, this was essential for the country to strengthen the fragile economy after the war. This is where the rebuilding of the country with the help of Afro-Caribbeans began.

The most significant wave of immigration from the Caribbeans to the UK occurred between 1948-1971 (Wallace, Wilson & Darlington-Pollock, 2022:2). This wave of immigration accounted for around 300,000 Afro-Caribbeans arriving in the UK with most of them already being educated. The children of this minority group have come to be called the children of the ‘Windrush generation’ (Wallace, Wilson & Pollock, 2022:2). The Windrush generation has played an important role in the UKs historical recovery. From the beginning of the Windrush generation's arrival in the UK until today however, there have been persistent issues amongst the children of the Windrush generation. The issues pertain to different forms of unequal treatment particularly within the education system. Thus, the education system is one of the main domains in which Black Caribbean children face systemic challenges.

Demie (2015:1) writes that the “underachievement” of children of African Caribbean descent has been a “persistent problem facing national policy makers in British schools for many years”. Moreover, the factors influencing the academic underachievement of black Caribbean children are complex and wide-ranging. Demie (2022:34) explains that although the causes behind black Caribbean pupils' underachievement are extensive, an analysis of literature illustrates that “teachers' low expectations and institutional racism are two main factors”. Some prime examples of literature providing evidence for such statements are Demie & McLean 2017, Graham & Robinson (2002), and Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury (2022) analysis.
This thesis will draw on the conceptualization of the authors above, thus the mentioned body of work will be of relevance in this research process.

Although institutional racism and teachers’ low expectations are the two main factors expressed in literature, there are additional sub-fields to these two factors that go hand in hand. (Demie, 2015:1-2) presents this following list of impactful circumstances in the academic under-performance of black Caribbean children: Institutional racism, headteachers lacking adequate leadership regarding equality issues, stereotyping, teachers’ low expectations, curriculum barriers, lack of diversity in the school institutions and inadequate targeted support. Oftentimes, these very factors go hand in hand in creating hindrances and disadvantages for these children. Black Caribbean children have been made educationally “subnormal” in the UK educational system for many years, and authors such as Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury (2021) argue that this issue persists in British schools today.

A big concern that is not mentioned in the problem areas above but falls under the umbrella of institutional racism/structural barrier according to many of authors, researchers and are school exclusions. School exclusion is the process where a child is removed from their school institution based on their behavior (Demie, 2021:58). The reality of the situation is that black Caribbean pupils have had negative school situations and, in some instances, “their very presence is seen as a threat. Exclusion rates among even very young Black Caribbean pupils are now higher than for any other group of pupils in England” (Demie & McLean, 2017:27). The British educational system’s “inability or unwillingness” to assist young black people in their academic journey has been discussed since the 1950s (Tomlin & Mocombe, 2014:37).

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND AIM
The general research problem is that Black Caribbean children in the UK have and are still academically under-performing in comparison to their peers. National data from England illustrate that Black Caribbean students are “constantly the lowest performing group in the country” (Demie, 2022:33-34). The more specific problem area is that discriminatory barriers are a significant reason for this. Racism has had a significant impact in black and ethnic minorities educational attainment (Demie, 2022:35). It is moreover relevant to acknowledge that although racism reaches all minority groups, Black Caribbean children are however more likely to experience in in comparison to their white, Pakistan and/or even other African peers.
Furthermore, literature and empirical evidence suggests that systemic barriers, racial inequalities, and teachers' low expectations are the most impactful factors in creating and maintaining attainment gap.

This thesis aims to shed light on the ways in which structural barriers and teachers’ low expectations influence the academic performance of Black Caribbean children negatively in the contemporary British education system. The overall research field this thesis contributes to is the academic underachievement of black Caribbean pupils in the UK. More specifically however, this thesis reaches beyond educational attainment data and contributes to an already established research field where structural and systemic barriers and teachers' low expectations are at the root of the issue that then translates to underachievement. Thus, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the academic disadvantages of Black Caribbean pupils more specifically. Being specific about one’s exact contribution is important since this field is wide and intricate. Placing one’s research focus intentionally is therefore relevant. In doing this, this thesis will explore the potential hinderances such circumstances have on Black Caribbean children’s access to adequate education in the Human Rights realm. The concern in this research field is primarily on primary and secondary stage children. Thus, the main problem areas refer to these stages of school.

Children's educational lifestyle is a significant part of their everyday lives. Teachers therefore also naturally become a significant part of children's everyday lives. In addition to this, researchers have described the role of teachers as vital in terms of molding black Caribbean students' experiences and outcomes (Demie, 2022:35). Furthermore, discrimination and teachers’ low expectations are in many instances co-existing in the schooling of Black Caribbean children in the UK education system and have been for many years. The relevance of combining institutional racism and teachers' low expectations becomes relevant since these two conditions are oftentimes intertwined and go hand in hand in a lot of the discovered empirical evidence, this will be further illustrated in the data analysis of this thesis.

More specifically, the aim is to expand our knowledge of the role structural barriers and teachers’ low expectations play in these children’s academic underachievement and what hinderance this has on these children’s right to education.
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will guide this thesis:

**Research question 1:** What role does systemic barriers/discrimination play in Black Caribbean children's academic underachievement in the United Kingdom?

**Research question 2:** In what ways can teachers' expectations and attitudes promote versus hinder Black Caribbean children's academic achievement in the UK educational system?

In answering these two main questions, one additional sub-question will also be answered:

**Sub question to the first 2 questions:** In what ways do systemic barriers and teachers’ low expectations interfere with Black Caribbean children’s enjoyment of ‘the right to education’?

**Research gap:** Although the research field regarding the academic underachievement of black Caribbean children is rather large and has been an ongoing discussion for many years, the same does not apply to the low expectations discussion specifically. Black Caribbean children have now been a part of the British education system for decades Demie (2022:32. Despite this however, not enough studies have explored the correlation between teachers’ low expectations and the academic attainment of Black Caribbean children.

1.4 RELEVANCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS

The importance of educational inclusion and equal treatment also relates to the sphere of ‘the right to education’. The right to education is expressed in article (26) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (United Nations, 2015:54). States have the obligation to protect, respect and fulfill the right to education (UNESCO, 2023). With such obligation comes the requirement for states to abstain from measures that could prevent “the enjoyment of the right to education” (UNESCO, 2023). Although the right to education is the bigger focus of this thesis, other realms of Human Rights exist in this research area.

Any experiences of discrimination relate to the United Nations (UN) ‘International Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination’ (ICERD) which was adopted in 1965 (UN, 1968-2023). Racial discrimination which is expressed in article 1.1 of...
the ICERD considers any form of “distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference” deriving from assumptions on race as discrimination Smith (2020:195).

Furthermore, the child's best interest is expressed within article 3, paragraph 1 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (OHCHR, 1996-2023). The connection to the child's best interest is hard to avoid in this thesis. The reason being that the right to equal treatment, comfort and overall wellbeing of Black Caribbean children is being questioned in the discovered research. Article 3, paragraph 1 of the UNCRC states “In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration” (OHCHR, 1996-2023). Article 4 of the UNCRC highlights that each right expressed within the UNCRC applies to all children and the government’s duty is to ensure that children get full enjoyment of these rights within their countries (UNICEF, n.d, p:3).

In terms of the reported experiences of stereotyping and racial bias, this could be linked to the UNs ‘The working group of experts on people of African descent’ (WGEPAD). The establishment of the WGEPAD was done by the Commission on Human rights in 2002 (OHCHR, 2019). The WGEPAD establishment occurred after the World Conference against Racism in Durban in 2001. Ahmed Reid, who is a human rights expert and head of the WGEPAD expresses: “People's ability to enjoy key human rights is being dramatically curtailed by racial bias in decision-making that is grounded in false beliefs” (OHCHR, 2019). Reid highlights that such bias has a systemic impact that causes people in different countries to endure similar challenges.

1.5 DELIMITATIONS

The research focus of this thesis does not come without its delimitations. The academic underachievement of Black Caribbean children is viewed as wide-ranging and intricate. Furthermore, factors influencing any child's educational situation/attainment generally involve a plethora of different potential reasons. Some examples of factors that could impact a child's academic situation negatively are socioeconomic background and lack of parental guidance. A delimitation here is therefore the absence of analysis on other factors that may contribute to this group's academic underachievement.
Thoroughly assessing each plausible and personal reason that a child may have to academically struggle is a complex process since individuality always plays a role. Each child has their own experiences and personal reasons for academic performance versus underperformance. Thus, there are other reasonable factors that risk impacting this vulnerable group negatively on the academic front. One notorious phenomenon within the topic of education and academic achievement is the influence of these children’s home life (Demie & McLean 2017:70).

