

**TWO GENERATIONS OF BLACK CARIBBEAN  
WOMEN 'S EXPERIENCES OF THE EDUCATION  
SYSTEM**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the generational differences between the first generation of British born females of Caribbean descent who attended school in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s and their daughters. Through the exploration of these two generations' experiences of school the research examined the similar trends and gained an understanding of the difficulties that they encountered and cited as barriers to their education. It explored the worries and anxieties of first generation mothers, and the measures they applied to improve the educational experiences of their daughters.

It is qualitative research of twenty-six Black Caribbean women in London and Oxford. Access to participants was gained using the snowballing method and semi-structured interviews were used to trace the discussions about the educational experiences across the two generations. Documentary sources such as government reports and other research provided the historical perspective and contextual background to the study. When these historical documents were analysed they showed there was on-going political tension around educational issues. The main contention of the early immigrants of the 1960s was educational inequality which resulted in a disproportionate number of West Indian children in educationally subnormal schools.

The study analyses some areas which were of concern to the mothers in respect to their dissatisfaction with their children's schooling. It showed that some first generation mothers felt that they received very little support from their parents in school. Immigrant parents were unaware that they were expected to participate in the education of their children. However, unlike their parents, mothers in this study used their experiences of education and applied various measures in an attempt to support the academic performance of their children. This is in contrast to some of the stereotypes of indifference, disengagement and detachment of Black Caribbean parents.

There is constant comparative analysis between the mothers' and daughters' experiences. The results showed that both mothers and daughters were affected by teachers' perception, and low academic expectation. The study also highlights their perception of discrimination, isolation, exclusion and prejudicial practices. It seems that the education system through its operations and practices have maintained a structure that undermines self-confidence and performance of some Caribbean students. It was concluded that when mothers and daughters experiences of school were compared that many similarities existed. There was increased access in the education system that resulted in the availability of opportunities to further and higher education. However many issues still exist that prevents greater equality in the British education system.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction to the study**

#### **Aims of the Study**

This research examines the generational differences between the first generation of Black British born females of Caribbean descent who attended school in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s and their second generation daughters. One of the aims of the study was to analyse the educational attainment of the two generations.

The study examines the similarities and differences in their experiences and seeks to gain an understanding of the perspective that they constructed of school. Another explores the worries and anxieties of first generation mothers, and the measures they applied to ensure the educational success of their children having been through the educational system themselves.

In this study it was evident that mothers had high expectations and aspirations of their children and based on their own school experiences and their desire for the children to be successful in education they enlisted different tactics. Mothers and daughters were aware of various debates that focused on race, class and gender dimensions of educational attainment of Black Caribbean children. Mothers and daughters alike valued and placed a significant amount of importance on education. Some mothers having been through the education system themselves aspired for their daughters to

achieve and be successful in school. They worried about teacher perception, low academic expectations, which resulted in their children not being encouraged in school. As a result of this awareness mothers worked with their children supporting them through school in order to obviate the risk of their educational failure. Some mothers employed private tutors to assist their children in key subject areas. One mother who was unhappy with the state education made the decision to choose a fee paying school for her daughters, some mothers who were on a limited budget choose the Saturday school option.

The research investigates their experiences of school and the strategies they employed to assist their children in education. The study is feminist qualitative based research of twenty-six Black British born women of Caribbean heritage with grounded theory as the methodological tool for data analysis, which involves the constant comparative analytic procedure. This research illustrates the many ways in which mothers were involved in the education of their daughters including encouragement in the home, monetary incentives, Saturday school, Sunday school, private tuition and private school education. In an attempt to ensure the education success of their children, some parents went to great lengths and changed schools on numerous occasions.

Mothers in this study were interested in all aspects of their children education and worked tirelessly in the pursuit of the success of their children in school. They viewed their role in the education of their children as critical to their success and endeavoured to work in partnership with the schools and teachers. However, some mothers encountered resistance from teachers in the academic placement of their children and as a result were more vigilant. As a result of greater parental involvement in their



education, some daughters in this study were better directed to achieve their goals and aspirations and were pleased with their achievement.

Fundamentally, it was the ambition of first generation mothers in this study to assist their children in their education in order that they achieved their aims and aspirations in life.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

A review of the literature demonstrates the vexatious issues concerning Black Caribbean children and education have been contentious amongst educationalist, sociologist and the British Government. Nevertheless, there is very little research that investigates two generations of Black British born women of Caribbean descent, and least of all mothers' and daughters' experiences of school. Their contribution provides an insight into the strategies that mothers have developed to protect their children from the exclusion, discrimination and racism that they themselves had experienced at school. The research gives mothers an opportunity to speak about their experience of school as children and as parents. The comparative aspect of the research includes the daughters' experiences.

This study provides a different perspective on the constant debates of Black Caribbean students and allows them to tell their stories of their experiences. It provides an understanding into whether the idea of educational failure is projected across the generations; and to gain an understanding of the strategies mothers employed and their perception of education success or failure. My findings are essential, and not yet

covered, and contribute to the discourse of education by taking into account these women's experiences of school, as mothers, as children and also their daughters' accounts.

## **Outline of the Thesis**

There are seven chapters in this thesis. Chapter One, the introduction, sets out the background to the study. Chapter Two provides an explanation of early migration of West Indians into Britain. This chapter sets out the study in respect to the historical and educational context of West Indians immigrants in Britain from the 1950s and 2000s. In this chapter Black Caribbean people are referred to as West Indians. They were the early migrants who arrived in the United Kingdom when that term was used. In subsequent chapters Black Caribbeans denotes the first and second generation participants who were born in the United Kingdom to Black immigrants parents from the Caribbean. West Indian migration into Britain occurred in the latter end of 1940s, however the biggest influx occurred in the 1950s and 1960s (Peach, 1968). During this period many migrants viewed this as an opportunity to train, earn some money and return back home (Hiro, 1983). It was their aspiration to return to the Caribbean and not to remain in the UK for a prolonged period (Abenaty, 2000; Thomas-Hope, 1980). However, the subsequent changes in immigration and border control laws of the 1950s resulted in new migrants and children coming to Britain to be with their parents (Peach, 1968; Macdonald, 1969). In addition during this period of the 1960s many settled migrants were giving birth to children in Britain (Davidson, 1962). This chapter concentrates on the some of the frustration and anger that parents had about their children in the British school system. There is an indication that home and school

relations were used to explain some of these factors, these issues were argued in terms of social policy and formed part of the political debates. Other issues such as language, genetics, and socio-economic factors are also highlighted. This chapter also brings to light the large number of West Indian children that were placed in educational subnormal schools and the subsequent arguments and condemnation around issues relating to their language. Documented evidence in the form of Select Committee reports and other secondary sources indicated that West Indian parents and communities groups refused to accept these philosophies and challenged the authorities in an attempt to address their concerns on the education of their children.

Chapter Three sets out the structure of the study in terms of the methodological and theoretical issues. The chapter is divided into four sections. Section one sets out the theoretical framework in terms of concepts and theories which underpins the research from the feminist perspective. Section two discusses issues of access, participants, methods and ethics; section three addresses reflexivity and finally section four deliberates on the concerns and dilemmas encountered during the research and discusses limitations. This research is aligned to the feminist methodology. The feminist approach sets out the theoretical conception for this study based on the intersectionality of gender, race, and education. Feminist methodology has been drawn upon as it emphasises a group of women who are often marginalised and polarized in society and gives the women an opportunity to voice their opinions and frustrations of their experiences of school as children, mothers and their daughter experiences (Maynard, 1994). Feminist methodology takes into consideration the association between the investigator and those being researched. There is an indication in this chapter that feminist researchers have difficulties in remaining

disaffected from their research and to remain objective in the process of research (Letherby, 2003).

The study is qualitative based research as “qualitative research aims to explain phenomena and events by the construction of hypotheses formulated by the researcher” (Arcidiacono et al., 2009). First generation mothers, having been through the education system, felt that they encountered barriers in education and thus they explored strategies which they implemented to combat discrimination and racism in school. Qualitative research was deemed to be the best mechanism for capturing the experiences of these women in this study. Qualitative interviews and documentary sources in relation to government reports and other research were analysed; these documents provided the historical perspective and contextual background. Grounded Theory was used as part of the data analysis as “this allows for the generation of a theory of a process that is grounded in data obtained from interviews and observations with participants who have experienced that process” (Solway, 2011: 21). Creswell (2007) suggested grounded theory “allows for more flexibility and places greater assumption on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals” (Creswell, 2007:65).

Indicative in the chapter was reflexivity. Reflexivity as part of the research is discussed in relation to the feminist approach. The theory of reflexivity is generally ascribed to feminist research methods. Neil (2006) indicates that the process of reflection in research between the investigator and those who are being studied is applicable and should be a fundamental part of research. This is an area which is discussed and encompasses three aspects; myself as part of the research process; identity; and power relations. Finally the issues and dilemmas examined the challenges and complexities around the field work and a discussion around the limitations of

conducting research. It was argued that the methods applied in the process of gathering data have been the most appropriate for this study.

Chapter Four investigated Black Caribbean women's experiences of school during the 1970s to 2000s, ethnic and racial identity, institutionalised racism in school and isolation and exclusion. The chapter explored the relevance and importance of education, educational attainment and finally low academic expectation and teacher perception. The chapter examined the potential barriers in education and identified areas of concerns that were gleaned through analysing the data. Ethnic identity explored the variation between ethnic and racial identity. In other words for some first generation women the use of racial and ethnic identity was interchangeable. In the case of those first generation women they were acutely aware of their racial identity and some participants were made to feel different because of the colour of their skin (Fenton, 1999). During the late 1960s and 1970s some first generation participants encountered very few Black Caribbean faces in the school with which they could identify.

Some other first generation women were able to identify with their ethnicity as this was a period in which there was an intake of West Indian children into the British education system. The issue of discrimination in school was more overt in relation to first generation participants. School, during the 1970s, was tumultuous experience for many ethnic minorities because there were not many laws protecting ethnic minorities and participants encountered discriminatory behaviours (Wright, 1987). The chapter shows that participants encountered racism on a daily basis and in some scenarios this was ignored by the teachers (Mirza, 1992; Majors, 2004). Mothers in this study

remained convinced that despite more recent laws protecting ethnic minorities in school from these behaviours, very little has changed.

Chapter Four investigated some key areas of anxieties in relation to education and these were specified through the data analysis. The analysis focuses on mothers' and daughters perceptions of education and compares and contrasts their views. Some of the issues they highlighted were the relevance and importance of education, educational attainment and low academic expectation and teachers' perceptions. In some respects these issues were similar to those of their parents before them. In respect to educational attainment some mothers in this study asserted that whilst in school they were not aware of the importance of attaining good grades in terms of career advancement. On a comparative analysis the second generation were more knowledgeable of the impact that achieving the best grades would have on their future goals. Another area in this chapter examined teacher perception and low academic expectation of Black Caribbean students. It showed that Black Caribbean children were disproportionately located in the lower tier of examinations (Strand, 2012). In this study it shows that mothers refused to accept teachers' evaluation of the academic ability of their children and challenged this assessment. There is an indication that teachers were influential in the manner in which school is experienced by students, more so for Black Caribbean students (Ferguson, 2003). This chapter shows that based on their own experiences in school some mothers challenged the perceptions of teachers of their children and became active participants in the education of their children.

Chapter Five focused specifically on parental involvement in the education of their children and on the strategies mothers employed to support their daughters in school. Through the interpretation of the data there was an acknowledgement that parental involvement had an impact on the educational success of children (DEECD, 2008). In this study parental involvement is defined as parental engagement. Mothers in this study were engaged in various ways in the schooling of their daughters such as parent governors and participating in after school fund raising activities. Other support mechanisms included home and school support, encouragement and guidance (Weaver, 2007, Estyn, 2005). It was evident that mothers took an active role in all aspects of their children education. Mothers in this study used their own experiences to assist and support their children in school. The mother's role in this study was juxtaposed in against that of their immigrant mothers of the 1960s. It was evident that some mothers having received very little support in school by their parents worked tirelessly to maintain a presence in the education of their children. What is notable is that some mothers in this study recognised that during their period of school, their immigrant parents were not knowledgeable of the education system (Tomlinson, 1987, Brock, 1984; Phillips, 2011). First generation mothers engaged different strategies in supporting their daughters through school in an effort to combat racism, discrimination and other underlying structural difficulties such as low academic expectations and teacher perception.

Chapter Six explores the opportunities in education for both generations. In this chapter choice of school is examined in relation to the decisions that mothers made in accessing schools for their daughters. What has been evident is that first generation mothers' choices of schools were comparable to the decisions made by their

immigrant parents. In other words some mothers made their decisions based on demographics and location. Social class as a factor in school choice was highlighted in the literature. However, class positioning was not discovered to be conclusive in this study as the data highlighted that only the three families who resided in London had experienced difficulties in locating the better school for their daughters. The majority of first generation mothers in this research lived in areas outside of London and were able to secure their choice of schools for their daughters. Lastly, perception of opportunities explored the options that were available in education to both generations. The second generation had access and more educational options in school. However, many first generation mothers believed that although their children had better options in education, racism and discrimination along with prejudicial practices have remained and therefore limited their options.

In the conclusion, chapter Seven brings together the main threads of the discussion and reveals that during their time in school, both generations experienced similarities and differences in their education. The study argues that some first generation Black Caribbean born women were not successful in education because their parents were unaware that they were expected and/or required to participate in the education of their children (Phillips, 2011). In this thesis parental engagement in the education of their children was a determining factor on the future success of children (Jeynes, 2005). The study showed that a number of second generation women were not successful in education, having failed because of systemic issues linked to low academic expectations and teacher perception. This chapter argues that the educational system through its processes and procedures continues to undermine confidence, self-esteem and the academic abilities of some Black Caribbean students



in education, an indication of institutional racism. In spite of these two generations' experiences of the education system, they continued to place a high value on education as a means of fulfilling their aspirations and realising their ambitions. The next chapter sets out the historical context of Black West Indians in Britain.

## **Chapter 2**

### **West Indian experiences in British Schools 1950s to 2000s**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an historical perspective of education in relation to West Indian children in Britain and their education during the early migration period. The terminology of West Indian is used only in this chapter and it documents some of their early experiences in Britain and the problems, anger and frustrations encountered when the children joined their parents from the Caribbean. It also explores a number of earlier debates and more recent arguments around first generation Black Caribbeans.

In the 1960s, significant numbers of West Indian children were enrolled in British Schools. The term West Indian is an historical expression which is shaded by colonialism and Eurocentric ideology (Linder, 2010). This terminology is appropriate to this chapter and explored an historical aspect of Black Caribbeans' early encounter with the British education system. During this period many West Indian parents were deeply concerned and worried about the low level of achievement of their children in school; this was debated amongst educationalists and sociologists alike. Though not exclusive, the focus of this chapter is primarily concerned with three areas that affected West Indian children and impacted on them whilst in school. The first area was language as it was argued that West Indians spoke a variation of the English language. The second was placement in Educational Subnormal Schools as West Indian children

were not expected to achieve in school or indeed had the ability to do so. The third was racism in relation to intelligence, class and achievement. There is a comparison of the intelligence quotient test which draws on research in America on Black Americans that documents their fight for equality in education in the United States. Demonstrated in this chapter is the refusal by West Indian parents and community to accept the explanations given by educationalists and the local education authority that blamed their culture and parents for the low achievement of their children in the school system. Indeed, this chapter also highlighted that Black West Indian parents campaigned tirelessly to try to redress the inequality within the British education system. However, before examining these three issues there is an exploration of the education in the West Indies to provide a context for understanding the relationship between migrants' experiences of education in the West Indies and their early encounter with the British education system.

### **The Educational Context**

Primary school education was accessible to men and women, in the English speaking Caribbean from the 1890s. This was embraced by people who were denied their freedom as it gave them the ability through education to become self-sufficient. Through education, literacy and numeracy, those who had access to it were able to make progress, not only within their home country but more importantly it also enabled their migration to Britain and to the United States (Goulbourne, 1988). While universal primary education had been achieved by most West Indian Islands by the 1950s, the educational experiences of most Islanders barely reached the primary leaving level. As early as 1960, in some of the less developed Islands "up to a quarter of the

population had no experience of schooling at all” (Brock, 1984:68). In the countryside and outlying districts the situation was dire and it was from such areas that the greater proportion of West Indian migrants originated. The system of education within the Caribbean was restricted to the learning of the very basics, often supported by hard punishment (Brock, 1984:68). Secondary school education was expensive, and the idea of attending a grammar school was the dream of many but realised by a few. Furthermore access to secondary education was only for the selective few who were able to afford a grammar school education (Braithwaite, 1965).

Within the Caribbean there was a system of scholarship programmes whereby students from all backgrounds could gain access to secondary school by successfully passing an examination. Through this scholarship programme some students were able to attend university in Britain (Braithwaite, 1965). Some working class parents were able to educate their children by making sacrifices, and depriving themselves or by funds obtained while working abroad to pay for school fees.

Migrants from the West Indies have been shown to have been resident in Britain for over a hundred years and there have been Black communities, such as in Liverpool, Cardiff and London with a long standing history (Banton, 1955). However, mass migration of West Indians to Britain occurred during the 1950s and early 1960s (Peach, 1968; Goulbourne, 1999b). Many West Indians from modest backgrounds, who had limited access to education in their homeland, emigrated to earn as much money as possible within a period of time as a means of financing their children’s education. The transition from schools in the Caribbean to British schools was not an easy move.

In spite of Britain's portrayal as a racially tolerant society (Studlar, 1974) the evidence was to the contrary (Heaven, 1987). Newly arrived migrants from the West Indies, experienced a culture shock. Disparities between mainly rural West Indian communities and British urban cities coupled with educational reformation made schooling for them even more difficult. Migrant children arrived at a time when British schools were implementing reforms and this made the route of accession to the system of education tumultuous. Many West Indian parents and their children who migrated to Britain did so during the period when the British school system was changing in fundamental ways. The "1950s and 1960s was a period of open-plan, child centred activity learning primary schooling; and non-selective curriculum development oriented and extended secondary schooling" (Brock, 1984, 1982). This influx of West Indian children placed added pressure on an already stretched system that was struggling to come to terms with the newly implemented changes.

Historically in British schools there was public acknowledgement to the hypothetical inability of children from lower socio-economic background (mainly white working class children) and their access to education. Chapman (1986) for example noted that prior to World War Two children received an education that was based on the social status of their parents. The 1944 Education Act was introduced in an attempt to alleviate this trend. This was to guarantee equality of opportunity in education for all children irrespective of socio-economic position. A three tier system of schooling was introduced, with schools categorised as grammar, technical and secondary moderns. Despite the change to the school system, education continued to be based on class differences (Chapman, 1986:08). In terms of the hierarchy in education working class

children remained at the bottom. These various arguments and debates were in respect to white working class children and their families and related to their underperformance in education. Nevertheless, many West Indian children who came into the education system during the 1960s and 1970s were by default involved in these debates and arguments (Brock, 1984; Homan, 1986). Many migrants lived in deplorable circumstances in inner cities (Davidson, 1962; Peach, 1968) and mainly in white working class locations which resulted in their implication in the debate.

During the late 1960s and 1970s there was a change in the manner in which it was thought that parents should interact with the school (Vincent and Tomlinson, 1997: 362). The involvement of parents in the education of their children was now heralded as 'good practice' for teachers and parents (Plowden Report, 1967). In particular, the participation of working class parents was singled out and the parents were encouraged to be more participatory in school (Midwinter, 1972; Baron, 1989). Various activities and incentives such as educational and recreational amenities were introduced. These became accessible to the community and parents were now welcomed into the classroom to assist teachers with some of their duties. In the Taylor Report (1977), there was a recommendation for parental inclusion on all governing committees, parents were seen an appropriate group in the affairs of school (Vincent and Tomlinson, 1997: 368). Vincent and Tomlinson (1997) noted that "the plethora of initiatives was informed by a number of different views about the ways and extent to which parents could and should be involved with schools and schooling" (Vincent and Tomlinson, 1997:372).

Generally, working-class parents have been blamed for the poor academic performance of their children, their antisocial behaviour, and their inability to provide adequate support to their children in school (Fine, 1997:276). However, Crozier (1999) argued that working-class parents were dedicated to the learning and educational success of their children. Parents have recognised the importance of their role and the various ways in which they do so (Crozier, 1999:316). McNamara et al., (2004) supports these arguments and have noted that many parents expected and believed that they should participate and support teachers in the education of children, though the level of assistance and involvement is dictated by the school (McNamara et al., 2004:477). Mothers in this study wanted to participate in the education of their children but it was unclear to what extent this was recognised. Studies have concentrated on parental involvement in education in different ways, for example David et al, (1993), on mothers; Dehli, (1996) and Gewirtz et al, (1995), on social class; Tomlinson, (1984), (1993); Vincent, 1996a, and Crozier and Davies, (2007) on ethnicity.

The debate on poor educational achievement of children in education started with white working class children but was later projected onto West Indians families and their children (Edward and Redfern, 1988). Home and support issues were not only the aspects relating to West Indian children in the British school, other factors such as language was seen as restrictive. West Indian children were perceived to speak a language that was inferior to the majority white population and this was viewed as problematic and became a contentious issue.

## Language Issues

The social language of many West Indians who immigrated to Britain was creole, however in St Lucia and Dominica, it was patois. The former is English based, the latter French, but neither would enable the pupil to relate without difficulty to the Standard English of formal education in Britain (Brock, 1984:62). West Indian students were often seen as speaking a variation of the English Language. This type of spoken English was often seen to have an influence on the written and spoken English of children from a West Indian background. It was the belief of some educators that the Black West Indian child spoke a language that was inferior to theirs and was not English (Brock, 1984). In the West Indies various dialects were spoken but the official language in the British Caribbean Islands was Standard English (Brock, 1984:62).

West Indian parents protested against statements made by teachers which implied that their children's language was insufficient for communication in schools. It was a widely held belief by many educators at the time (Select Committee On Race Relations Immigration, SCORRI, 1969:964). An education officer from Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) reported that "quite a proportion of immigrants know no English at all when they come here. Equally, a very large number of immigrants, particularly from the West Indies, do speak English but with a difference, and this makes a problem also" (Select Committee On Race Relations Immigration, SCORRI, 1969:964). This was subsequently criticised by the West Indian community who disagreed with this statement. They concluded that speaking an English dialect should not be perceived as problematical or as not having command of any English. Furthermore, English was mainly the language spoken in the West Indies, although dialects were used. This was



similar to the situation in Britain for example in Devon and Cornwall where local dialects exist.

Giving evidence to SCORRI (1969) an English as a second Language teacher (ESL) argued that West Indian children were not treated fairly with the language issues. She stated that dialect speaking West Indians in general have not been given systematic help in crossing the communication gap between their style of English and the local one. There is no established strategy either for coming to terms with the not always narrow gap between different dialects spoken by United Kingdom and Irish children and teachers (SCORRI, 1969:90). In other words teachers had no difficulties when dealing with local white children who spoke with regional accents or dialects in school but when applied to West Indian pupils this appeared to be problematic. In other words it can be argued that the language issue was challenging because of their 'otherness' (Winch, 1990:45). West Indian children who spoke and sounded different to the majority white British population could be perceived as not belonging to the homogeneous cultural group. West Indians were identified as foreign, unlike the majority white population, and as a result of this so were their dialects. Issues with language were not aimed at new immigrants from the West Indies only, but have been remained as a contentious issue with West Indian children born in Britain. In reality this was indicative of the negativity attached to the issue of language.

This was a damaging image associated with this aspect of language. A North London West Indian Association representative argued that the difficulty was not with the children and compared West Indians circumstances to those of European migrants who fled to Britain during the two world wars. He argued that obstacles European

migrants encountered had been quickly resolved without the distresses that had befallen West Indians immigrants. In other words he argued that it was prejudicial to say that white settlement was less arduous than Black settlement (SCORRI, 1969:1017). There was an indication that race was an issue in the perception of Black relocation to Britain.

The debates and polemic around language issues remained at the time of SCORRI, Session 1976-1977. At the SCORRI, Session 1968-1969, the argument had focused on whether dialect speaking was a contributory factor to the low attainment level of West Indian children. The argument concentrated on British born children from West Indian backgrounds who despite being born in Britain, and spoke English like their white peers spoke a dialect at home. It can be argued that issues of language have very little to do with the manner in which they speak a dialect but is a commonality to every child. At SCORRI, Session 1976-1977 it suggested that the solution was to enhance educational materials with emphasis placed on advancement of linguistic programmes for all children (SCORRI, 1977:522).

An investigation conducted by a Schools' Council project at the University of Birmingham (1967) revealed that there were developmental complications in language which were common amongst children whose indigenous idiom was Standard English and not attributed to dialect differences. They discovered that grammatical resources which were introduced for West Indian children were beneficial to all children in school. Consequently, the correlation between West Indian children's language and the hypothetical complications in the school system did not translate into reality.

What has been demonstrated is that far from the complexities of language, race was a factor in West Indian children's reception in British schools. The debates around language issues were used to mask the challenges West Indian children encountered in the school system which were based on racists 'ideologies'. However, these were not the only obstructions West Indian students experienced in school. A large number of West Indian children were placed in schools for the educationally subnormal (ESN) in the 1960s and 1970s. This issue is discussed in the next section.

### **SEN, ESN and the West Indian child**

West Indian families and the community for over forty years have expressed dissatisfaction on the number of West Indian children that were identified with special educational needs. Special Educational Needs was introduced and made public in the United Kingdom education system in 1978 (Warnock, 1978; Pumfrey, 2010). The 1944 Education Act defined eleven classifications of disability; this practice was subsequently discarded following the instrumental Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science, 1978) and the successive Education Acts of 1981, 1993 and 1996. Successive special needs education policies specified in the first Special Education Needs Code of Practice (Department for Education, 1994) have been guided by the Warnock Report (1978) and have mostly maintained the concept of special educational needs (SEN). Schools operate under a Code of Practice that is legislated for the identification and assistance of children who have learning difficulties, to be provided additional support within school (Lupton et al., 2010). They are so defined if they "have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or have a disability which prevents or hinders them from

making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of local authority” (DfES, 2001:06). Special Education Needs are assessed in stages (Department for Education and Skills, 2001). Eligibility under the U.K. Laws are now not predetermined and is based on assessment of needs (McLaughlin et al., 2006). It is concentrated on the additional needs of children as a result of “a learning difficulty which calls for special education provision to be made” (Education Act 1996, 312). The revised SEN Code of Practice states that “children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their homes is different from the language in which they will be taught” (DfES, 2001, McLaughlin et al., 2006:49).

However, in the 1940s children with special education needs were classified as retarded and considered intellectually subnormal with slow learning abilities. Doll (1961) suggested that “intellectually subnormality is associated with corresponding subnormal academic achievement, but with overall social competence sufficient for successful adult independence” (Doll, 1961: 487). Furthermore the intellectually subnormal child is normal in other regards except aptitude (Doll, 1961). Tomlinson (1978) noted that according to the official definition being educationally subnormal was not dependent on a child’s IQ. However schools expected teachers to differentiate between different levels of retardation among children.