The author of this thesis is therefore aware that systemic barriers may not influence all Black Caribbean children's academic situations. This thesis focuses on the role of systemic barriers and teachers' low expectations in the academic underachievement of Black Caribbean children. However, other potential and relevant factors have naturally been making appearances in the literature throughout this research process.

Lastly, this thesis does not aim at examining the remedies for the dilemmas illustrated as it instead focuses on shedding light on the problem areas and outcomes such situations have on this vulnerable group. An extensive analysis of remedies will therefore not be the focus of this research, although some suggestions will naturally be mentioned considering the emphasis on such in the literature. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that this thesis does not assess statistical attainment data of all the different subjects in school, since overall underachievement is in focus.

1.6 KEY TERMINOLOGY

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS
Both structural and systemic barriers are hinderances in different policies and/or practices that systemically impact marginalized groups disproportionately (TogetherWeWill, 2012-2023). These obstacles are therefore not always blatant and can transform in subtle ways within institutions.
TEACHERS LOW EXPECTATIONS
Understanding the ways in which teachers' low expectations can transpire is essential to recognize the potential harmful effects it has on children's self-esteem and in turn their academic self-efficacy. Teachers’ expectations are directly linked to the way in which they “deliver instructions” (The Education Hub, 2018:1). Thus, the instructions teachers deliver are based on the very expectations they have. In the cases where teachers view certain students as low-achieving and in-capable of elevated academic thinking, they tend to provide “differentiated” learning experiences while teaching (The Education Hub, 2018:1). This is shown through teachers' management of behavior, teaching statements, feedback, or questioning. Research is suggesting that teachers' low expectations seem to be a cause of racism; this can become a contributing factor in the educational problems faced by black children (Demie, 2022:35). One prime example of such educational problems is a hindrance to academic achievement.

PUPIL/S
Some authors refer to these black Caribbean children as “pupils” and in the instances they do, the author of the thesis has chosen to also utilize this word. Pupils typically refer to children being taught within schools (Oxford University Press, 2023). Since Black Caribbean children enrolled in UK schools is the focus of this thesis, both “children” and “pupils” is suitable.

DEFINING AFRICAN/BLACK CARIBBEAN
Black Caribbean children are also referred to as African/Afro Caribbean children. African Caribbeans are Caribbeans with African descent from the West Indies. The West Indies is more commonly known as the Caribbeans. Oxford University Press (2023) defines Afro Caribbeans as: “a person who comes, or whose family comes, from the Caribbean and who is a member of a group of people who have dark skin and whose ancestors came from Africa”.

RELEVANCE IN CHOOSING BLACK CARIBBEAN CHILDREN
What makes the Black Caribbean experience important to study is the overrepresentation this specific minority group has in the academic retention research field. The relevance of examining the academic situation of black Caribbean children essentially boils down to two reasons. Firstly, the migration history of black Caribbeans goes back to 1948 as previously
mentioned. This means the children of the Windrush generation are spread out in British schools and have been for a very long time now.

Secondly, The Swan report from 1985 presented their findings on the underachievement on black Caribbean children by stating “there is no doubt that Black Caribbean children, as a group and on average, are underachieving, both by comparison with their school fellows in the white majority, as well as in terms of their potential. Notwithstanding that some are doing well” (Demie & McLean, 2017:1). The relevance of the Swan report still stands true today. (Demie & McLean, 2017:1) highlighting ‘The Swan report’ from 1985 in their 2017 research analysis of the underachievement of black Caribbean children in England illustrates its relevance. Moreover Demie (2022:35) makes a similar assessment to The Swan Report by emphasizing that racism reaches all minority groups of children, however black Caribbean pupils have been particularly affected. Although one of the first concerns about black Caribbean children's education was expressed in ‘The Rampton Report’ in the 1980s, “the concerns still persist” (Demie, McLean 2017:1). Moreover, Black Caribbean young people are “historically disadvantaged” (Wallace & Salisbury, 2022:1445).

1.7 THE UK EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THE EDUCATION GAP
This section of the thesis will focus on briefly explaining the UK education system, the curriculum, and the educational attainment gap of black Caribbean children in the UK. Firstly, a curriculum overview provides us with relevant information on the functions of the UKs education system. Secondly, many of the authors who emphasize institutional racism and teachers' low expectations tend to also reflect on what they perceive to be the significant role of the UKs national curriculum. Moreover, there are problem areas within the curriculum that are recognized to be hindrances for the academic success of black Caribbean children.

THE UK EDUCATION SYSTEM
The UK education system contains the four following units: primary education, secondary education, further education, and higher education (Bright World Education, 2019). Since this thesis focuses on the academic situations of black Caribbean children meaning minors, the focus will be on children enrolled in primary and secondary education. The educational system of the UK also divides children into different stages called “Key Stages”. These Kay Stages contain the following age groups:
THE UK NATIONAL CURRICULUM
The UK curriculum is a collection of standards and subjects created for primary and secondary school institutions (GOV.UK, n. d). The UKs national curriculum is set out to cover the main standards and subjects for primary and secondary schools to follow (GOV.UK, n. d). The purpose of this curriculum is for children to acquire and learn the same skills and knowledge. Moreover, GOV.UK (n. d) highlights that the biggest portion of the UKs national current curriculum is a direct result of the curriculum update that transformed in the year of 2014.

ATTAINMENT GAP
Although some changes are visible in academic attainment, too much remains the same for Black Caribbean children in UK schools. Recent data show that there has been some improvement in the sense that children from minority backgrounds are performing better now in comparison to before (Demie, 2021:34). One reason for this is linked to “new generations of minority families embedding themselves more into British culture (...)” and therefore take advantage of opportunities within the education system (Demie, 2021:34).

The academic situation may therefore continue to improve for minority children by being born and raised in the UK. Despite certain improvements however, the educational performance gap is the most concerning for black Caribbean students (Demie, 2021:34). Generally, the highest achieving students in the GCSES are of Chinese and Indian descent, in the middle we then find white British, Black African and Bangladesh students and lastly, black Caribbean and Pakistani students at the lowest performing level. Although improvements have been made the black Caribbean educational dilemma is constant and real.
CHAPTER 2

2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The following analysis consists of some of the relevant previous research targeting the academic underachievement of Black Caribbean children in the UK. More specifically, these authors and researchers examine the schooling of black Caribbean children with the focus of institutional/systemic barriers and teachers’ low expectations. These barriers are used to explain the distress and academic underachievement of these children. One can therefore say that this previous research analysis emphasizes the academic disadvantages of black Caribbean children primarily since they focus on inequalities and structural barriers.

Early engagement covering the academic underachievement of black Caribbean pupils is found within the Swann report “Education for All” from 1985. In this Swann report, the focus was on assessing the examination results amongst 16-year-old West Indian children (Strand, 2012:2). Based on the assessments found in this report, it was evident that the examination results illustrated that children of West Indian descent were under-performing in the England education system.

2.1 SYSTEMIC BARRIERS AND TEACHERS’ LOW EXPECTATIONS

Strand (2012) “The white British-black Caribbean achievement gap: tests, tiers and teachers’ expectations” focuses on the impacts of tier placements in English schools. To grasp Strand conceptualization on such impacts one must first understand 2 things, 1: What tiers mean in the English education systems and 2: Tiers in relation to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Tiers or tiering were introduced in alignment with the introduction of the GCSEs in 1986 (Barrance, 2022). Moreover, tiering means that examination papers come in different versions and are given to different students based on what is deemed to be an appropriate level for them. Strand (2012) main conclusion was essentially that institutional racism and teachers' low expectations are big factors in the achievement gaps since these 2 factors have made it difficult for black Caribbean children to enter exams within the top-tiers. Although this thesis will not dive into the realm of tier placement specifically, it is worth noting that previous research made valid connections between low expectations being the motivator for tier placements.
A considerable number of researchers have argued that tier placements is a problematic practice within British schools that further contribute to the academic disadvantage of black Caribbean children. Strand (2012:4) suggests that research targeting socio-economic status as the hindrance for this academic gap is not enough to fully grasp the underachievement of black Caribbean pupils. Moreover, Strand suggests there are evident systematic issues aimed at Black Caribbean children. These systematic issues are hindering black Caribbean children's academic performance. Moreover, Strand (2012:75) explains that “The results indicate Black Caribbean students are systematically under-presented in entry to the higher tiers relative to their white British peers”. In other words, Strand suggested that black Caribbean children’s low socio-economic status is not a broad enough perspective to describe the attainment gap.