Many West Indian students were thought to require SEN and have been disproportionately represented in SEN schools. Coard (1971) lambasted the education system when he discovered that a large number of children of West Indian descent were sent to Educational Special Needs schools. In his study he argued that this was

the result of the educational psychologist, who had not studied the background of children from the West Indies and therefore incorrectly assessed them as having low IQs and behavioural problems. Townsend (1971) reaffirmed Coard's (1971) research and concluded that children of West Indian immigrants were 2.33% more likely to attend ESN schools than all other non-immigrant children. 0.32% of Indian children and 0.44% of Pakistani children were sent to such schools, which was disproportionate to West-Indian children. This was apparent by the number of West Indian children assigned to ESN schools; especially those recently arrived in Britain. West Indian parents and the community were particularly aggrieved by this and insisted that their children were treated unjustly in these tests. In an effort to address those aspects affecting recently arrived West Indian children in British school, the West Indian Standing Conference advocated to the Select Committee On Race Relations Immigration (SCORRI), Session 1972-1973, on education, that these children should not be assessed on arrival but to give them a grace period of two years to have settled and adjusted to the school system. This request was refused by the Department of Education and Science (DES) which was also present at the SCORRI, Session 1972-73.

Tomlinson (1978) observed that the DES defended their position in their response over the disproportionate numbers of West Indian Children in SEN schools; they argued that SEN were inclusive of other factors. The DES indicated that language issues, teachers' inability to manage children who were slow learners and had difficulties with children who challenged their authority in the classroom as some of the causes for these contrasting numbers. This communication for example was ambiguous and perplexing to parents and the West Indian community about the

selection process for ESN schools. As indicated earlier, there were questions surrounding intelligence and IQ tests; these were vigorously contested as teachers were influential in deciding on the future and educational aptitude of children in their care. Whilst these tests were administered by white teachers to West Indian students, there were contestations that suggested these IQ tests were biased and unfair to Black students.

As Coard (1971) argued that the people who constructed these tests were white and middle class and therefore he was not in the least surprised that white middle class pupils passed the test with a high pass rate. He suggested therefore that using this test as a marker for pupil ability was unfair to West Indian students. Similarly Tomlinson (1978) highlighted the results of an internal ILEA report on results of a survey. The report discovered that teachers in these schools believed that many migrant children were inappropriately placed, as students were assigned based on aspects around behaviour instead of their academic abilities.

Coard (1971) concluded that the British Education System was a bad influence on Black children. He declared that the system made them “feel inferior in every way and that black children became educational subnormal’ and he concluded that “teachers expected black children to fail, thereby creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, which they live up to” (Coard, 1971:69). Tomlinson (1982) is congruent with Coard’s (1971) argument as she noted that labelling or categorisation of individual children is a social construction that reduces them to a description which is supported by negative stereotypes, beliefs and marginalisation. Abberley (1987; 1992) and Corbett (1996) called for the rejection of policies that label children based on a medical model of

disability. These models tend to cause undue anxieties to parents and labelling has a negative effect on the child.

West Indian parents and community activists fought relentlessly in the 1970s on the subject of ESN schools, as parents were convinced that racism was a key aspect in the extraordinary high numbers of West Indian children in these schools. The West Indian communities registered a formal complaint to the Race Relation Board on the grounds of racial discrimination (Tomlinson, 1978). Nevertheless, the debates and arguments around ESN schools were not abated. The West Indian communities and parents were now vociferous in emphasising the other worries and anxieties they held over the education of their children. Furthermore at the SCORRI, Session 1976-77, the West Indian Standing Conference expressed their distress that children who attended conventional schools were achieving the same level of results academically as those children who attended ESN schools. Therefore if the basis of ESN schools was to assist children who had difficulties coping in academia and mainstream schools, then West Indian children did not appear to fare any better in conventional schools. In other words as Coard (1971) had posited earlier, the educational system was failing West Indian children in all areas of schooling. The West Indian communities and parents were aggrieved as they believed that these were legitimate complaints about the education of their children which were not taken seriously as there was no redress to these issues.

The issue of the over-representation of Black children with Special Education Needs (SEN) is still a contentious debate. SENs have highlighted teachers' influence and their ability for uninterrupted and implicit biases, and their attitudes and behaviours

(Strand and Lindsay, 2009). These arguments are consistent with the earlier research by Coard (1971) and Tomlinson (1971; 1978). Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) for example stated that “the problem in England is not the misidentification of minority students as having disabilities but the misleading identification of them as having special educational needs as individuals when the difficulties they experience are systemic and structural in origin”. SENs in Britain have proved to be categorised by different form of disproportionality “between social groups and/or by the inappropriate interpretation of ethnic and cultural differences as disability” (Dyson and Gallannaugh, 2008:37-42).

The disparities in SENs referrals and admissions appear to expose profound societal disjunction and inequalities in the education system. Factors such as gender, ethnicity and class positioning underpin the manner in which school, special educational needs and educational attainment are experienced. In an unequal society factors such as career opportunities, aspects around health, and earning capacity are all experienced differently by various ethnic groups (Blanden, et al., 2005; National Statistics, 2003, 2004). In other words there are the systemic issues which maintain the disproportion of the number Black pupils in SENS, because teachers hold the authority in deciding who is considered as having special education needs. Teachers are in the position of power and have the ability to affect the achievement level of children. Teachers held lower expectations of Black students and this is a constructed response to the inequalities in education and society (Kairiene and Jones, 2011:45). The issue of ESN and SENs schools was an indication of the complexities around aspects of the failure of the British education system to address the needs of the West Indian child.



The debates have continued and the implication of SENs and IQ tests has been detrimental to West Indian children, and reiterates the inequalities in the school system. One such debate centres on intelligence, the idea being that white people were superior to Black people. This was a widely held belief among race scientists in the USA and UK and they have spent decades in an effort to prove this theory. This issue is discussed in the next section.

### **Intelligence Quotient and Racism**

In the 1960s there were debates involving the intelligence of West Indians and Black people in comparison to white. From the inception of the mental ability test, questions were raised as to the suitability for assessing the intellectual ability of certain marginalised groups. American literature is drawn upon as it explains some of the difficulties that Black Americans experienced in their fight for equality in society and in education. These tests reiterated the stereotypical belief that suggested Black Americans were intellectually inferior. Tests were based on an ideology of white superiority and the legacy of slavery (Bell, 1992:9). The Black-White attainment gap has been widely theorised, investigated, critiqued and documented in American literature and is still a contentious issue (Jensen, 1969; Clark, 1965; DuBois, 1953; Bell, 1992; Haymes, 1995; Dyson, 2006; Feagin, 2006; Lewis *et. al.*, 2008). This literature is relevant in this study as West Indian immigrants are a marginalised group who experienced similarities in their campaign for equality in education.

Furthermore these arguments in Britain and in the USA suggested that there was a racial bias in the tests and that they should not be implemented (Coard, 1971; Boozer,

1978; Williams, 1971a, 1974, Tomlinson, 1978). Jensen and Eysenk (1970) held the belief that Black Americans were of lower intelligence than white Americans. Jensen (1969) indicated that Black Americans were 15 IQ points lower than the majority white population. Jensen and Eysenk (1970) justified their argument and insisted that the use of the IQ test as a fair measurement of innate ability on educational attainment within the United States. They argued that statistical evidence had proved that Black people scored consistently lower than white people in the test, thus proving their theory on intelligence.

During the period of the 1960s and 1970s various scientists introduced other measures of intelligence tests that systematically discriminated against Black people. For example Wechsler (1974) introduced the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for children (WISC) which was later revised and published as (WISC-R) in an attempt to be more inclusive and improve fairness for Black children. However, Munford and Meyerowitz's (1980) findings on both (WISC) and (WISC-R) discovered that Black children had lower test results on both tests in comparison with white children who produced similar IQ results. Despite apparent efforts to produce results to the contrary, overall racial IQ differences have increased. Therefore according to Williams (1974), the WISC-R can be seen as even more culturally biased than the WISC (Munford and Meyerowitz, 1980:474). Munford and Meyerowitz (1980) noted that it is not unexpected that based on the dominant ideology of intelligence quotient that Black American children have now become more predisposed to being identified erroneously as developmentally disabled.

The other instrument used for measuring intelligence is the McCarthy Scale of Children's Abilities (MSCA). The MSCA is designed for use with children two and a half to eight and a half years of age inclusive. It is

“an individually administered test that assess the cognitive and motor skills of young children” (Arinoldo, 1981:632).

In his study of forty children, twenty were between the ages of four and five and a half years and the other twenty were aged seven to eight and a half years. Half of the participants were Black and the other half were white children. Arinoldo (1981) noted in his findings that Black American children continued to lag behind whites in school and asserted that this was most likely due to the absence of Black mentors and Black teachers in schools. Arinoldo (1981) suggested that:

“even though children are matched on variables as SES, geographic locale, and age, their individual cultural experiences may influence significantly their test performance to varying degrees” (Arinoldo, 1981:637).

In other words educationalists who administer these tests should be mindful that Black and white students have different cultural and school experiences.

Black children continued to score lower test results on the IQ approximately one standard deviation lower than whites (Jensen, 1980; Loehlin, Lindzey, and Spuhler, 1975; Reynolds and Gutkin, 1981) and WISC-R (Wechsler, 1974). Gordon and Rudert (1979) insisted that in the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for children (WISC) they found no evidence around cultural bias and on the IQ test which suggested unfairness against Blacks or lower class whites. Gordon and Rudert (1979) asserted that despite taking into consideration, factors such as class positioning and ethnicity, Black students were not able to achieve higher test results. These tests were congruent with

Jensen (1973) test results which maintained with implicitly that these disparities did exist.

In Britain the IQ tests had been severely criticised during the 1970s by researchers such as Coard (1971) who argued that these tests had systematically excluded students who were not white. Gould (1990) supported his argument and noted that such tests were “culturally biased”. He argued that these tests were devised by white Americans, aimed at white children and therefore, excluded the minority ethnic population. Coard’s (1971) critique against the use of intelligence tests was supported in the United States of America (Anastasia, 1967; Halpern, 1971; Williams, 1971) who argued that the current test should not be used to assess Black children (Williams, 1971). Incidences of racism and impropriety were discovered by Blanton (2000) who investigated research which was conducted on Mexican Americans and African Americans in Texas in the 1920s. He concluded that the people who were administering these IQ tests at that time were ‘racist’. Further, he noted “that these tests represented the state of Texas educational community on the subject of IQ science which makes this racism that much more significant” (Blanton, 2000: 1023).

Vance and Egin’s (1978) argument on the question of culture-fairness in intelligence tests has been raised by many researchers. However, as Wesman (1968) pointed out, attempts to develop culture-fair tests have not been successful because of the failure to recognize that intelligence, in part, is the summation of the learning experience of an individual. However, “the practice of testing minority children continued in spite of the many questions raised as to the fairness of intelligence tests scores, especially as it relates to Blacks”(Vance and Egin, 1978:453).

Syer (1982) asserted that these were racist ideologies that were entrenched in educational theories of the 1960s and unmistakably this had an impact on teachers' perception of West Indian children. Hudson (1995) confirms Syer's (1982) argument and asserts that "the belief in the intellectual inferiority of persons of colour is a core assumption of ideological racism" (Hudson, 1995:3, Jordan, 1968; Bowser and Hunt, 1981). Further, in spite of IQ being disproved on numerous occasions, many Americans believed this notion was correct Hudson (1995). Vincent (1991) explained the Black/White IQ differences and noted that:

"it appears that the lack of early educational and economic opportunity has taken a toll on the Black adult population that is still being reflected in recent renorming of the WAIS-R and other IQ tests. In other words racial inequality has left its mark on Black adults" (Vincent, 1991:269).

Ferguson (2003) alluded to teachers' opinion and attitude on the academic performance of Black children. He said that "my bottom line conclusion is that teachers' perception, expectations, and behaviours probably do help to sustain, and perhaps even to expand Black-White test score gap" (Ferguson, 2003:495). Though research has shown that differences exist, other research has shown that the tests are discriminatory. It is apparent that intelligence tests excluded Black and minorities in the United States and United Kingdom and maintained the concept that Blacks were somewhat less intelligent than whites (Franklin, 1991).

In the UK, West Indian parents were justifiably anxious about IQ tests which showed that their children lagged behind white children. More significantly, these test results were used as selection criteria for placement into ESNs school or conventional school. There were contradictions in the manner in which LEAs operated ESN guidelines

because there were discrepancies in the test as several different criteria were used in the evaluation for selection to ESN. This influenced West Indian children's school placement. The overrepresentation of West Indian children in SEN was a persistent problem (Graham and Robinson, 2004). It is evident that West Indian pupils during the 1960s and 1970s were marginalised in schools based on racist ideologies that were underpinned by IQ tests. In spite of this the West Indian community and other immigrant populations canvassed relentlessly against the dogmas of ESN schools during the 1960s and 1970s.

In their struggle for equality in education West Indian parents rebuked assertions about their children's intelligence, language and aspects around their cultural background. The deep rooted and insidious aspect of the education system as an institution meant that Black children have been expected to under achieve in all areas of the curriculum and parents of West Indian children have rightly been concerned about this. Current research on teachers' attitudes and beliefs on the attainment of Black children suggest that they continued to be plagued in the education system by these phenomena (Jussim et al., 1996; Casteel, 1997; Ferguson, 2003; Atwell and Domina, 2008). This aspect is discussed in depth in chapter Five.

West Indian parents were blamed for all the educational difficulties of their children (Graham and Robinson, 2004) and at times disregarded in their attempts to gain access to equal opportunities in education. On the question of intelligence of Black people this has been contested and illustrated. Other arguments around intelligence and the academic performance of West Indian children alluded to aspects of

socioeconomics as an explanation for underachievement in school. The next section discusses this aspect.