Graham & Robinson (2004) ‘The Silent Catastrophe’ targets the impacts of institutional racism on black boys specifically in the UK educational system. This is one of several articles targeting black boys as particularly susceptible to racial discrimination in the British schooling system. One of the discriminatory examples expressed in this article is the exaggerated disciplining of black boys in British schools (Graham & Robinson, 2004:659). The title of this article is self-explanatory in that the authors argue the British schooling of black children is an institutional catastrophe. Moreover, Graham & Robinson (2004) argue that black families have historically been to blame regarding their children's educational “problems” (p:654). Looking at the past decades however, educators have instead shifted their focus to institutional structures and educational practices. Furthermore, the premise instead became about these very institutions leading to negative outcomes for these children. One of the institutional and discriminatory barriers illustrated in this article is the overrepresentation of black Caribbean boys getting excluded from schools. Furthermore, exclusions are said to have negative impacts on these children's educational situations and overall wellbeing. Teachers’ expectations can impact learning opportunities and achievement (Graham & Robinson, 2004:660).

Demie (2021:57) explains that some previous research targeting school exclusions amongst black Caribbean children focused on the high exclusion rates amongst black Caribbean boys specifically such as Gillborn & Mirza (2000) analysis.
Bernard Coard’s conceptualization on the underachievement of Black Caribbean children becomes an important part of this previous research chapter. The reason being that Coard is one of the most common authors known to the discussion of institutional racism in the UK’s education system. More specifically, Coard highlighted the immense role of systemic racism on Black Caribbean children's academic underachievement/disadvantages in the British schooling system. Coard illustrated these impacts through his publication of “How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal in the British school system” (1971).

This very publication from Coard was “the first substantive empirical account to detail institutional racism impacting black Caribbean children and young people in the British school system” (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021: 1427). Through the lens of Coard’s (1971) publication, the dilemma of the academic “underachievement” of Black Caribbean children was not genetically constructed nor was it a culturally inherent issue (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021:1427-1428). Instead Coard argued that the “underachievement” of black Caribbean children is a social construct that has been politically conditioned. In Coard’s 1971 book publication, he expresses that there is an evident lack of understanding when it comes to the needs of Black Caribbean pupils (Demie, 2015:1). Much of the more recent research have taken inspiration from Coard’s (1971) publication and started echoing the impacts of racial stereotyping; teachers (and wider societies), low expectations; streaming and other variants of “ability grouping practices”; lack of racial literacy stemming from teachers, ethnocentric, exclusive and alienating curriculum; weak school leadership stemming from headteachers; the failure of policies within institutions in addressing racial barriers (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021:1431).

*Teachers’ Low expectations, stereotyping, and overall negative attitudes:* Crozier (2005)

“*There is a war against our children: black educational underachievement revisited*” provides a study (interviews included) with the aim of understanding the educational experiences of African Caribbean and mixed-race children and does so through the perspectives of their parents. This study quickly revealed that the parents find the educational experiences of their children to be negative, resulting in the children feeling rejected and unmotivated (Crozier, 2005:585).

Crozier (2005:588) highlights that there is statistical evidence such as *(Sammons, 1995; Department for Education and Skills, 2003)* that illustrate the good results of African
Caribbean children enrolled in Key Stage 1 standard assessment tests (SAT). However, there is an evident shift occurring after Key Stage 2? since the underachievement starts showing at Key Stage 3. Crozier links this decline of achievement to the parents' perspectives on their children's decline of motivation. Like Graham & Robinson (2004) articles, Crozier (2005) focuses on black boys and deems them to be extra vulnerable. The participants in this study who were parents expressed a particular concern regarding their sons although the daughter of the parents also “at times” experienced negative educational experiences (Crozier, 2005:586). One of the mothers gave Crozier the inspiration for the title by expressing “there is a war against them” regarding young black boys in the UK education system. This then leads to these children feeling demotivated in learning by the very system the parents explain has rejected them.

Some researchers focused on the ‘fear of acting white’ as one potential reason for the academic under-performance of black Caribbean children. We see a clear stance against this notion however through several previous research, Beale-Spencer & Harpalani (2001) being one example. Beale-Spencer & Harpalani (2001) article takes a distinctive shift from the wrongdoings of the pupils themselves and instead leans towards the impacts of structural and contextual school circumstances (Crozier, 2005:589). This approach revealed that school is filled with stress factors that negatively impact black people's wellbeing. (Psycho-social being more specifically). Those stress factors or “stressors” are moreover influencing these children's identity development while simultaneously jolting their coping mechanisms. The authors further illustrate this by emphasizing that there is a presence of structural racism that is placing the learning, adaptation, and positive outcomes of these children at great risk since it disrupts ‘individual and community level health and well-being’ (Crozier, 2005:589).

Demie (2022:36) in “Tackling teachers’ low expectations of black Caribbean students in English schools” explains that studies/assessments on teachers' low expectations have also been emphasized in the USA regarding the ways in which teachers set expectations for African American and Latino students in comparison to white (European students). Like the findings in the UK, teachers' low expectations are deemed ‘responsible’ for the academic underachievement of African American and Latino students in the USA (Demie, 2022:36). An example of a study targeting such problem-areas within the US is McKown & Winston’s (2008) article. Demie (2022:36) also refers to a similar study made by Rubie et al. (2013) in a
New Zealand analysis where similar conclusions were made. In this study the teachers' expectations were high for European and Asian students (who were academically achieving) and remarkably low for the indigenous minority students Māori.

Foster (1992:269) explains that teachers' negative attitudes as well as their stereotypical ideas and low expectations is considered an immense factor contributing to the relatively low educational performance of many afro Caribbean pupils. This then translates to “less favorable treatment of afro/caribbean students or that they communicated to them and reduce their self-esteem and academic motivation; as a result, they tend to underachieve in comparison to their white peers” (Foster, 1992:269).

CHAPTER 3

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Systemic racism (often used synonymously with institutional racism) and self–efficacy have helped this thesis un-cover the persistence and impact of systemic barriers and teachers' low expectations. Tomlin, Wright & C. Mocombe (2014:42) clarify that many theories are applicable to the academic underachievement of black Caribbean children, institutional racism being one example. Two authors taking the approach of understanding the matter through institutional racism are Rampton (1981) and Macherson (1999). Moreover, Graham & Robinson (2004) makes use of the concept of institutional racism in their article and argues for the severe impact it has on black Caribbean boys. Systemic racism has guided this thesis in discovering racial discrimination and different levels of marginalization in the schooling of black Caribbean children/pupils, while self-efficacy examines the role of the teacher based on educational psychology evidence.

Disclaimer: Systemic racism is sometimes used synonymously with institutional racism. In the academic situation of Black Caribbean children in the UK, systemic and institutional racism apply. The reason being that these definitions speak for the same process and issue in this instance. Braverman et al (2022:172) explains that both systemic and institutional racism “captures the involvement of institutional systems and structures in the race-based discrimination and oppression”. Thus, although this thesis will develop its theoretical
framework on systemic racism specifically, in the instances that authors in this field refer to institutional and sometimes even structural racism, the core issues they want to signal relates to systemic racism as well.

Racism can often lack consciousness and explicitness and/or is simply not visibly portrayed, which makes it systemic and structural (Braverman et al, 2022:171). Both structural and systemic forms of racism thrive on being embedded in written or unwritten policies which is relevant to mention considering the topic of this thesis.

3.1 SYSTEMIC RACISM
To examine the prevalence and impacts of systemic racism within school-institutions in the UK, one must first understand what systemic racism entails. Elias & Feagin (2020:21) explain that systemic racism relates to a ‘white-generated’ form of discrimination in combination with oppression aimed at people of color. This variant of racism is essentially scattered throughout a society and reaches different kinds of institutions. Furthermore, it is this process that enables systemic racism to qualify as systemic.