### **Race, social class and achievement**

Issues such as discrimination, social class, family structure and culture have all been influential in the socio-economic progression of West Indian people in Britain (Perlmann, 1987). The 1967 Plowden Report established that schools should address the issue of the culture in working class homes and to address the deprivation experienced by such families; this category included immigrant families, and in effect connected race and social class. Education reforms were implemented in Britain and in the United States to address these inequalities in academic experiences within schools (Harris, 2012). In Britain it was a widely held belief in society and by educators that West Indians were from a different class, and had no distinctive culture, or language (Pyrce, 1979; Brock, 1984).

Often West Indian pupils were seen as coming from a different class from that of teachers. Teachers held low expectations of West Indian children and did not expect them to perform academically. Many ethnic minority pupils were seen as coming from a working class background and some teachers felt that West Indian families should not see themselves on the same par as that of white working class. As, Skeggs (1975) asserts class is primarily about inequality and exploitation (Skeggs, 1997:75). Ultimately teachers' expectations of West Indian children were not very high, and teachers often had preconceived ideas of children and would not admit this even when their assumption was wrong (Stone, 1981).

Furthermore it was construed that coming from a lower economic status implied that one was culturally deficient and materially deprived. This argument that family class position has an effect on educational achievement of their children was endorsed by many teachers (Tomlinson, 1984). Another argument indicated that West Indian children's homes were more disadvantaged and that parents did not support or encourage their children. Pryce (1979) for example suggested that West Indian families failed in their encouragement of their children, and books and toys were often inadequate. He noted that as an ethnic group West Indians had no identity as a group, family life was unstable, and West Indian children were most likely to underachieve (Pryce, 1979). Such was the thinking at the time on West Indian families. This was a credible argument on the difficulties experienced by West Indian families in Britain at the time. However his research did not consider that West Indian people were from different Islands in the West Indies, lived on some of the worst housing estates and were mostly in menial jobs. These deplorable living conditions had an impact on the manner in which education was experienced by some West Indian children.

The 1971 Census illustrated that many ethnic minorities lived in inadequate and poor housing conditions. The majority of West Indian women worked longer hours, when compared to white women. Ethnic minority men were often employed as unskilled labourers in lower positions and with lower incomes than the majority of white men (BPPA, 1978:3; Fenton, 1999). These were extreme and hostile conditions under which many West Indian families lived. As Tomlinson (1984) indicated, these associated factors regarding the West Indian family and their background were shown negatively and impacted on education.



The SCORRI, Session 1968-1969 demonstrated that teachers assumed they were ineffective in influencing the educational results of children. There was an assumption made by some teachers that all West Indian children were deprived irrespective of their home life (SCORRI, 1969:64). Coard (1971) highlighted the disparity between different ethnicity groups. He identified a number of biases such as social class, culture, emotive bias and teachers' attitudes as significant to West Indians pupils. He challenged the education establishment to introduce teaching methods that would be more inclusive for the West Indian child. It was evident that during the SCORRI discussion the issue of race was overlooked and remained obscured.

This general reluctance and omission meant that 'race' was not alluded to as a contributing factor in teachers' perceptions of West Indian children and their academic ability in school. Consequently, schools adopted a blame culture which asserted that parents were accountable for the academic achievement of their children in school. Goulbourne (1998) suggested that the majority group of white British also felt less able to control the social factors of education and as a consequence had adopted an attitude of a blame culture with this blame firmly placed on the immigrants and their children (Goulbourne, 1998:87-93). West Indian parents were becoming increasingly concerned that their children were not being taught adequately and given the right skills and attributes to gain meaningful employment to compete in the job market (Goulbourne, 1998:87-93). West Indian parents and the community refused to accept this assessment and campaigned for a closer investigation of the education system and the negative impact it was having on West Indian children.

These concerns were investigated by the Rampton Committee, which was set up by the Labour Government of 1974-1979 and operated into the early 1980s. The Committee recognised the position of West Indian students as in general being much worse than that of any other component of the school age population, immigrant or otherwise' (Brock, 1984:70). An urgent interim report was published by the Committee under the Swann Report which came to a similar conclusion, specifying that covert racism was the single most significant influence in maintaining the distinct pattern of low self-esteem among West Indian students in relation to their education potential (Brock, 1984:69).

The endemic pattern of persistent educational difficulties confronted by West Indian students has been evident for at least forty years. These debates which plagued the West Indian child as newly arrived immigrants, in the 1960s and 1970s, have continued into first and second generation Black British born children of Caribbean parentage.

The arguments have focused on family life, which seems to show that a child from a lower socioeconomic background would not achieve academically. However this was not accepted as an explanation to the underperformance of West Indian children. For example, Goldthorpe and Hope's (1974) suggested that 'white collar' clerical workers, traditionally defined as middle class, and 'blue collar' manual workers, traditionally defined as working class, shared similar lifestyle and aspirations for their children.

Nevertheless, the education system, through its operation and structure, has continued to undermine self-confidence and academic abilities of West Indian children

within British schools. More recent research (Strand, 2011) has shown that ethnic minority students have continued to attend schools which are failing, their families live in more disadvantaged areas and experience greater poverty. Black Caribbean pupils are more likely to be identified as Special Education Needs (SEN) and are more likely to be excluded from school. Harris (2012) noted that “changing deeply embedded beliefs that teachers and other school personnel hold require a different kind of professional investment where staff must confront negative beliefs about students that are shaped by race, social class and English Language status” (Harris, 2012:146).

## **Conclusion**

The focus of this chapter has been on concerns regarding the education system and its impact on West Indian children since their entry into the British school system towards the latter part of the 1950s but mostly 1960s and 1970s. There is an illustration in this chapter of some of the political debates and issues regarding West Indian children and the dissatisfaction of the West Indian communities and parents initial encounter of education in British schools. The strength of feeling among the West Indian community groups was reflected in the numerous campaigns, petitions and political debates demanding equality and social justice in education.

Factors in relation to language, ESN and SENs schools were highly contentious issues as these were used as justification for denying West Indian children access to equality in education. These schools of thought supported the ideology of the racist IQ debate. Although the debates on underachievement and home factors started off with white

working class families, the timing of the arrival of the West Indian children into the British school system meant that they were by default associated with this model.

This chapter has also showed that race has remained controversial and is pervasive throughout the education system. It demonstrated the failure of the government to deal with the consequences that racism has had on the education of children. Early immigrants challenged this and minority communities campaigned relentlessly in the attempt to rid the education system of racism. Debates which suggest that West Indian parents have been less involved in the education of their children have remained prominent in society because children of West Indian heritage have remained at bottom of the educational league table on statistics of attainment. However there is an alternative discourse and this research attempts to depict the reality of the school experiences of the two generations during a time when the education system was undergoing changes. It shows mothers' experiences in school, their concerns, anxieties, expectations and aspirations for their children. It highlights the strategies that mothers employed to support their children against the real and perceived barriers to education.

The following chapter, three, gives an explanation of how the study was devised and organised in regard to its methodological and theoretical issues.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodological and theoretical issues**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of the methodological and theoretical strategy employed during the collection of data for this study. The overall research stratagem was based on the feminist methodological approach which explores the relationship between the researcher and the researched. This is a feminist qualitative based study where generally the issue of reflexivity was of great importance. Feminist methodology and methods explores this aspect and reflects upon the effects of this relationship in the researcher findings; in effect giving the participant a voice within the research project.

The chapter is divided in four sections; section one explores the theoretical framework. Section two explains access, methods and ethics. The main method employed for gathering data was the use of qualitative interviews. Research participants (mothers and their daughters) were identified using the snowballing technique, gatekeepers, and other various networks. Government documents, committee reports and other research were drawn upon to provide the historical and the contextual analyses to the study. Public events, meetings, conferences and seminars were attended and contributed to the background of this study. The method selected for analysing the gathered data is grounded theory. This method of data analysis has been important for interpreting the phenomenon being researched and the classification of the data.

In section three, reflexivity is addressed. To be reflexive in research is to acknowledge oneself in the process of the research; this issue was explored in relation to the research process, politics of identity and power relations in research. Finally section four discusses the issues and dilemma in the study and acknowledges that there are limitations with any research process and likewise these were recognised.

## **Part One**

### **Theoretical framework: Feminist methodology and feminist method**

Over the last twenty years feminist researchers have endeavoured to explain why it is important to give women a voice within research. There have been numerous debates around the validity of the feminist approach and on the conceptualisation as to what defines feminist research. Harding (1987) describes methodology as:

“A theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed; it includes accounts of how the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines” (Harding 1987:2).

Letherby (2003) explains that to think methodologically:

“involves describing and analysing the methods used, evaluating their value, detailing the dilemmas their usage causes and exploring the relationship between the methods that we use and how we use them, and the production and presentation of our data-our findings” (Letherby, 2003:5).

In other words a key feature of feminist methodology and feminist researchers is the approach to affect male biasness in research (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley and Wise, 1993). Feminist researchers have attempted to explain the importance of giving

women a voice within research which can be linked to the theory within a framework or perspective. A key aspect in this research is to give participants a platform to express their opinions and to talk about their experiences of school. Given the conceptual basis of the study which has been influenced by gender, race, ethnicity and education therefore applying a feminist methodological approach has been applicable.

In a patriarchal system women are often marginalized and polarized into a category that fits within the acceptable norms of society and thus thinking methodologically is very important when conducting feminist research (Francis and Skeleton: 2005). There is an assumption that feminist methodology is not primarily concerned with only conducting research but also highlights the underlying structural problems surrounding social research. This aspect is evident in chapters four to six. Letherby (2003) for example noted that feminist methodology considers the relationship between the researcher and the participants and indicated the difficulty encountered by feminist researchers to divorce themselves from their research and to remain objective in the process of research. What is more, the feminist methodology is very mindful of the effects that may be introduced whilst conducting research and recognizing the researchers' own subjective involvement within their research (Letherby, 2003:5). This characteristic is explored further in the chapter in terms of reflexivity, power relation issues and issues and dilemmas in my research.

Feminist methodology is different from that of a non-feminist researcher. Letherby (2003) maintains that as a feminist researcher there is scope to be subjective rather than objective in research. Given this aspect I afforded myself permission to be subjective rather than objective and there is a degree of sensitivity that I, as the researcher was able to include in the process of my research. I was able to evaluate

my progress and to position myself within my research and to ask questions of myself such as why I have chosen this particular subject to research. In this framework of methods I was receptive to the thoughts and feelings of the participants of my research as discussed previously by Letherby, (2003). This is illustrated further on in the chapter with an indication of some participants unease with a number of questions during the interview process. I was very careful and recognised these feeling and during the process of interviewing asked several times whether they still wanted to carry on with the interview. Maynard *et. al* (1994) and Letherby (2003) maintained that a feminist methodology instinctively equips the researcher to be reflective in their research. At every stage of the research process I reflected on how I came across and on what I could have perhaps done differently. Reflexivity is an aspect which is discussed further in the chapter.

Conversely, Harding (1987) states that there are several strands of feminist epistemology, one such strand she described as feminist empiricism. Epistemology she described as “issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategy” (Harding 1987: 2). She argued that it was possible to remove sexist and other biases from the processes of research. Harding (1987) claims that it was possible to do so once problems with the study had been identified and eliminated at the start of the research. Another strand is the ‘feminist standpoint’. She explains that this strand is the ability of a committed feminist to understand, explore and investigate the intricacies of other woman’s lives and less distorted than if the research is carried out by a man. She explained that a woman is more likely to understand another woman’s plight which may not be visible from the position of the ruling gender (Harding 1987). In other words what differentiates a feminist research method from other social



scientist is their observation and how this is then conceptualized making it a unique method. Letherby (2003) for example explains as feminist epistemology as:

“An epistemology can be defined as a theory of knowledge. Thinking epistemologically involves a consideration of the relationship between the knower and the known, and issues of epistemology relate to issues of ontology (being/ the nature of things/ that which is knowledge)”, (Letherby, 2003:5).

Furthermore, Letherby (2003) stated that there is no such concept as a feminist method. She noted that there is “no distinction about feminist methods as any method can be used to retrieve data and can be used in a pro-feminist or non-feminist way” (Letherby 2003: 5). However, Allcoff (1988) noted that ‘women are able to demonstrate their positional perspective a place from where values are interpreted and constructed rather than as a locus of already determined set of values’ (1998:46). She explained that, had it not been for a feminist method, knowledge about women’s lives would have remained invisible. Maynard (1994) reiterates this argument and noted that it was because of a feminist method, that is women researching other women’s life through active listening and women’s understanding of other women’s experience has been instrumental in a feminist method. Moreover feminist researchers dislike ‘any method of research that is exploitative and creates a power relationship between the female researcher and the female respondent, (Bryman 2001: 348). This is an aspect which concerned me, in terms of who holds the power in research. I discuss this in detail in power relations issues further in the chapter.

This research was constructed from the perspective of a Black liberal feminist using grounded theory as data analysis. This has facilitated my subjectivity and permitted me to identify myself within my research. I discuss and acknowledge ‘myself’ as part of the research process further in the chapter. Collins (1990) asserted that ‘Black

feminist thought, like all specialised thought, reflects the interests and standpoint of its creator' (1990: 201). My experiences as a Black Caribbean woman is somewhat different to that of a Black Caribbean woman who was born in Britain, however, I am able to relate to some aspects of subjugation encountered by them. I have encountered racist behaviours towards me in several different forms. I am Black and female thus giving me a better insight of race and gender differentials within Britain.

King (1988) asserts that Black women have acknowledged their commonalities that are mutual to all women and the bonds of 'race' which connects Black women to Black men. Black women have understood 'that the interactive oppressions that circumscribe their lives provide a distinctive context for Black woman-hood'. The effect is double jeopardy, not an unfamiliar concept to Black women (1988:42). The concept of double jeopardy asserts that Black women are marginalised because of their sex and their race. In other words there are some experiences Black women receive because of their sex and race that female members of other groups do not experience. However because of their consciousness of this discrimination Black women have been resilient in resisting this oppression (King, 1988:43). Equally, Mirza (1992) noted that Black women are doubly discriminated against because of their ethnicity and gender (1992:142). The concept of intersectionality emphasises that some women do not experience discrimination and other forms of oppression mainly on the basis of gender but for reasons including ageism, sexism, class and ethnicity (Ludvig, 2006). This is an aspect discovered in this study as Black Caribbean mothers challenged and refused to accept some of the discrimination and prejudice directed against their children as illustrated in chapters five and six. In other words institutionalised racism discussed in chapter Four.