When it comes to the dissecting of systemic racism one essential component becomes relevant to highlight. Elias & Feagin (2020:16) explains that this component of systemic racism is referred to as the “white racial frame”. The white racial frame contains an organized collection of “racialized ideas, stereotypes, emotions and inclinations to discriminate”. In/through the process of systemic racism, the society gets systematically framed in a color-coded construction. In this process two things occur simultaneously: a positive orientation aimed at whites and a negative orientation aimed at people that are within a racialized group of ‘others’ Elias & Feagin (2020:16) (Repeated reference). Furthermore, the ‘White racial frame’ operates in societal realms such as political views, ideas of beauty, morality and/or intelligence (Elias & Feagin, 2020:22). Reflection: Link to the educational situation of black Caribbean children. We see these ideas/values echoing within the dominant culture’s different institutions; educational, economic and/or political institutions are thus prime examples of this.
When taking a historical glance at the start of systemic racism, certain black social thinkers are especially relevant to acknowledge. Elias & Feagin (2020:18) emphasize the importance of critical black social thinkers in the conceptual development of systemic racism. One of the initial critics of racist practices and beliefs was David Walker, a black abolitionist who criticized the oppressive treatment deriving from “white Christians” on African people (p:18). Some other relevant names and initial thinkers behind the negative impacts of institutional racism are David Walker, Benjamin Banneker Anna J. Cooper, Marcus Garvey, and Frederick Douglass. The target of these thinkers was dismantling the racist practices and racist framing exerted by white people during the Jim Crow era as well as the long slavery.

**WHITENING CITIZENSHIP**

Immigration of black Caribbeans in the UK goes back to 1948, thus most of these children of this descent are considered British-black. They are by default a part of the UK, and it's their birth country and home. However, the disadvantages and exclusions these children continue to face in the educational system can easily translate to feeling like an outsider within one's own country of birth. So, what role do western ideas of citizenship play in the discussion of social exclusion of racialized groups? Joseph (2020:58) highlights that minorities who fall into the category of being ‘ethno-racially different’ risk not being regarded as social citizens to the same extent as natives. This applies even though minority groups may have citizenship of the country in question. Furthermore, a persistent process that has enabled this perception/conceptualization of racialized groups, have historically been European and American public policies.

*Reflection*: In the case of the Afro-Caribbean children within the UK, many of the families have migrated 60-70 years back so they are by default a member of British society. Despite the UK being their home, the educational inequalities in the literature and research-evidence illustrate different forms of exclusions that place them in a subordinate position. British campaign rhetoric's have historically viewed ethnic diversity as ‘undesirables’ and this was aimed at several minority groups within the country, Caribbeans and Jewish being 2 examples (Joseph, 2020:59). This tells us the perceptions society tends to have on who is considered to be ‘others’ is deeply rooted within Britain historically.
3.2 SELF EFFICACY

The concept of self-efficacy falls into the psychological development studies of ‘Positive psychology’ and has had greatest influence from the psychologist Albert Bandura (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2016:193). Gable and Haidt (2005:103) describe positive psychology as the field of study where the focus is on the conditions that promote the growth of individuals. This promotion of growth could equally apply to groups and institutions. The main purpose of positive psychology is for people to reach their full potential and become optimally functioning. Self-efficacy is by Bandura's own definition about “people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions” (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2016:193).

The theory of self-efficacy is therefore about individuals' ability to believe they can obtain certain skills under different conditions/situations. Furthermore, self-efficacy is an essential tool to reach the necessary cognitive steps to embark on goal-oriented tasks and actions. The process of self-efficacy starts when children are infants and continues throughout one's entire lifetime (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2016:194). Social cognitive theory is the foundational layout for the creation of self-efficacy. Social cognitive theory highlights the importance and impact of social environment in learning, self-regulation, and motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

One of the five fundamental pillars of the developmental process of self-efficacy is the importance of verbal persuasion and influence from a helper's words of encouragement. Moreover “powerful figures” play an immense role in positively reinforcing children’s developmental and self-efficacy process (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2016:194). Research illustrates that for teachers to create healthy relationships with their students they themselves need to acquire self-efficacy. Not only will this create an enriched relationship between teacher and student, but there is also a sense of inclusivity that naturally comes with teachers that have self-efficacy. Although self-efficacy is not the exact same translation of self-esteem these two concepts can work together and produce either positive or negative outcomes.

In addition to this necessary component of healthy teacher and student dynamic, self-efficacy also highlights that parental influence also becomes an area of interest. The reason being that parents also hold a position in the modeling of self-efficacy that influences children. In fact,
Byrne, Accurso, Arnow, Lock and Le Grange (2015) presented a study where the main takeaway was that the children's levels of self-efficacy were greatly impacted by their parents' level of self-efficacy Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, (2016:194-195). Bandura considers 4 different realms of self-efficacy in the development of this theory: “Mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological and affective states” (Pfitzner-Eden. 2016:1).

Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, (2016:442) explains that one of the hypotheses presented within the Coleman report (1966) is that schools do not create much of a difference when it comes to the learning outcomes for students. However, such findings can be countered with the concept of positive schooling. The basis of positive schooling is creating an environment of respect and trust in relation to diversity (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2016:444). This variant of schooling requires teachers to develop goals tailored for each individual student to generate learning for all. Teachers will also need to plan strategic ways for the students to feel motivated enough to reach such goals. Although self-efficacy is one of the chosen theories, positive schooling is within the realm of positive psychology. Thus, examining how positive schooling is lacking within Black Caribbean children in the UK could be of interest here.

Ackerman (2018) writes “Everybody has strengths. However, not everyone is aware of them, let alone confident enough to use them”. This very expression is of value when assessing the impact of a teacher’s low expectations on a child’s self-esteem which will later be illustrated in the data analysis of this thesis.

Self-efficacy and the child's wellbeing: Self-efficacy goes beyond an improvement of one's self-esteem and self-confidence, it reaches other areas which are directly tied to one's overall wellbeing. Self-efficacy helps one in dealing with potential psychological problems such as depression (Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder, 2016:198). Reflection: This suggests that a lack of self-efficacy can drive individuals to psychological problems that then in turn can lead to academic underachievement or focus problems. This very process can be linked to the empirical evidence that is yet to be presented in this thesis and can explain the distress and stagnant position Black Caribbean children experience in British schools.
CHAPTER 4

4. METHODOLOGY
This chapter explains the applied methodology of this thesis as well as reflecting on what these research decisions have meant for the author, the research process and research outcome. Furthermore, this reflection attempts to clarify the relevance in choosing such methodology and the way in which the material has been collected.

4.1 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS
This thesis has taken a qualitative research approach and will analyze already existing research and data. A good portion of the chosen research material contains empirical data which has helped this study gather real life experiences. Qualitative research is typically about acquiring as well as analyzing non-numerical data (Bhandari, 2020). The acquired data usually concerns text. However, the data can also include audio or video. Kuckartz (2014:2) explains that although qualitative data could include text, audio, movies and images, text is typically the persistent material in “social science, psychology and education”. This thesis is a social science variant targeting both educational and psychological situations and experiences, text is therefore the targeted material. The texts used in this study are more specifically different types of textual documents and publication. Books, academic articles, and one news article are some examples of textual material.

The purpose of conducting qualitative research is to comprehend experiences, concepts, or opinions (Bhandari, 2020). Furthermore, a qualitative research approach allows one to explore potential problem areas and/or develop new ideas for research to come. Although this thesis is a qualitative research study, it contains some numerical data and statistics as well. The point of using numerical data was to reinforce the relevance of certain facets of the topic. To reinforce such relevance, this thesis will illustrate the extent to which events occur and have been occurring in the UK.

The research process: The topic of academic achievement contra underachievement of black Caribbean children typically captures a plethora of potential reasons. Thus, the initial research process was rather broad, capturing socio-economic background and the role of parents as well. With time however, systemic/institutional racism and teachers' low expectations became of particular interest considering the impacts these factors appear to be
having on black Caribbean pupils. These impacts have been emphasized in literature for many years now and continue to be a concern for many researchers and policy makers in today's British society. The following keywords have helped narrowing the thesis down and collecting material that targets the main problem areas: Black Caribbean children, Institutional racism, teachers’ low expectations, discrimination, underachievement, and school exclusion.

Databases: Some of the academic articles have been discovered through the regular google search bar while most of the articles have been found through the following webpages: Google scholar, research gate, JSTOR.ORG and Routledge Taylor and Francis Group. These 4 databases would be considered general databases since they all tend to cover multidisciplinary subjects/topics.

4.2 MATERIAL
The materials for this thesis consist of books, academic articles and journals, UN publications, reports, and webpages (for general information and definitions). Both primary and secondary sources have guided this research study, although most of the material qualifies as secondary sources. A considerable amount of the material are academic articles and journals, some of which contain necessary empirical evidence that has helped the thesis solidify some statements/arguments. The chosen academic articles contain a wide range of different arguments, angles, and relevant previous research on this topic.

A good portion of the data has been collected from Demie & McLean (2017) research brief “Black Caribbean Underachievement in Schools in England”. This research brief has been of particular interest since it considerably captures many problem areas. This research brief draws on relevant empirical evidence from focus-group interviews that capture relevant problem areas. Moreover, this research brief provides tangible examples and a wide range of perspectives and perceptions from teachers, education psychologists, pupils, and parents. Additionally, Demie & McLeans professions have in this case placed them in a credible position and their work is adequate to use for research purposes. Feyisa Demie is the chief of Research and Advisor for self-evaluation and Christabel McLean is a former headteacher turned Education Adviser (Demie & McLean, 2017). This means that these researchers have experience within the education field and their work is of relevance. Although this research
brief focuses on England and not the whole of the UK, it is of interest for the simple reason that England is the biggest part of the UK.

Books: This thesis has utilized several books which have served different purposes within this research process. Lopez, Pedrotti & Snyder (2019) “Positive Psychology. The scientific and practical explorations of human strengths” have been of great value in defining the social psychological theory of Self-efficacy, as well as providing relevant everyday examples relating to this theory. Halperin & Heath (2017) “Political research methods and practical skills” is a recommended course literature book. Thus, the relevance of using such material has to do with the fact that it is recommended by university professors. Course literature is deemed as useful research tools and in this case this book was used for defining the research technique content analysis and ways of utilizing content analysis in research.

Academic articles/journals: Academic articles have been useful in this thesis as they have provided real life examples through empirical evidence and credible data. Outside of the empirical evidence, academic articles have also been relevant material since they have undergone peer-reviewing and contain data supported by other researchers. This naturally places academic articles in a trustworthy category considering they have undergone such process before being published. Examples: Demie (2022) “Tackling teachers’ low expectations of Black Caribbean students in English schools” is one of the main articles that have guided this thesis in detecting the main issues within teachers' low expectations and the impacts this has on pupils. Crozier (2006) “There is a war against our children: black educational underachievement revisited” targets black Caribbean parents' perspective and the children's motivation and self-esteem struggles which have helped link the impacts of low self-esteem on a child's self-efficacy (theory).

Government publications: Some government publications have been used in this thesis. GOV.UK has been used for describing some of UKs educational processes and procedures and Government Du Quebec (2023) for the definition of stereotyping.

Webpages, dictionary: This thesis has utilized webpages for the main purpose of illustrating certain processes within the UK educational system and/or apply definitions and descriptions to certain terms. One example would be (The Education Hub) that was used to describe
teachers’ low expectations. The Education Hub is a non-profit organization with credible contents such as research reviews which motivated the author of this thesis to use it.

Two of the references used in this thesis are from Oxfords English dictionary. The author of this thesis has made the decision to use these two sources since the only purpose and goal was to explain the definitions of “Afro Caribbeans” and “pupils” for the readers who may not be aware. Newspaper:

4.3 CONTENT ANALYSIS
Content analysis has been a helpful research technique in this research process, the chosen methodology for this thesis is therefore considered qualitative content analysis. Halperin & Heath (2017:346) writes that qualitative content analysis focuses on ‘latent content’. Latent content analysis can be defined as making interpretations of what is deeply hidden within a given text (Kleinheksel, 2020). Moreover, qualitative content analysis provides the necessary tools to detect the ‘meanings, norms, values, motives, and purposes’ exerted in the texts (Kleinheksel, 2020:346). Furthermore, content analysis has been a useful research tool for tracing common themes and concepts within the collected material. Columbia (2023) defines content analysis as a research technique used to detect the “presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data”. Some examples of the discovered themes within this research field are: Systemic racism, stereotyping, low expectations, school exclusions. Demie (2015:2) describes the factors impacting black Caribbean (pupils) academic underachievement as “wide-ranging and complex”. Content analysis has helped this thesis in capturing and tracing the most common factors that are in alignment with the research questions especially. The aim is therefore to examine this wide range of complexities with the help of content analysis and trace key factors and takeaways.

CATEGORIZING THEMES AND CODING
The content analysis will be conducted qualitatively, this means that the research will be created with a qualitative content analysis approach. The aim of this approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the topic through interpretations. The interpretations will be based on the most essential and reoccurring themes, words, concepts/perspectives, and/or theories.
Initially when researching this topic, one risks finding a plethora of different themes to assess. The reason for this is the topic's complexity and wide range of potential factors. It is therefore important to narrow down essential themes that will guide the thesis and link the material to the research question and theories. The categorization of themes can also be described as headlining of themes meaning that the key themes will accordingly fall into specific headlines that align with their contents.

Categorizing themes can also be defined as “coding”. Halperin & Heath (2017:349) explains that coding within content analysis requires making sure the different avenues of text and/or other materials of value such as images are being identified. This is done through labeling of them which would illustrate that they are “examples of some thematic idea” (Halperin & Heath, 2017:350).

PURPOSIVE/RELEVANCE SAMPLING
Krippendorff (2013:120) explains that relevance sampling, also known as purposive sampling, aims to capture all types of textual entities that could give responses to one-imposed research question/questions. Relevance/purposive sampling is moreover not conducted with probabilities and is considered non-probabilistic. Moreover, taking the approach of relevance sampling requires making use of a “conceptual hierarchy, systematically lowering the number of units that need to be considered for an analysis” (Krippendorff, 2013:120). This essentially means that one would need to exclude text units that do not provide relevant information/data for the targeted research aim and research question/s. Relevance research also implies that the researcher has some type of pre-assumption on some of the potential outcomes. In the case of children of immigrants in any given domain within a Western Society, one naturally has some hypothesis of the challenges and adaptation issues they may experience.

Problematization of content analysis: Overall, content analysis has provided this study with a direct and necessary methodological approach, however this method does not come without its limitations. One limitation of content analysis is that the author may stay stagnant on the patterns/themes aimed for their specific study and potentially disregard any relevant change of patterns shown in the material/literature/evidence. Finding a difference in pattern could help a study gain range with different angles. It helps to be aware of this when applying
content analysis as a research-tool. Attempting to incorporate other relevant counterarguments in the research field could help the writer tackle this limitation.

CHAPTER 6

5. DATA ANALYSIS
This chapter will focus on shedding light on some of the relevant data found within the topic of discrimination and teachers' low expectations in the British schooling of black Caribbean children. The analysis of the found data will also be illustrated in this chapter. This essentially makes this chapter a compilation of data, results, and analysis. The main segments of this chapter consist of: Systemic barriers, teachers' low expectations, stereotyping, and disciplinary methods.

5. SYSTEMIC BARRIERS
5.1 CURRICULUM CONCERNS
One question that seems to be persistent amongst researchers and authors is who the curriculum standards are supposed to be suited for. Researchers within this field have progressively aimed their focus to declare the UKs national curriculum as one of the main barriers for black Caribbean children (Demie, 2022:35). The issue within the curriculum relates to its failure to “adequately reflect the needs of a diverse, multi-ethnic society” (Demie, 2022:35).

Laura Swiszczowski, head of the program ‘Diversity & inclusion’ at Teach First (A charity organization targeting educational inequalities in England and Wales) suggests that the curriculum within the UK education system is maintaining racial inequality (Swiszczowski, 2022). One way this takes form is through the teaching material within the curriculum. The Guardians assessment of GCSE exams illustrates that few schools lecture on black history although they are permitted to (Leach, Voce & Kirk, 2020). The assessment also reveals that only 11% of GCSEs include modules to the contribution black people have had to Britain. Furthermore, not a single book written by a black author is incorporated into England's largest exam board.
This lack of black literature makes it evident that the curriculum falls short in that it fails to “reflect the community it is designed for, young people and to ensure positive representation exists of ethnic minorities” (Swiszczowski, 2022). Joseph-Salisbury (2020:2) expresses the curriculum's inability to reflect contemporary society's diversity. Moreover, the curriculum fails to incorporate colonial legacies and racist foundations within contemporary Britain.