Similarly Collins (1990) argues that 'Black woman scholars may know that something is true but be unwilling to or unable to legitimatise their claims using Eurocentric masculinist criteria for consistency with substantiated knowledge and criteria for methodological adequacy' (1990:204). Collins (1990) states that "Black feminist thought encompasses diverse and contradictory meaning" (1990:19). Within the Black feminist framework, I was able to align myself to the constraints of the questions on gender, education, achievement, social class and racism discussed in chapters four to six. As suggested by King (1988) and reiterated by Collins (1990) "Black women's experiences with both racial and gender oppression results in needs and problems which are distinct from white women and Black men, and that Black women must struggle for equality both as women and as African-American" (1990:20) or as Black Caribbeans. This concept is discussed in chapter four in terms of the challenges and perceived barriers that participants encountered in education.

Historically Black women are often raised in a matriarchal environment and led by strong women who are thus dominant within this structure (Hill-Collins, 1990). In this research these were Black Caribbean women were instrumental in their children's lives and were aware of their "rights" as mothers and their responsibility in the education of their children. Mothers' role in the education of their children is discussed in chapter Six.

Furthermore, Black feminists argued that much of the feminist writings relate to the experiences of white middle class women and not to their experiences. Moreover, the feminist praxis is based on a premise of patriarchal Eurocentric theories which has

often excluded Black feminist thought. It is evident that there are limitations in the various techniques of gathering data. It can be argued that the feminist praxis has no uniformed method of approach to data collection, and indeed feminist researchers have used a combination of methods and methodologies to retrieve data which has ultimately created the visibility of women. Consequently, there is a contention that feminist researchers and other researchers have opposing views on the concept of gender and conducting research (Hooks, 1981; Hill-Collins, 1990; Maynard, 1994; Letherby, 2003).

As mentioned before there is double discrimination for Black feminists because not only is there gender inequalities, there is racism which we are unable to divorce ourselves from (Hill-Collins, 1990; Mirza, 1992). Subsequently in using a feminist approach I was aware that there are limitations to any research method and methodology whether from a feminist approach as opposed to a non-feminist stance. Maynard (1994) suggests that the debate over methods has been in part concerned with the method of data collection. She states that the more traditional method of qualitative research in particular surveys and questionnaires were more representative of a masculine form of knowledge. This method of data collection meant that there was a disparity between the researchers and the respondents thus allowing for an objective approach to, a value-free form, of data collection of social facts (Maynard, 1994:11). Nevertheless, Lather (1995) asserts that 'very simply, to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the centre of one's enquiry. The overt ideological goal of feminist research in human sciences is to correct both the invisibility and the distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position (Lather, 1995:295). In this study it was appropriate and logical to apply the feminist approach as a Black Caribbean woman interviewing other Black

Caribbean women. The women in this research were able to express and voice their grievances of an education system which at certain periods in their lives created barriers, excluded and discriminated against them in their struggle for equality and success in education. The feminist methodological framework has been an important feature to this research as it underpins the basis of this study. The purpose of this research was to investigate two generations of Black British women from a Caribbean heritage, mothers and daughters experiences of education. Thus theoretical conceptualisation of the feminist methodological approach was adopted to give an 'invisible group' of Black Caribbean mothers and their daughters an opportunity to talk about their experiences of school in the British education system.

## **Part Two**

This next section discusses access to the participants and some of the difficulties I encountered; it gives details of participants in respect to age and location; discusses ethical considerations, and finally data analysis.

### **Access**

Through various websites such as the Black Londoners and different organisations such as Communities Empowerment Network, Saturday school in Clapham, The Separation network, Baptiste churches in Brixton, Dulwich and Clapham junction, libraries in Stratford, East Ham and Brixton town hall I was able to gain access to two families who were willing to participate in the research project. These two mothers made the initial contact with me via email and I made formal contact with them by emailing the participation information sheet (Appendix 1). I waited a week and then I contacted them again via email to see whether they were still interested in taking part

in the research. Once they had responded I then formalised this by emailing the letter inviting them to participate in the research along with the consent form.

Access to participants was also gained through gatekeepers. Sixsmith et al., (2003: 583) noted that gatekeepers are beneficial to community research but equally researchers must understand that there are disadvantages. They assert that gatekeepers 'could attempt to influence the research process with their own version of 'reality' by indicating only participants 'approved of' by themselves' (2003:583). I agree with Sixsmith et al., (2003) that gatekeepers have the ability to refer only participants who they deemed suitable to take part in research (2003: 583-584). I experienced some challenges with this method of access. Potential participants were first contacted by this gatekeeper who spoke to them initially and then passed the phone to me. The participants who were chosen were women who were known to the gatekeeper and despite requesting other contacts who would be interested in taking in the research the gatekeeper declined to give the names or numbers of other participants. Furthermore, after participants agreed to take part in the research whilst the gatekeeper was available, subsequent phone calls to arrange to meet up were ignored and the other woman had changed her mind. In keeping with the rights and dignity of participants, they had the right to change their mind at any time before and/or during the research process. I was mindful of their wishes and I did not make contact with them again. Furthermore, Miller (1995:79) and Sixsmith et al., (2003:25) noted that gatekeepers have the balance of power in the research process. They assert that this occurrence has been well documented. For example one person who had previously agreed to help me, after I contacted him again, he stated that had I discussed my research topic with him beforehand, he would have discouraged me as

I was going to struggle to recruit my sample. After several telephone calls and emails to him which he did respond to, I was left to assume that he was no longer interested in assisting me. Miller (2003) noted that she had not anticipated the drawback of snowballing and the importance of the role of the gatekeeper. I agree with Miller (1995) and Sixsmith et al., (2003) that gaining access to participants can be problematic.

In Oxfordshire access was gained to participants through personal contacts and the local family centre. The concern here was that some of the participants were acquaintances and known to me. These were women whom I met occasionally at social events and my concern here was using this relationship to my advantage and how was I going to avoid doing this. To alleviate this problem I spoke to the women about the nature of the research I was undertaking. None of the women knew beforehand that I was conducting this type of research. Again the process was followed as with the participants in London. They were contacted via telephone and for an informal conversation that I then formalised by sending the participation information sheet (Appendix 1). They were also contacted again after a week via a telephone call to ascertain whether they were still willing and happy to proceed with the interview. They were then sent a letter inviting them to participate in the interview as has been the case with all participants who took part in the research (Appendix 4). Daughters were also contacted separately and they too received an information participation sheet and a letter inviting them to take part in the research (Appendix 3). I brought hard copies of all the documentation with me to the meetings. I went through all the information given to participants beforehand and explained the details again. They were informed of their rights to withdraw from participating in the research project at any time before and/or during the interview. Again, before the recorder was started

I asked for permission to do so. I was extremely conscious of the participants' opinion and valued their input in the research project. Jayaratne (1993) points out that as part of the research process it is imperative that the researcher actively engages and is interested in the research participants (1993:120). I tried to keep an open mind as these were their opinions and as such should be valued even if the views expressed were not in accordance with my beliefs. My aim at all times was to maintain the reliability of the research and to deal adequately with any ethical issues that emerged from participant-researcher relationship.

During one interview there was a participant whose family was known to me, and she wrongly assumed that I knew of personal issues that had occurred in her family. I was slightly taken aback as I had not seen this participant for a number of years or members of her immediate family. This particular interview lasted one hour and forty-five minutes. This was also a difficult interview for me as she talked more about the problems she was experiencing in her life with her other children. Despite trying to get her to refocus on the questions, she answered part of the question and before fully completing her response she brought up other issues she was now having with her sons in school. She then spoke of her daughter raising four young children alone. It was evident during the course of this interview that this participant needed someone to talk to about her personal problems and even after the recorder was switched off I stayed and listened to her vent some of her frustrations.

Hofman (2004) noted that during the course of her own research on women injection drug users (WIDU), 'researchers might feel compromised by the fact that study participants viewed them as friends' (Hofman, 2004:656). In other words because of



this perceived relationship as that of 'a friend' by the research participant then it was very likely for participants to divulge more personal issues. Hofman (2004) discussed being 'ill-prepared to deal with the ethical concerns related to study participant-researcher relationships'. Furthermore, she had no intention of being friends with or/ of contacting the research participants other than for the purposes of the research study (Hofman, 2004:656).

Just like Hofman, (2004) for example, during this interview I felt uncomfortable and not prepared for the level of personal details I was being told. Unfortunately, I was unable to complete my interview with this participant because I had a malfunction with my recorder and had to return to her home the next day to continue the interview. This participant once again started off by discussing the problems she was experiencing with her sons and her daughter. Yet again I found myself spending more time at her home than I had anticipated. Like Hofman (2004) I had not expected the level of personal details or had any intentions of contacting this participant again other than to discuss the research study.

An argument by Costely and Gibbs (2006) assert that it was important for individual researchers who conduct research into their own community to be aware of the "ethics of caring" (Costely and Gibbs, 2006:96). In other words, as a researcher it is important that the feelings of research participants be taken into consideration as a matter of the "ethics of care". During the course of this research study I have been very careful in instituting a process of care and consideration for all the research participants. For example, during one interview, a participant appeared to be distressed; I stopped the recorder and asked whether she wanted to carry on with the interview. At the end of

each interview I asked each participant how they felt about the interview and whether there were questions on the interview schedule that they found particularly difficult for them.

## **The Participants**

The study comprised of twenty-six participants, thirteen mothers and thirteen daughters, who are Black British–born women from Caribbean backgrounds. Individual participants, mothers and daughters were interviewed and access gained using a non-probability sampling method of snowballing. The criteria for selection were that all participants had to be Black British born females of Caribbean heritage, eighteen years and above. I had chosen to be rigorous about the age limit as I was acutely aware that not all experiences of school are necessarily positive ones and therefore talking about their past experiences of school may invoke unpleasant memories for some participants.

The research was carried out in London, Norwich and Oxfordshire, using semi-structured interviews. The age range for mothers was between forty-one and fifty-one years, all of whom were born in Britain to immigrants from the Caribbean and therefore described in this study as first generation Black British born women (Appendix 8). Their daughters' age ranged from eighteen to thirty years old and they were the second generation of Black British born women, grandchildren of the settlers who arrived from the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s. The decision to interview these specific groups of people was based on two criteria: firstly, location because the biggest groups of

migrants from the Caribbean settled in London, Birmingham, West Midlands and the larger cities in the north of England, and secondly, access to these groups. London is viewed as one of the most ethnically diverse cities and was therefore chosen to conduct this research.

Seven families were interviewed in London and the remaining six families were interviewed in Oxfordshire. However, a separate interview was conducted in Norwich as a daughter was away at university and agreed to be interviewed at university. In the original research proposal it was anticipated that all the research participants would be based in London. However there was difficulty in locating all participants in London for the research and therefore this was resolved by widening the geographical area to include other parts of the country.

The process in London was problematic. Despite advertising in various organisations such as churches, libraries, different websites, attending local events, attending conferences, handing out flyers at all events attended, this cohort of women proved difficult to recruit. Finally, they were recruited through personal contacts and snowballing techniques. The process of snowballing technique is not without limitations (Miller, 2003; Sixsmith et al., 2003). Castillo (2009) notes that researchers have limited control over the sampling method, furthermore snowballing is not a representative sample, and prone to sampling bias (Castillo, 2009; Bryman, 2001; Sixsmith et al., 2003).

In total, thirteen families were interviewed over a period of three months, from January to March 2010. Potential participants were informed about the research by email, letter

and telephone. Two second generation participants were single parents; another participant was expecting her first baby. Two families had daughters who were at university, with another family's daughter at college with the expectation of attending university in the next academic year. These women were at various stages in their careers. The process in Oxfordshire was less difficult, as personal contact was established through the local family centre, names and addresses were more freely available.

## **Methods**

This research was based on a qualitative feminist framework of Black British Caribbean women's experience of the educational system. Qualitative research seeks to gain an understanding of the 'why' and not the 'how' of a subject area through analysis of unstructured information such as open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews, interview transcripts, and notes (Qualitative Research International: 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Matteson and Lincoln (2009) pointed out that whilst researchers chose interviews as a method of giving participants a voice in their research, "there is a danger that participants' voices are lost within the research process. In a sense, during this process the researchers' own objectivity/subjectivity obscures the research participants" (Matteson and Lincoln, 2009:3). They argued that researchers have to be aware of maintaining neutrality throughout the research process (Matteson and Lincoln, 2009). Given Matteson and Lincoln (2009) argument on the researchers' objectivity during the process of research all interviews were conducted informally and with a level of flexibility. This allowed a degree of freedom for participants to express their thoughts and perspective in an area that was unique

to them (Horton et al., 2004: 340). Additionally, this format was adopted to give participants options in terms of time, and location. The process assisted in gaining trust, maintaining an element of relaxation, alleviating stress by adopting a less hurried approach and providing an opportunity for probing when required (Horton, 2004). The qualitative approach was selected to better comprehend the participants experiences with reference to their explicit life perspectives (Arcidiacono et al., 2009:165).

Semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured interviews were conducted. This method was chosen primarily because this allowed me as the researcher to observe meanings within a less formal structure (Reinharz, 1992). Bryman (2001) stated that the advantage of semi-structured questions are that participants are able to answer questions on their own terms without being forced to answer questions within a framework of closed-questions. Open-ended questions in semi structured interviews do not suggest how to answer the question but they are also useful for exploring new areas or ones in which the researcher has limited knowledge (Bryman 2001: 143). More open-ended questions were devised as part of the instrument for data collection as this assisted with further probing as and when it was required. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:314) noted that semi-structured interviews were normally organised around a list of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging during the course of the interviews. The questionnaire devised for this research is shown in Appendix 6 and 7 respectively.

This type of interview was appropriate for this study as it facilitated further probing in certain areas of the interview schedule if clarification was required. Seeking clarification removed the element of assumption; by that I mean participants may or

may not have a different meaning to what I thought and therefore it was fitting to ask for further explanation. Accordingly, qualitative interviewing as part of the research technique has assisted me to probe more fully participants' responses during the interviews (Horton et al., 2004).

Four interviews were conducted at a London University, because two of the participants were employed at a university; one participant was an undergraduate and the last participant felt it was more convenient for her to meet with me at the university. Two interviews were conducted at my home as participants felt it was more convenient, two took place in a church hall, one interview was conducted at a work place and the remainder took place at the participants' homes. They were all reassured of confidentiality and anonymity.

Each participant was given an informed consent form to read, sign and date with copies given to each individual. Before starting each interview I wanted to ascertain that each participant was clear about the nature and purpose of the interview, and therefore before I switched the recorder on they were all asked for their permission to be recorded. All participants were asked to choose pseudo names before and sometimes after the recorded interviews.

The majority of interviews lasted from forty minutes to an hour, two interviews lasted over an hour and a half, and two other interviews lasted about thirty minutes, with one interview lasting twenty-five minutes. Some participants were very eager to talk about their experiences at school, but for a few participants school had not been a very good experience and they had difficulty talking about these experiences. The first interview

was exhilarating and took place in the participant's home and she was very welcoming. She picked me up from the station and in fact the atmosphere was so relaxed, it felt like I was meeting a friend rather than a research participant. She was keen and eager to tell me about her experiences during the 1970s which was the time she attended school. She was candid in her manner and when we had completed the interview she stated that if I needed further clarification I should feel free to contact her again. This interview lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes.

Another interview lasted one hour and thirty minutes; this interview took place at her workplace and she too was very candid with her responses. She did not need much probing, but I did have to ask her for clarification on a few occasions because of the nature of some of the comments she made. Four interviews lasted about thirty minutes and this included one mother who had 'blanked' most of her school experience out because school was an unhappy place for her. During the interview it seemed as if she was unable to recall a great deal of what had happened at school and I had to probe a bit more for her to respond to the questions.

Robson (2002) stated that in interviews where questions appear to be unsuitable for particular participants, then these can be left out and replaced with additional queries. During the course of the interview process I had to modify and leave out several questions as they were not relevant to some of my research participants. In particular, the category of education on the interview schedule asked specific questions on subject choices and grades attained in examinations. This was to accommodate three participants who left school without attaining General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs).

Another interview lasted twenty minutes. This participant had a traumatic time at school, she was ill for the most part of her secondary school, and had a learning support assistant in her classes, as well as a learning mentor. During her final year at secondary school, she was not allowed to take her GCSEs. Her answers were very short and halting all the way through the recording and I was unable to probe further. At times during the interview she would not answer specific questions, even when probed. In another interview the participant was excluded from school at the age of thirteen, and had also run away from home. As a consequence she was unable to answer specific questions relating to education. In this instance the questions were modified in keeping with a degree of flexibility (Robson, 2002; Horton et al., 2004). It was a challenging interview. During this interview there were constant distractions because she had two young children both under the age of five who required constant attention. The children fought with each other whilst the interview was taking place and on several occasions I had to stop the recorder because the children were screaming and fighting in the background. As a result of the constant interruptions and the background noise I had difficulty transcribing this particular recording. This interview lasted fifty minutes and was conducted under challenging circumstances.

During another interview I had to stop the recorder several times to see whether it was satisfactory with this participant and on several occasions asked her whether she wanted to continue with the interview. She sighed constantly throughout the interview, held her head, and there were long periods of silence throughout. I also had to stop the recorder during the interview because I was interviewing her in the kitchen of her mother's home with regular interruptions from other family members. It seemed that



recalling the events of school were painful for her. I left the interview later than I had anticipated because she wanted to talk further about what was happening in her life as a single parent and to discuss issues she was having with her job.

In another interview, I met a participant at the train station and then returned to her hall of residence to conduct the interview. This was another challenging interview and again conducted in a kitchen, but this time in student halls where there were constant interruptions with other students coming in to prepare meals. This participant answered the questions really quickly and there was very little opportunity to probe because of the constant distraction. The atmosphere was not relaxed and again because of the noise level there were occasions when the recorder was switched off. This interview lasted thirty five minutes. It can be argued that despite research methods literature that reiterates the advantages of this method (Horton et al., 2004) it is not guaranteed. This was evident in the lack of probing opportunities and lack of co-operation during four interviews in my study.

Mothers and daughters were sent letters separately and interviews were conducted separately (Appendix 3 and 4). In some instances where daughters were away at university I travelled to their university to conduct the interview and in another case I was asked to conduct a daughter's interview when she was visiting home for the weekend. During another interview we had to stop mid-way through as the mother had to collect her young child from school. In the case of another interview I had waited for two to three hours for the daughter's return from college. In the main, the majority of mother and daughter interviews were conducted on the same day, but at different times.

Each interview was different and some were conducted under very stressful conditions. As a result of these problems I found interpreting participants' responses problematic because of the background noises on the recorder. Some participants welcomed the opportunity to be able to discuss their experiences of school whether it was good or bad. Others had great difficulty recalling and seemed to be distracted by some of the events that occurred during their time in school. Moreover during the recording process I carefully acknowledged each answer to the questions by saying yes and nodding my head and if unsure of any answer I asked for clarification. At the end of each recording, both on and sometimes off the recorder I thanked each participant. I also made a point of asking each participant how they felt after the interviews. This was an important part of the interview process for me because I was aware that some of the questions may have raised issues or concerns that participants may have wanted to forget. The thinking behind this process was that despite reassurance from me not all participants were comfortable with being recorded. I was therefore able to gather further information from participants after the interviews, as some of them felt unable to articulate or perhaps had forgotten incidents. I once again asked for permission to use this new data as part of the research study. In qualitative research there are advantages and disadvantages to using semi-structured interviews. Nevertheless, for this research study semi-structured interviews seem the most appropriate approach given the research topic. Furthermore, during the interviews I was also able to observe unspoken tone and body language. This degree of flexibility during the investigation research has been beneficial to the study.

Once I had conducted the interviews I asked participants if they knew anyone who might be interested in taking part in the research, therefore utilising the snowballing technique. They were asked to speak to other women who might be interested in the research. Anyone who was interested in participating in the research was then asked for permission for me to make direct contact with them either by phoning and/ or through emails. It was extremely important to me that this permission was obtained prior to me telephoning a potential participant.

Miller (1998) explains, that snowballing is “a recognised technique in qualitative research concerned with accessing stigmatized groups” (1998; 62). Through the snowballing method three potential participants were identified by a participant who had taken part in the research. However, as this research was based on an intergenerational study of mothers’ and their daughters’ experiences of the British educational system, it was not possible to include them in the research because their daughters were unwilling to participate. The method of snowballing can be problematic; particularly if participants suffer from research fatigue as highlighted by Cowen and Goulbourne (2001:404). In other words marginalised groups may feel fatigued and overwhelmed particularly when they can see no tangible benefit from the research activity.

A second method applied in this study was documentary analysis. Documents are a common source of qualitative data in social research (Palmer, 2004; Woodhouse, 2006). Palmer (2004) suggested that whilst other methods such as interviewing and surveys have been emphasised, most studies are expected to include some documents as well (Palmer, 2004:385). Documents, the practices, thoughts and

organisational procedures of which they provide evidence, offers insight and understanding of content and perspective of activities in time (Prior,2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that 'documents can be a rich source of information, contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent' (Lincoln and Guba,1985: 277). In this study a wide range of documents such as government papers, newspapers, and official reports were used. The main reason for examining documents was to attain an understanding of the meaning and importance of what these documents contained. With respect to documents Atkinson and Coffey (1974) suggested that "our recognition of their existence as social facts alerts us to the necessity to treat them very seriously indeed. We have to approach them for what they are and what they are used to accomplish. We should examine their place in organizational settings, the cultural values attached to them, their distinct types and forms" (Atkinson and Coffey,1997: 47). It has been shown that documents are required to be located in a theoretical context for their subject to be understood (May, 2001:192).

There are various manners in which documents are connected. Scott (1990) suggested that documents are used as resources, this consist of using them as references for specific information; documents have been used as subjects, and or as additions to larger studies (Scott, 1990:36). In this study documents were used as resources and this was applicable to Ofsted, and ONS reports which contained statistical information of educational attainment. May (2001) for example asserts that the majority of social science research is dictated by statistics from the government. There have been concerns around the government influences on these statistics and questions have been asked on their authenticity. Conversely Bulmer (1984) argues

that government statistics can be used in several ways, their findings are interesting, others who use them are concerned about the possible margin of errors, and some theoretical aspects encountered are similar to those of sociologists (Bulmer, 1984:137). In this study for example statistical data was used in confirming and verifying mothers views of Black Caribbean children and underachievement in school.

The other concept applied in this study was 'documents as topics'. 'Documents as topics' were used to elucidate the quality of the documents (Scott, 1990:36). The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, during sessions 1968 to 1978, were specific to race relations in the United Kingdom and were selected because of the implicit information they contained. These documents were used specifically for their evidence as they comprised of arguments and debates involving the anxieties and worries of the Black Caribbean communities and other migrants who settled in the United Kingdom after the Second World War and provided the historical perspective discussed in chapter Two. They also contained the frustrations and exasperation of these communities on their living conditions, not only with education, but with the lack of job opportunities, victimisation from the police, racism and discrimination.

Debates about social and economic achievement and underachievement, and social exclusion have been expressed in daily newspapers such as *The Guardian*, and *The Guardian Educational Supplement*, *Daily Mail*, *Telegraph*, and other publications such as *The Voice*, *The Gleaner* and *Caribbean Times Newspaper*. In this study, articles from the various newspapers in relation to these issues have been important in focusing on some of the key arguments with respect to Black Caribbeans in school at that time. In this study it was beneficial to examine research articles from selected

newspapers because this assisted in focusing on current debates and to be kept up-to-date on how developments in education were reported as they related to ethnic minorities.

### **Ethical considerations**

When conducting research ethical factors need to be taken into consideration. This is a requirement of any research where human subjects are involved (Hammersley, 1993). Mauthner *et al* (2003) asserted that it is important that all participants share a common interest and understand what the research is about (Mauthner *et al.*, 2003: 65). For this research investigation, before meeting with participants, all participants were given a participant information sheet (Appendix, 1). The participant information sheet gave participants a detailed account of what the research was about beforehand and was in the form of a question and answer sheet. I ensured that all disclosed information was safely documented to protect their right to confidentiality and anonymity. The storage of information is in accordance with the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice. It is in a password-protected area of LSBU and not on a laptop. The participants were informed of this prior to the interview in the research information leaflet issued to all participants. Bulmer (1982) pointed out that whilst exploring and trying to gain knowledge of the truth, one must be mindful and indeed be aware of the rights and dignity of human beings (Bulmer, 1982; Mauthner *et al*, 2002). This study was based on participants' educational experiences of school and not an intrusive subject such as domestic violence, sexual abuse or of any type of violence.

In terms of confidentiality all participants were taken through the informed consent documentation. At the start of each interview participants were given the option to choose a pseudonym. I went to great lengths to explain that anything said to me during the interviews would be confidential. During this communication they were also made aware that anything that was said to me by their mother or similarly by their daughter would be kept between myself and the participant. In one incident I had interviewed the mother of this participant the previous week, to my surprise this participant asked me to relay to her what her mother had said. It was obvious that this participant was not concerned with what was going to be written up about her, or whether she would be identifiable in the research. I had not anticipated this question and therefore I was slightly taken aback by this; morally and ethically it would have been the wrong thing to do. I calmly but firmly stated to her that in very much the same way anything she said to me would not be communicated to her mother therefore it would be unfair for me to relay to her what her mother had said. I had a duty to adhere to the ethical guidelines in maintaining confidentiality for mother and daughter alike.

Her main concern was what her mother had said to me during the course of her interview. Flavo and Parker (2000) have emphasised that due care and diligence must be taken when gathering data (2000:198). Flewitt (2005) reiterated the Flavo and Parker (2000) argument that not only do researchers have an ethical responsibility when conducting research; they need to ensure that these principles are upheld all the way through the research process (Flewitt, 2005: 553–565). I agree that every effort should be made to protect participants involved in taking part in research and in this case I kept confidential what this parent had said to me.

During the course of the interviews I was very careful when meeting with research participants to meet mothers and daughters on separate days or if they were held on the same day to meet with them individually. Nevertheless, despite instituting the ethics of care as suggested by Costely and Gibbs (2006), I was unprepared for some of the personal details that were being divulged during some of the interviews and as indicated previously surprised by some participant questions.

## **Data Analysis**

An interpretivist tradition states that the social world is best understood through the exploration of meanings between the actions and contact of human subjects and is not easily explained through statistical exploration. An interpretivist approach was adopted as it permitted uncovering of several possible meanings of Black Caribbean women's experiences. I interpreted, understood and presented the women's experiences (Erickson, 1985). Black Caribbean children have continued to underachieve in education which is measured by quantitative methods (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; DfES, 2007; DES, 2010). Education is considered to be significant to the participants, their opinions and experiences as a consequence of this reality are not measurable or quantifiable through statistics. In my research it was important to recognise the meanings that participants assigned to their circumstances although these meanings were not all the same. These accounts were told to me as a Black Caribbean woman, from a place of 'knowledge' of the difficulties in the education system and similar experiences as a Black person.