Joseph-Salisbury (2020:3) emphasizes that although close to a half century has passed from Coard’s (1971) publication, evidence is illustrating that “racism still plagues our society and our schools”. Reflection: Although these curriculum discussions may not seem like direct and/or blatant examples of structural barriers and/or discrimination, they risk contributing to the educational disadvantage faced by black children further. Moreover, these curriculum barriers are a good example of the systemic and/or institutional nature of institutional racism. These barriers are not blatant and perhaps not easily detectable for some because they transpire in systematic ways that indirectly help keep vulnerable groups stagnant while on the outside seeming like normal procedure. Children are taught to simply follow the curriculum, and there is not much they or their parents can do about such structures that have existed for long.

Swiszczowski (2022) goes on to refer to a Runnymede (2020) report in which several institutional and unequal problem areas were detected. One example of such would be the disproportion of teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds. It also became prevalent in that report that racism is heavily ingrained within schooling which is shown in the perspectives of 49% of black youth (Swiszczowski, 2022). In the perspectives of these young black people, racism is the most impactful barrier in their performance levels in school.

Furthermore, black Caribbean children have been particularly impacted by the national curriculum which can be greatly linked to their educational attainment (Swiszczowski, 2022). In the year 2006 a change was introduced within the UK educational system which came to be called ‘The Golden Standard’. The golden standard meant higher requirements for obtaining descent grades. This change has arguably caused a clear gap in education attainment between black Caribbean and white pupils. In 2011 further advancement of attainment was introduced which has only helped make this gap bigger. Examples of educational attainment changes within this advancement include ‘The English Baccalaureate’ which essentially made it more demanding to achieve higher grades in the following subjects:
English, mathematics, geography, a foreign language (ancient or modern) and two sciences (Swiszczowski, 2022).

The English Baccalaureate measurement has resulted in 15.4% of the pupils achieving the benchmark in 2010 were white British, while only 8.5% of mixed white and Black Caribbean pupils were able to do the same (ICERD, 2011:43).

Joseph-Salisbury (2020) “Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools” report focuses on tackling structural disadvantages within the British education system and the impacts this has on minority children. One pattern within this report is that the participants’ attitudes towards the curriculum generally hints that the curriculum is a “fundamental barrier to a more racially equitable education system” (p:10).

One participant within this study expresses that the curriculum is far too narrow and that “it’s all about white history, it’s all about kings and queens. What is all that about? You are not talking about colonialism, you are not talking about the East India Company, you are not talking about slavery (..)” (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020:12).

5.2 THE LACK OF TEACHER DIVERSITY
Throughout this content analysis, it has become evident that researchers are concerned about the lack of teacher diversity as they describe this as something that further promotes issues for these children. Swiszczowski (2022) explains that the Runnymede 2020 report found that 49% of young black people declare racism to be the most impactful barrier in their academic progress. Lack of teacher diversity may not sound as the first initial link one may have to discrimination and teachers’ low expectations; however, a considerable amount of research has raised concerns on this very matter. This naturally makes the lack of teacher diversity in the workforce one of the findings within this research process. In fact, authors such as Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury (2021:1437) suggest that teacher diversity in school institutions could counter teachers’ low expectations.
Based on this, one can draw the conclusion that the immense lack of teacher diversity can be defined as one of the factors that could potentially play a role in keeping black Caribbean children in an institutionally disadvantaged position. Thus, a more ethnically diverse workforce (teachers, educational psychologists, and examiners) may be a potential step forward to remedying the attainment gap. Looking at both primary and secondary stage schooling, around a third of those children are from ethnic minorities (Swiszczowski, 2022). When comparing this demographic of children to the demographic of teachers within those schools, however, they are nowhere close to being similar. In fact, a study done by UCL proves that 46% of schools only have white teachers, meaning that none of the teachers within those schools are from an ethnic minority background. The importance of teacher diversity: Study done by Demie illustrates that black Caribbean pupils perform well in multicultural schools with a solid school leadership on equality and diversity (Demie, 2018:3).

Reflection: This hints that an ethnic child who is already academically struggling has a chance of strengthening his/her level of self-efficacy by seeing a multicultural teaching force. The importance of role-modeling is shown here. Furthermore, a white teacher participating in Joseph-Salisbury (2020:5) expresses that the workforce is predominantly white and that this results in a lack of black and Asian role models in the staff. This can be seen as a systemic barrier since it is not blatantly discriminatory to only have predominantly white teachers in school institutions.

One relevant question to ask here is: Could ethnic teachers help remedy the academic attainment gap by providing Black Caribbean children with equal opportunity to access education? We cannot know until the school institutions hire more minority teachers, but there is a great potential they might.

5.3 SCHOOL EXCLUSION (DISCIPLINARY METHODS)

Disciplinary methods (School exclusions): The relevance of assessing school exclusions as a sub-field of institutional racism in this sense shows in the way authors have issued concerns in the literature. Demie (2021) school exclusions study “The experience of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusion in England” aims to understand three things primarily: The previous research of black Caribbean pupils’ exclusion, the reason/s behind such exclusions
and the implications this has on policy and practice (p:58). In large, data has shown that black Caribbean pupils as the most excluded group within the UK educational system (Demie, 2021:58). One example of such data is Gillborn & Youdell (2000) article. The impacts of school exclusions are profound and based on a considerable amount of research some of the impacts include educational attainment issues, risk of long periods of unemployment and crime involvement.

Demie (2021:59) makes connections to institutional racism and teachers' low expectations to school exclusion based on conducted interviews. An educational psychologist explains the following regarding their perceived reasons/s for school exclusions: “I think there are a number of different reasons. My personal view is I think there is quite a lot of institutional racism, particularly against boys of black Caribbean background. In one school I have two children behaving the same way, one from a middle-class white background and the other black Caribbean, and the black Caribbean child was excluded (...)” (Educational psychologist A) (p:59). Reflection: This is a rather common theme within this research field, different disciplinary methods being applied to pupils of different races. The same educational psychologist then goes on to express that they feel that there is a lack of assessment in the needs of black Caribbean pupils and that this then can translate to them ending up excluded.

Another educational psychologist within the same interviews explained that they also view racism to be a factor in the overrepresentation of black Caribbean pupils experiencing exclusions (Demie, 2021:60). Disciplinary methods including school exclusions based on unreasonable grounds/reasons are also discussed in Demie (2021) article on school exclusions in the UK educational system. One educational psychologist expresses that institutional racism is an immense problem area in this topic of discussion and reveals “Teachers and SENCos in schools will say things to me as a white person about the reasons for exclusion that they wouldn't say to a black person” (Educational Psychologist, A) (Demie, 2021:60). Yet another educational psychologist within this study explains that there are many illegal exclusions taking place in schools. For example, “a child coming into school for mornings only, or a headteacher says “take them home to calm down” or “managed moves” to another school or “transfer” (Educational Psychologist A) (Demie, 2021:61). One significant issue here is that minority children's parents oftentimes lack awareness of the
system and therefore cannot stand their ground. Or: “Tend to not know the system enough to stand their ground”.

The head of policy and public affairs (Just for kids’ law & children’s rights alliance for England) Natalie Williams expresses that Just for kids’ law (a charity) have detected black children being excluded from school based on unjust reasons (Williams, 2022). These black children are moreover facing discrimination from their teachers which naturally places them in this vulnerable position. There are also issues regarding special education needs or disability (SEND) children being excluded instead of having their needs met by teachers. Exclusions infringe on the child's right within the UNCRC as well as the Human Rights act. Article 2 of the Human Rights act expresses that no person's right to education should be denied (Williams, 2022).

One important takeaway from the exclusion rates is that further attention and research is needed to expose more angles within school exclusion procedures/processes. As Swiszczowski (2020) explains it, more research is needed in the topic of school exclusions especially when it comes to intersectionality. For example, understanding how factors such as race, socio-economic status and/or locations play into this matter. More attention is of value here since “we need to ask questions about what is happening with exclusions and why, this is an area currently under-researched” (Swiszczowski, 2020).

5.4 TEACHERS LOW EXPECTATIONS

Low expectations can transpire in several different ways, some examples are reprimands in harsher manners, stereotyping deriving on racism, “unconscious and conscious bias” as well as being overlooked to reply to certain questions as a child/pupil (Demie, 2022:32).

In the past decade there has been a growth of black pupils in England schools (Demie, 2022:32-33). Within this growth, around 90,157 of the pupils are black Caribbean, which is reported in recent statistics. Researchers have thus in the past 3 decades reported the constant growth of black Caribbean pupils. Researchers have however in the same context also issued concerns regarding the low performance of black Caribbean pupils Strand (2012) analysis being one example.
Teachers' expectations can derive from perceptions on the pupils' race, ethnicity, socio-economic background and/or other non-academic characteristics (Demie & McLean, 2017:31). These perceptions can then lead to the teachers having low expectations towards certain pupils which can transform in different ways. Some examples of teachers' low expectations are teachers providing little to no feedback on the children’s errors, failing to provide children the opportunity to answer questions, failing to give pupils positive feedback once they have corrected their work or simply giving pupils significantly less time to answer questions. All these tendencies can “ultimately perpetuate the achievement gap that plague the education system” (Demie & McLean, 2017:31).

Demie & McLean (2017) research brief “Black Caribbean Underachievement in Schools in England” targets many problem-areas relating to the schooling of black Caribbean children and teachers’ low expectations is one of the targets. These authors do this by capturing the perspectives and experiences of parents, teachers as well as school staff overall to gather their perceptions on the impacts of teachers' low expectations on black Caribbean children. The responses within these interviews illustrate a varying image on teachers' expectations. The responses were varying in that some participants expressed good experiences with teachers' expectations. One example of a good experience being one of the parents (Parent D) within these interviews explaining that her teachers embedded her with high expectations early on (p:31).

Despite such exceptions, however, a considerable number of the interviewees' responses illustrate a depressing image of their low expectation experiences. One of the parents participating in these interviews expressed the following:

“I remember hearing a black teacher say, ‘she doesn't need to go to University’. I said, ‘hang on, would you say that if the child was called Annabel’? We should make any child feel that they can go to university. For me, I did not expect my child to do anything other than go to university” (Parent D) (Demie & McLean, 2017:31).

Another participant within these interviews who is a governor explains that a child of their friend attempted to do A level English while her teacher was implying that she could not achieve that. “She went on to get an A” (Governor) (Demie & McLean, 2017:32). Reflection: This suggests that, despite the teacher's low expectations, some students still succeed. This
can relate to Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury (2022:1438) reminder that some students may use low expectations as motivation according to more recent research. Despite such success stories however, the risk of low expectations still being a barrier is important to take notice of.

Furthermore, the concerns on teachers' low expectations start at primary school since one of the participants, also a governor, explains that one person they interviewed in their radio-station expressed their concerns about their child experiencing low expectations in primary school (Demie & McLean, 2017:33).

(Parent H) explains the following: “In year 2 my son had a black, female teacher. She just had high expectations for all the children, and he blossomed for the next two years. Then in year 4 he had a white teacher who was disinterested” (Demie & McLean, 2017:33). Similar concerns have been issued by a mother who participated in Crozier (2005) study where she expresses that her son was doing well in primary school, but that secondary school became troublesome for him (p:589). This can be seen as a pattern, a decline of motivation from primary school to secondary school especially when linking this to the participants/interviewee’s experiences in Crozier (2005) study.

Low expectations impact black Caribbean children's self-esteem and wellbeing negatively by causing a self-fulfilling prophecy that in turn contributes to low educational performance (Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2021:1438). This could also relate to the importance of having potential role models within Bandura's self-efficacy model. Furthermore, the high expectations the black female teacher had to have raised the boy's self-esteem and in turn his self-efficacy.

A church leader who was a former Vice Principal within a secondary school in London expresses the following: “We had a teacher from Rhodesia who commented to a white pupil ‘People like you should not misbehave because one day you will be leading this country’. From this I gathered I would not be running the country!” (Former Vice Principal, Church leader B) (Demie & McLean, 2017:33). This former Vice Principal goes on to highlight that situations like those explain exactly why people feel discouraged. Reflection: This can be linked back to Ackerman (2018) self-efficacy description where the author writes that not everyone is aware of their strengths even though they have them. In this instance this former
vice principal felt a lack of self-confidence solely based on what his teacher expressed; the decrease in self-efficacy starts here and could alter the child’s perception of their own potential.

Within these interviews a school governor provided a good summary of most participants' views on this matter and expressed the following: “You need a staff team who understand the children and expect a lot of them. High expectations, you should believe in them” (Demie & McLean, 2017:36).

**The UNCRC and embracing the child's full potential:** Article 29 of the UNCRC expresses that every child's education should ensure that they “fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities (…)” (UNICEF, n. d, p:4). **Reflection:** This means that the reports of teachers not applying enough attention to certain students because of their low expectations naturally goes against this very article within the UNCRC and in turn hinders aspects of the child's best interest in the realm of education specifically. Furthermore, article 3 of the UNCRC emphasizes the importance of adults making decisions with the child's best interest in mind, meaning that the impacts on the child should be in the center of decision making (UNICEF, n. d, p:3). Article 3 of the UNCRC also stresses that governments should ensure the protection of children in the realm of their parents but also in other realms with other people that they find themselves with. People and places should be held responsible and do a good/proper job of looking after children and the government should ensure this.

Through education one can properly utilize public services, gain financial empowerment, and simultaneously also contribute to security for society (Zendeli, 2017:160). The right to education is a fundamental instrument and important in understanding other human rights (Zendeli, 2017:159). The reason being that human rights are “inseparable” and understanding a certain right can fuel another. **Reflection:** This can be linked to the focus of this thesis, although the right to education is mentioned primarily, there are other Human Right aspects currently undermined. Examples being ‘children’s best interest’ in the UNCRC. Full enjoyment of the right to education could therefore naturally remedy these children’s best interest as well.
Reflection: The question of how well these children is being looked after in terms of their educational circumstances by teachers is up for debate considering the empirical evidence illustrated above. Authors such as (Tomlin & Mocombe, 2014) highlight that the British school system has failed in helping black pupils in reaching their academic potential and this is expressed by many authors and researchers. Looking at the guidelines within the UNCRC, one could argue that because several of the fundamental rights of these children are being ignored, the educational system lacks in aiding these children.

5.6 STEREOTYPING

It is important to understand what stereotyping means to grasp the ways this can harm Black Caribbean children. Although the focus of this thesis is on racial (and in some instances racial and masculine stereotyping since black Caribbean boys are risk being stereotyped) it is worth mentioning that stereotyping falls under more categories than race. Stereotypes are different characteristics applied to different groups of people within a society (Government du Quebec, 2023). These characteristics are applied by society itself and are used to categorize people based on gender, skin color, weight, and age primarily. Government du Quebec (2023) goes on to explain that “everybody subscribes to some stereotypes because identifying types is the method the brain uses to sort information”.

Understanding the commonality of stereotyping in the schooling of black Caribbean children in the UK is of value in this thesis. The reason being that stereotyping usually transforms as a direct result of racial bias and racism/discrimination. In addition to this, the stereotyping deriving from teachers oftentimes causes them to have low expectations.

Demie & McLean (2017) dedicates a couple pages of their research brief to discuss their empirically supported findings on the commonality of stereotyping within schools in England. In this research brief stereotyping is greatly linked to the media's negative pictures. The way in which the media presents and reports situations can be seen as an “integral part of society” (Demie & McLean, 2017:99). Furthermore, the media elaborates on already existing knowledge that is perceived as ‘common sense’. A society then more or less absorbs this perceived ‘common sense’ along with different forms of belief structures that come with it. This has historically been the case for the way in which the media creates images that become general knowledge to the society viewing it. One deep-rooted component of media
profiling has historically been the angles it places on people viewed as different. More specifically different from the perceived normal and/or acceptable. Looking at British society for example, the perception of ‘difference’ has been applied to jews, black people and even Irish people. Positioning different people as ‘dirty’, ‘others’, ‘criminals’ and ‘trouble’ therefore places the majority population as more civilized (Demie & McLean, 2017:99).

One of the headteachers within Demie & McLean (2017) research brief, expresses that the immense power of media is concerning and that “the South London press is full of negativity, and it always has articles about black men with guns or knives” (Headteacher, School A) (Demie, McLean, 2017:100).