In reviewing the transcribed narratives, common themes were unveiled. It was evident that each participant had a story to tell about their own experiences of school and their children's school. The use of grounded theory to data gathering, after transcribing the notes, has assisted me in identifying key themes within the research. Grounded theory data analysis has been important for interpreting the phenomenon being researched and the classification of the data. Morse *et al.*, (2009) stated that 'the traditional methodology of grounded theory helps the researcher to understand participants' behaviour, regardless of their cultural background, from a social interaction perspective. In other words the methodology is suited to address research questions not only about change within social groups [which is the focus ethnographers], but [also] understanding the core central processes central to that change' (Morse *et al.*, 2009; 13). As Charmaz (2009) noted 'grounded theory assumes a relativist epistemology, sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance' (Charmaz, 2009:129).

According to Bryman (2001) this is an appropriate method of data analysis because data are collected and the theory formed from the gathered data rather than a priori basis (2001:396). Glaser (1992) pointed out that 'grounded theory is for the discovery of concepts and hypotheses not for testing and replicating them' (1992: 33). A key justification for the use of grounded theory as part of the data analysis is that I am investigating two generations, mothers and daughters and their experiences of the British educational system and therefore 'grounding' the data (Glaser 1992). Indeed Morse and Field (1995) assert that it is through the theory that these themes are

generated, and the themes from the data during analysis capture the essence of meaning or experience drawn from varied situations and contexts (1995:56).

For this research, grounded theory which relies on an inductive approach to data investigation was used (Cashman et al: 2011). In other words this research focused on understanding the range of experiences of participants and on constructing awareness that is grounded in real-world patterns (Glaser and Strass, 1967). I performed numerous readings and analysis of the data and created numerous iterations of the text (van Manen, 1990; Watson, 2001; Rothbauer, 2004). I concentrated on the verbatim transcripts and was able to identify common themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The analysis was led by open-coding techniques (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The data was coded and classified with similar theories and categories were introduced based on the appearance of themes (Cashman et al: 2011). During the process of analysing my data new themes emerged that were not expected and which required further exploration (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). As a result, themes were elaborated, processed and clarified (Solway, 2011).

Accordingly, Glaser (1992) suggested that by grounding the data the researcher is exploring 'what is' and not seeking to discover 'what might be' and therefore there is no requirement for a test (1992:67). Glaser and Strauss (2009) argued that the credibility of grounded theory relies on the collection and analysis of the researchers' qualitative data and in a sense the systematic knowledge of his or her own data (2009:225). The interpretation of the data was further guided by active listening of tape recorded interviews, assessing what was being said during the course of each conversation, reading of the transcripts very carefully, immersing myself in the data to

come up with a clearer and more meaningful understanding of the data (Morse et al., 2009; Cohen et al., 2000; Rothbauer, 2004).

Another aspect of this method is the constant comparative analytic process. In this study interviews were based on and formulated using a set of prepared semi-structured questions, all questions were thematic. The research tool was therefore categorised in relation to family life, gender and ethnicity, gender and education, class and the educational system, with various questions in each themed area. The mothers' interview schedule was slightly longer because I wanted to explore not only their own experiences of school, but also what they experienced with their daughters in the education system. In the process of data gathering I compared each section of the text with each other, through constant comparison and analysis of the collected data, and the construction of theory. I searched for convergent and divergent categories using the coding system that I had developed. 'In the tradition of grounded theory, twenty-six is an appropriate sample size if saturation is achieved' (Solway, 2011:22). The codes were examined for differences, similarities, and consistency until saturation was achieved (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Kawamura et al., 2009; Hays and Singh, 2011; Hays and Wood, 2011).

Similarly Ribbens and Edwards (1998) note 'the strengths of grounded theory are the emphasis on an open-mindedness and willingness to listen, hear and act on the results at all stages of the research process, grounding the analysis in the research data rather than trying to fit the data into an a priori framework' (1998:90). This argument reiterates the relevance of grounded theory in this research. They argued that grounded theory is consistent within the feminist framework, which has rejected

positivism because it claims to be value-free and objective. Within this method, what is important is the contextual factor, regardless of whether qualitative or quantitative data collecting methods are used (Ribbens and Edwards, 1998: 90). Furthermore, they pointed out that feminists argue on the difficulty of distancing oneself from the research and remaining objective without introducing bias, which is a fundamental belief of positivism. In my own research it was increasingly difficult to remain expressionless or empathetic when participants relayed to me some of the obstacles they had encountered within the educational system (Song, 1998). Ribbens and Edwards (1998) noted that regardless of what methodology we use it is our perception of social life that is the determining factor on who and what we chose to research and how this data is presented (1998:90).

An important aspect of grounded theory in this research has been my ability to collect data from the field and to start analysing the data collected immediately. I was able to switch between the data analysis and the field in order to collect further data (Speziale and Carpenter, 2007). As with every research method, there are strengths and limitations. Grounded theory approach to data gathering is problematic because it is time-consuming and when working to deadlines it is difficult to fully conceptualise the theory with the data accumulated (Bryman, 2001).

However, what has emerged is the complexity surrounding concepts and theories. Bryman (2001) explains that it often difficult to explain how the theory is linked with the concepts (2001; 396). I agree that using the grounded theory approach within this study has proven to be time-consuming; nevertheless it is has been an appropriate method for analysing the data in this study as several themes were developed and

explored as part of the process of analysis. The key themes identified during the interrogation of the data are perception of education, Institutionalised racism, parental involvement and strategies in school, educational opportunities and limitations, finally understanding intergenerational experiences of education are discussed in detail in chapters four to seven.

### **Part Three**

Part three of the chapter investigated the aspect of reflexivity. In an attempt to be reflexive in this study I have focussed on three aspects; myself as part of the research process; identity; and power relations.

#### **Reflexivity as part of the research process**

Reflexivity has been described as an attempt to make clear the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). This concept of reflexivity is generally attributed to feminist research methods. Neil (2006) indicates that the process of reflection in research between the researcher and research participant is applicable and should be an integral part of the research process. Moreover, she stated that reflexivity is viewed as an intrinsic part of the grounded theory technique (Neil, 2006: 254). This notion is situated within the realms of the power relations between the researcher and those being researched (Letherby, 2003:114). Nevertheless, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) assert that reflexivity in

research is not without limitations. In other words being reflexive in research is one where the researcher is aware of the reaction to the relationship between the researched and themselves. They state that what it means and tries to attain is often more difficult (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:156).

Neil (2006) reminds us that reflexivity can be significant during the process of self-identity to research participants (Neil, 2006: 259). In other words, including the 'self' as part of the research process has an effect on the type of research that is carried out, and in the development of grounded theory (Neil, 2006: 259).

Steier (1992) and Karnieli-Miller et al (2009) reiterate the argument on the benefits of writing reflexively in research. They noted that it is vitally important that researchers adopt an element of reflecting on the process of research. They argued that to make public the issues encountered during this process not only expands the understanding of these aspects but also promotes self-examination at different points of the research (Naples, 2003). Hastings (2010) suggested that writing reflexively in research is not new. She asserted that it was important for researchers to name their experiences 'in order to claim the subjectivity, the possibility of historical agency' (2010:310). Thus by reflecting on the process of research, researchers can "potentially decrease the violation of participants rights and increase our accountability and true obligation to them, and to the professional community" (Karnieli-Miller et al, 2009: 287). This is an argument I agree with and have demonstrated throughout this research that reflexivity has been a crucial part of the research process for me. As a result of my reflexive work, I have been able to see myself in the work I was producing (Hastings: 2010).

## **'Myself' as part of the research process**

My role as a mother and as a Black woman was discussed with some of the mothers who were interested in me other than as the researcher. Jayaratne (1993) reminds us that an important part of the research process is the ability of the researcher to actively engage and to take an interest in their research participants (1993:120). I also wanted to learn more about my participants not from the position as a researcher but from a 'woman to woman' perspective. I was interested to learn more about their hopes and aspirations. Sword (1999) noted that during her research assignment that she had adopted the style of a learner. She made participants feel valued and talked about participants as being experts with their contribution to her research project (1999: 273).

I carefully chose my clothing simply because I did not want to be perceived as being in a 'position of power'. My thought process with the issues of dress was deliberate. The idea was that participants who were comfortable would be more likely to speak to me uninhibited if they were at ease in their environment and recognised me as 'one of them'. Letherby (2003) pointed out that the manner in which a researcher is perceived is not simply about gathering data, but is also about creating an atmosphere that is calm for both respondent and explorer (2003:236). With this in mind within the field work process I was constantly aware of my overall appearance and how that may have been perceived by the participants. I dressed down in jeans and T-shirts; I wore casual shoes and not trainers and when I met participants in their homes. I made a point of asking whether they wanted me to remove my shoes. I made the conscious decision to take a less formal approach in my style of dress because I did not want participants to feel inhibited or intimidated by my appearance. With the two participants who were

interviewed at my house I tried to create a relaxed atmosphere so that it was easier for them to talk.

McDowell and Fang (2009) indicated that researchers have to be aware of their own social world, and must acknowledge their views on the process of research. They remind us that as researchers we are required to confront our own theoretical biases, values, and motivation and as such pay close attention to the relation between the researcher and research participant (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2003; Small, 1995). They argue that researchers must continually be reflexive of their own biases during the research process. Researchers have to adopt an approach that is critical and must be socially aware of their surroundings. They argued that in adopting this stance researchers are not expected to remain distant or to adopt a degree of neutrality during the research process (McDowell and Fang, 2009: 558). Characteristics such as race, class, gender and ethnicity play an important part between researchers and research participants, and that is considered far from neutral during the research process (McDowell and Fang, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

### **Identity: insider/ outsider approach in the research**

Another of the aspects considered during the course of the data collection has been the question of identity. Unlike the participants I was born in the Caribbean, and my primary and secondary school experiences were different from their experiences of school. My further and higher education experiences may have been the same as the participants, but I was an outsider simply because their experiences of schooling were not the same as mine. Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt (2008) suggested that



being an insider enables research participants to become more interactive with the researcher because there is an assumption from participants of shared understanding and of cultural background. In the insider role, participants sometimes are encouraged to share problems with the researcher (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, 2008: 17). This was certainly my experience throughout the interview process; participants shared with me other issues that were happening in their life that did not pertain to the research. Nevertheless, there was an assumption by participants that my primary and secondary schooling were similar to theirs. I was empathetic to their experiences, nonetheless I did not have the same issues in school that many participants encountered (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt, 2008).

I felt I was a 'partial insider'; I looked like the research participants, had a shared identity and culture but was not privy to the British primary and secondary school education system. Sherif (2001) explained that there are advantages of being a "partial insider because there is flux between the researchers' social world and identity" (2001: 446). Clearly, this positioning made me an outsider from the perspective of my primary and secondary school education. However, gender, ethnicity and racial identity are commonalities and shared attributes with all research participants. During my process of reflection I was concerned about how I would be viewed and received by my participants. I worried that participants might feel awkward during the interview process, and not be receptive to me. Similarly, because the majority of my interviews were conducted in homes of research participants, I was unsure of what to expect when I arrived there. For example, upon arrival at participants' homes, I asked whether they would like me to remove my shoes or boots. I did not sit unless I was asked to do so and waited to be shown into the room they preferred to be interviewed.

Waggle and Cantaffa (2008) reflected on their own research and they too had similar concerns whilst conducting their research. Waggle and Cantaffa (2008) suggested whilst conducting her research that it was a continual learning process for her and it was only through reflection that she realised that “personality and physical presence are inseparable dynamics from one’s research” Waggle and Cantaffa (2008: 151). Waggle and Cantaffa (2008) indicated that within any research process, researchers are fundamentally part of their research and as such it is appropriate for the researcher to become part of this process. Adopting the role as one who is researched during the research process, explores the complexity between the researcher and participant. I agree with Waggle and Cantaffa (2008) as this is reflected in my personal journey, both before and after the field work process, the highs and the lows. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) also noted that it is imperative that “self-reflection and self-analysis of feelings be undertaken as part of the process of research especially during qualitative research” (2000:217).

Whilst conducting the fieldwork my experience has turned into more of a journey of reflection, discovery and analysis. Nevertheless, by recognising this aspect in the research process it has assisted me as a researcher to better understand and indeed be more sensitive in respect to conducting and presenting fieldwork (Sword, 1999; Evans *et al*, 2001; Neil, 2006; Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

## **Power relations issues**

The section investigates issues related to power relations in the research process. Letherby (2003) argues that there is a complexity surrounding aspects of power within the process of research. During the course of exploration the notion is that the researcher eventually controls the process and is the one who 'holds the balance of power' (Letherby, 2003:14). Furthermore, it is the researcher who has the ultimate power during the research project, overall control over the equipment used during the interviews and the types of questions asked. It is the investigator who is responsible for the final analysis and dissemination of the findings (2003:14). However, in reality this aspect of research is more complicated than it seems (Letherby, 2003:14).

Jacobson *et al* (2007) asserts that "in an interpretive research paradigm, reality is understood to be socially situated and the investigator and the participant to be engaged in a mutual process of constituting knowledge. Investigators are flexible and iterative, aiming to produce either rich description or theory" (2007: 02). Previously participants taking part in research were not given a choice whether to participate in research projects or had no idea what was going to happen during the process of the research (Jacobson *et al*, 2007:02).

In my own research I went to great lengths to alleviate some of these research problems. I informed all participants through the participation information about the research, why they fit the criteria and also gave all my contact details if they were unsure of what was written in the document and/or if they required clarification about the research. Decisions surrounding times, venues, locations were all scheduled

around availability of participants offering them the degree of flexibility and simultaneously giving them control over this aspect of the research.