Stereotyping can be defined as an effective and persistent process of racism portrayal (Demie & McLean, 2017:100). This alone explains the value of examining stereotyping within this thesis. Stereotyping leads to individuals being placed in categories of what is perceived to be common for that specific group of people. This could translate to black people being primarily associated with entertainment, athletics, and crime. (The order of the phrases?).

A parent within these interviews’ states: “There is a lot of stereotyping especially of the black Caribbean. Especially in the media. If they are showing a black man, they would just choose someone with braided hair and ear-rings and the reinforces stereotypes” (Parents B) (Demie & McLean, 2017:101).

A governor goes on to express “A lot of the images we see of black Caribbean in the media are stereotypical and negative. Even Ride Along 2 which is an action comedy gives out a very violent, aggressive, negative image of black people. It is divisive in many respects” (Governor, School M) (Demie & McLean, 2017:101).

The impact of racial stereotyping can be linked to the United Nations (WGEPAD). Furthermore, a report by the WGEPAD illustrates that stereotyping leads to misrepresentation (OHCHR, 2019). In this context connections are being drawn to the risk of hatred and hate crimes. Human Rights experts within the WGEPAD also direct their focus on children within school institutions that face indirect discrimination. Indirect discrimination could for instance transform through negative stereotyping and ‘imagery’ stemming from teaching tools/materials. Reflection: This can be linked to the systemic and institutional barriers that are at the core focus of this thesis. Discriminatory practices are subtle and indirect; however,
they still create substantial barriers to Black Caribbean children’s self-efficacy, educational attainment and thereon their fundamental right to adequate education.

Crozier (2005) study “There is a war against our children; black educational underachievement revisited” focuses on the educational experiences of Black Caribbean and mixed-race pupils and lets their parents lead the conversation. This article reveals a disheartening image based on the views of the parents and the children themselves since the educational experiences were overwhelmingly negative. Moreover, it quickly becomes clear in this study that black boys are a particularly vulnerable group in this as highlighted in the previous research. Furthermore, this study focused on the educational experiences of pupils in both primary and secondary level in two different cities within England (Crozier, 2005:585).

One of the participants within Crozier (2005) explains that physical appearance placed her son in a vulnerable position. More specifically, physical appearance and being labeled threatening and troublesome by teachers impacted her sons (Crozier, 2005:591). One of Mrs. Jordan's sons became tall young, and this placed him in the category of a young tall black man, especially in the eyes of teachers. Mrs. Jordan expresses that her son's teachers would stereotypically be saying that her son is a young tall black man, they would also in the same conversation include that they felt intimidated by him. Mrs. Jordan follows this by expressing that “this is the norm for most black youths” (p:591).

Reflection: Teachers feeling threatened by certain pupils solely based on physical attributes risks placing pupils in vulnerable positions and hinder his/her educational experience. The reason being that there is a risk of the teacher simply sustaining from aiding and assisting certain children in comparison to others.

Mrs. Jordan also expresses that her son started detesting school and managed to drop out of one of his classes because of the lack of assistance he faced in his schooling. Teachers would in some instances blame him for things others were doing, “there has been some occasion where because he was in a particular position, you know when you’re in class and your sat with a particular group, or near a particular group, if that group starts off because your there, your automatically getting blamed” (Mrs. Jordan) (Crozier, 2005:591). These types of misunderstandings tend to place minority children at risk of confrontation and in some cases school exclusions.
Another mother makes a similar assessment of her son's educational situation and explains that her son has been accused of misbehaving on several occasions. Examples of such allegations include that her son (Kofi) supposedly stole a bike, had hashish on him, and threatened his teacher (Crozier, 2005:592). Although Kofi ended up being excluded for allegedly threatening his teacher, it was later understood that he did not do such a thing. Instead, they ended up declaring the situation to be ‘a misunderstanding’. (Demie, 2021:63) also finds the labeling of Black Caribbean pupils to be one factor leading to their overrepresentation in school exclusions. One parent within Demies interviews expresses that black people are viewed as being violent and such problematic perceptions makes its way into school settings. The parent goes one to state “I advised a friend whose son had been excluded to ask to see the official school figures for exclusions. He was never excluded again. He was autistic” (Parent C) (Demie, 2021:63). This tells us that certain exclusions are being made without enough attention being given to the child’s circumstances and learning abilities.

CHAPTER 6

6. CONCLUSION

This final chapter of the thesis will do three things; Reflect on the main takeaways from the research findings, apply a human rights context, and suggest future research recommendations.

6.1 DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS

This thesis attempted to answer the following questions:

*What role does systemic barriers play in Black Caribbean children’s academic underachievement in the United Kingdom? In what ways can teachers’ expectations and attitudes promote versus hinder Black Caribbean children’s academic performance in the UK educational system? And lastly, in what ways do systemic barriers and teachers’ low expectations interfere with Black Caribbean children’s enjoyment of ‘the right to education.’*
Black Caribbean children continue to be one of the lowest performing groups in the UK educational system. Institutional racism and teachers’ low expectations have significant impact in this underachievement. We see this through discriminatory practices that are embedded within school institutions such as: overrepresentation in school exclusions, lack of teacher diversity that could be remedied with more minority teachers, implications within the UK national curriculum such as a lack of black history modules and teachers stereotyping of black children’s (specifically black boys) that result in them having low expectations. When it comes to stereotyping it has become evident that the media’s portrayal of black people and especially black men can make its way into school settings. This then worsens teachers’ perception of Black students since labeling and racial bias transforms and often creates a perceived narrative in the teachers’ minds. Teachers’ low expectations dictate the way they deliver instructions and overall engage with pupils, not providing each child with equal attention risks contributing to the child losing motivation thereof access to educational attainment.

All in all, structural barriers and teachers’ low expectations risk hindering the motivation, self-esteem, and self-efficacy of Black Caribbean children which in turn can make them academically stagnant. Lack of Self-efficacy interfere with the child’s wellbeing as mentioned in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Moreover, depression is one consequence of this, and this can have significant impact on the child’s motivation to achieve academically.

6.2 HUMAN RIGHTS DISCUSSION

Although the ‘right to education’ may be the most obvious Human Right context applied to the academic situation of these children, it is abundantly clear that the educational disadvantages of Black Caribbean children in in UK undermines several Human Right realms/areas. Particularly children’s best interest which expressed in article 3 of the UNCRC and right to no discrimination expressed in ICERD. We earlier stated that understanding and maintaining one human right can motivate another. By ensuring that Black Caribbean children access their right to education properly, the barriers to these children’s right to ‘non-discrimination’ and ‘children’s best interest’ could be remedied as well.
Black Caribbean children are consistently underachieving in the UK educational system and the systemic disadvantages (particularly school exclusions) paired with teachers’ low expectations are translating to demotivation and low self-efficacy. This leads to their access to adequate education being undermined. The barrier to the right to education is particularly visible through school exclusions. The reason being that school exclusions essentially mean that the children excluded are missing out on school hours. It is also visible through the simple fact that teachers are not targeting enough support and guidance to the Black Caribbean children in the empirical evidence. In Crozier's (2005) study one participants expressed that not only did teachers fail in guiding and assisting her son academically, but there was also a lot of labeling and stereotyping of her son that resulted in him receiving unjust disciplinary methods. In these instances, the best interest of the child is not being taken into consideration and their right to access education is being hindered.

6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS
Firstly, future research can delve deeper into the role of teacher’s low expectations in specifically in the schooling of Black Caribbean children in the UK. The reason being that this specific focus is considered under-researched as previously stated in this thesis. Moreover, it is important to note that this topic is intricate, and more factors could be applicable when researching the underachievement of Black Caribbean pupils in the UK. Thus, future research can investigate other interesting factors that may also play a role in this academic dilemma. Some perspectives to apply are socioeconomic background, lack of parental involvement and overall contributing home factors and/or the role of peer pressure by applying the theory of peer pressure. Future research could also implement a bigger scope of Human Right context to this research area. The academic articles in this research field vividly illustrate the structural inequalities faced by Black Caribbean children. However, not as many include international Human Right framework to the situation. Thus, applying a further Human rights context could be another suggestion for future research.

Lastly, although most of the articles refer to the whole of UK since the systemic barriers are in most institutions, it is worth noting that England has been making an appearance as an example in several of the articles. One suggestion is therefore targeting research on other parts of the UK.
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