None of the participants were paid for their time and I made this position quite clear in the information sheet found in Appendix, 1. As part of the recruitment process I devised a poster seeking volunteers to take part in the research (Appendix, 9). Participants were also informed of their right before and during the research process. I made it clear that if at any time they were uncomfortable with a question or did not want to answer particular questions, then they had the right to do so without any explanation to me and I would stop the recorder if that was their wish (Holland *et al*, 2010).

Karnieli-Miller *et al* (2009) maintain that the relationship between the researcher and the research participant is complex. They noted that the research participant becomes the 'story teller' and the researcher the one who documents and writes the story (2009: 280). They reminded us that the relationship between researcher and research participants changes. Changes are based on factors such as ethnicity, social background, personality and various other aspects (Karnieli-Miller *et al* 2009; Abbas 2006). They summarised the various steps of the research process based on the power relationship between the researcher and research participant through these processes and maintain that power shifts between the researcher and participants were not constant but fluid. Indeed, as researchers we have to be mindful of how we analyse the data and realise that these skills do not grant superiority or the right to perform judgemental analysis (2009: 286).

I agree with Karnieli-Miller *et al's* (2009) summation on the various stages of research on who actually holds the power during the research process. In my own research there were occasions during the research process where I despaired. As part of the recruitment process I devised an initial questionnaire that would have assisted in getting to know more about participants before the face to face meetings (See Appendix 5). The idea behind this questionnaire was to assist me during the recruitment process with a choice on whom to invite to take part in the research. Unfortunately, this process did not work out, as I had four potential participants who refused to take part in the research project because they felt this questionnaire was intrusive.

It was evident at this stage of the research process who held the power. In another incident a family, a mother and daughter had both agreed to participate in the research project; I had sent all the necessary information to them beforehand and there was agreement on times and meeting place. As discussed, as part of the research process, before meeting with participants I would confirm appointments. However, when I rang to confirm the meeting this family stated that they were having personal issues and it was not an appropriate time for them. Again the concept of the researcher ultimately holding the power as Letherby (2003) points out is complex. There were times during the research when I felt entirely helpless and I realised very early on during the study that without the involvement of research participation I was in fact powerless.

Accordingly, Richie and Rigano (2001) emphasised the point that there was a constant shift in the balance of power between the researcher and the research participant. They argue that “at times participants can be both powerful and powerless” (2001:

749). Richie and Rigano (2001) point out that at the beginning of any research study the researcher may be the one in the more dominant position simply because there is an agenda to their research. On the other hand Maynard and Purvis (2001) remind us that it is grossly unfair to identify research participants as passive and resistant during the process of research (2001:755).

I agree with Richie and Rigano (2001) and Karnieli-Miller *et al's* (2009) argument on the various stages in the power relations between the researcher and the researched. It is with this context I consider my own research. Indeed in my own research at times I felt I had no control over the study as I was having difficulty in recruiting participants. In addition, whilst trying to identifying this cohort of women through churches and various networks I was advised by some community leaders that I would struggle getting this group of women to take part in the research. I spoke to various church leaders who seemed at times enthusiastic about supporting me with recruitment. However, I received very little support from them and was unable to get volunteers through churches. Additionally, prospective participants who had previously agreed to participate in the research would change their minds. In keeping with the ethics in research, research participants have the right to do so without giving any explanation (Ethical Practice of the BSA, March 2002 and updated in May 2004).

Goring (2004) explains that there were periods during her own research where she felt "tiny and insignificant in comparison to some of her participants" (Goring 2004:53). My experience was somewhat similar to hers, as I too experienced some element of insignificance during the course of my research. Indeed some of the participants had experienced turmoil within their personal lives, such as domestic violence and had

health problems from an early age but in spite of this had gone on to become successful in their careers.

As stated earlier power relationships between the researched and the researcher are complex. During my research exploration there were junctures in the study when I realised that I had very little control and indeed at other times I felt I had no control over my research. I needed the research participants more than they needed me because without them I would be unable to proceed with the research; and I felt they controlled this aspect of my study. All along in the investigation I have been very mindful of the ethical issues and of the power relationship within the study. Lessons have been learnt throughout this experience: gathering evidence for research is time-consuming and sometimes fraught with difficulties. I do not dismiss the notion that ultimately I have power and control over what is written and the manner in which I analyse my data (Letherby, 2003; Karnieli-Milleer *et. al*, 2009). I may hold the power over the equipment and on what I chose to divulge at the writing-up stage, but so does the research participant; research participants hold the power over what they chose to divulge during the interviews (Richie and Rigano 2001; Ebbs,2007).

#### **Part Four**

In this section issues regarding dilemmas and limitations in this research are discussed.

#### **Issues and dilemmas with the research**

Another aspect of the study has been the challenges I encountered during the process of recruitment. I wrongly assumed that because I was passionate about education and the education of Black women and girls in particular, there would be no complications in recruiting volunteers for this research exploration. In my eagerness to tell the participants' stories, I overlooked the fact that not everyone would be interested in volunteering to take part in research. Malacrida (2007), a research coordinator for a major project in Canada, on patient reaction to pain management stated that she had been distressed by what some members of her team had experienced. Team members reported that they felt overwhelmed and at times frustrated in doing social research (2007: 136). In my own experience, I also felt an element of frustration, of being overwhelmed by the quantity of data I had collected and the task of analysing the data. I experienced anxiety and stress and worried more about getting access to participants. I was anxious because the women who were volunteering to take part in the research were born in the Caribbean and came to Britain either as babies, young children and /or as teenagers and did not fit the criteria of this research.

Additionally, I concerned about the slow progress of my research. Issues surrounding access and the manner in which I came across to research participants. Goring (2004) in her study of UK Caribbean parents and education said that she experienced anxiety and questioned herself about whether her racial identity as a Black Caribbean woman conducting this type of research helped or hindered her research. She asserts that quite early on in her investigation she experienced rejection, which dented her confidence. I had a similar experience which lessened my confidence. I had an email from a potential participant who emailed me from her work address, together with her contact number. I responded to this email and agreed in writing to send her the



relevant information about the research. After subsequent correspondence through this media, I rang her to arrange a face to face meeting and to discover a little about her. However, to my surprise I received an email from her telling me that I was not to communicate with her on her work address or to ring her again. I respected that she no longer wanted to be part of the research project and did not contact her again. Like Goring (2004) this incident affected my confidence nonetheless, I persevered.

Through various contacts and referrals I was able to carry on with my study. In fact I have learnt a very valuable lesson during this investigation and at times I have had to be very humble and apologetic simply because I had no control over what was happening. Moreover, I had to expect the unexpected, but mostly how to deal with these complications. This was paramount to the success of the study. Similarly, Irwin (2006) noted during her research in the tattooing field that she experienced “marginality, conflicting loyalty pulls, professional and personal angst, moments of intense pleasure and joy, as well as devastating bouts of self-doubt and failure” (2006: 160). I too experienced a crisis of confidence, emotional turmoil, questioned my ability, felt hopeless, exhausted and after each setback my anxiety level rose throughout the research process. In the same way Chong (2008) and Gergen (1992) reiterate that acknowledging our emotions in the process of research should assist us in becoming more sensitive to factors that may be affecting research participants.

Another issue that concerned me during this research was the method of snowballing and gatekeeper access. In this instance I wanted the sample to include a cross section of Black British Caribbean women. Sixsmith et al., (2003) notes that there are limitations to the use of snowballing. They assert that this technique “can result in a

restricted sample of participants drawn from similar backgrounds” (Sixsmith et al., 2003:584). Because of these aspects, I executed other strategies such as advertising on various websites, and social networks such as Facebook, churches in Clapham, Brixton, Dulwich and Stratford, university notice boards and Black websites such as the Black Londoners (Appendix 9). Nevertheless for this research this technique of data collection has been the most appropriate as it is recognised as the best method to gain access to hard to reach groups.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter comprised four sections. I argued that in social science research, the methods engaged are influenced by the methodological approach. In section one I presented the theoretical framework of the study. It was argued that feminist approach in research has been contentious amongst social scientist in terms of the conceptualisation and definition of feminist research. Nevertheless, it was argued that a critical aspect of feminist methodology and feminist researcher is to remove male bias in research. Indeed a feminist approach in research aspires to give a marginalised group a platform to speak about their experiences and to highlight this aspect. In the ensuing chapters, participants are given an opportunity to talk about their concerns, stresses and frustration they encountered whilst in education.

Section two explored the methods in the research. It noted that secondary research was conducted by analysing various government documents, statistics and other literature pertaining to Black British children from Caribbean descent in education, and provided historical and contextual analyses for the research as was demonstrated in

chapter two. I argued and demonstrated that semi-structured interviews assisted me to probe and to make changes to the interview schedule as and when it became necessary. An interpretivist approach was utilised because its' epistemological and ontological meaning suggest that humans are subjective beings who make sense from the reality of the world around them. Grounded theory approach has assisted me to fully immerse myself in the data and to develop themes during this stage of the research; these themes are illustrated and begin in chapter Four.

Section three concentrated on the issue of reflexivity in research as a feature of the feminist approach. Reflexivity as part of the research process recognised the relationship between the researcher and research participant. In the insider/outsider position or for me the 'partial' insider position was analysed as part of the process. Finally in section four, I highlighted some of the issues and dilemmas I experienced during the course of the research and addressed some of the limitations when conducting research. I argued that the technique applied for gathering data in this study has been appropriate. In keeping with the feminist methodology generally the interviews I conducted have enabled me to tell the story of mothers' and daughters' worries and anxieties on race and education in some British schools. In other words giving participants a 'voice' this is an aspect which is traditional to the feminist approach.

The next chapter outlines two themes discovered during the course of the data analysis. It highlights institutionalised racism in school and mothers' and daughters' perception and understanding of education. It demonstrated that despite various Race Relations Act some participants in this study experienced discrimination and

encountered prejudice in school. There is an emphasis on the value and importance that educations have had on two generations of Black British born women from Caribbean backgrounds. It shows that based on mothers' own childhood experiences of education they were better informed and perceptive in the schooling of their children.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Black Caribbean women experiences of racism and race issues in school during the 1970s-2000s**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter concentrates on racism and race issues in school and the assessment and observation that some Black Caribbean women made on their education during the late 1970s, to 2000s. Their opinions and experiences of school were compared and contrasted with those of their daughters. It is divided into two parts, section one focuses on ethnic and racial identity, institutionalised racism in school, isolation and exclusion. There are complexities in identity, race and ethnicity and this chapter explores those issues. Institutionalised racism in school is seen from a first generation perspective; there is an indication that during this period of schooling there was insufficient support from the school and education authorities in acknowledging this discrimination. The section on isolation and exclusion looks specifically at the second generation participants' exclusion in key areas of their social and academic development.

Section two explores the relevance and importance of education, educational attainment and low academic expectation and teacher perception of Black Caribbean pupils. The generational comparison on the relevance and importance of education highlights their perspectives. It explores the impact and significance that education has had on their lives. The section on educational attainment investigates the issue of

achievement and under achievement and the subsequent value they placed on the attainment of grades. Finally, low academic expectation and teacher perception explores the relationship between teacher and student and the effect of the relationship as a potential barrier to academic performance.

## **Section One**

### **Ethnic and racial identity**

The literature indicates that educationalists, sociologists, parents and researchers have been concerned about the education of Black Caribbean children and over the past forty years or more various discourses have focused on the poor performance of Caribbean pupils. Issues surrounding race, racism, discrimination and the performance of different ethnic groups in the educational system have been central to many of these debates (Goulbourne, 1999, 2001; Gillborn, 1990, 1995, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). Ethnic and racial identity is one of the most researched topics in race and education. Ethnic identity has been defined as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, feeling, and behaviours that is due to ethnic group membership” (Phinney and Rosenthal 1992:147).

“Ethnic identity is usually contextual and situational because it derives from social negotiations where one declares an ethnic identity and then demonstrates acceptable and acknowledged ethnic group markers to others”(Trimble and Dickson, 2010: 122).

Similarly, it was suggested that racial identity is a shared common origin that holds a group together and is based on a sense of belonging, collective identity and a common heritage with a specific group (Phinney, 1989; Helm, 1990; Bradley, 1996). Chávez

and Guido-DiBrito (2002) suggested that “racial identity is a surface-level manifestation based on what we look like yet has deep implications in how we are treated” (2002:40). Racial identity meanings have originated from a biological feature (Spickard, 1992) and from other research as a social component (Helms, 1995; Spickard, 1992). Racial identity has been explored in relation to educational attainment (Tomlinson, 1984; 1987; 2005, Gillborn and Mirza, 2000, Cole, 2005) self-esteem (Coard, 1971; Sewell, 2009) and career prospects (Fenton, 1999; Luna et al., 2010; Henry, 2010).

Another argument posited by Fenton (1999) asserted that ethnicity has been claimed from a perspective of unequal power. In other words the majority group maintains the influence in society. This inhibits the abilities of individuals or groups to pursue their argument or unease, and their resistance against poor and unfavourable treatment within this social construct (Fenton, 1999: 25). Further, Fenton (1999) argued that hair type, appearance and other attributes used by race practitioners are real and visible differences. However to use this difference as a moralistic and social feature to dissect certain human beings has been fundamentally wrong (Fenton, 1999:66). Ethnicity is about descent and culture and these are identified with specific culture communities (Fenton, 2003). Similarly, Goulbourne (2006) noted that race and ethnicity should be observed independently; as ethnicity encompasses socio-cultural aspects such as common histories, cultures, traditions and values, some of which are interchangeable while some others continue over time.

The majority the “one million people referred to as ‘black’ or ‘black Britons’ may trace their ancestry either to the Caribbean or to Africa. Meanwhile, the term ‘African-Caribbean’, used interchangeably with black, has often been used to describe those ‘of African descent who were born in the Caribbean or in Britain, but who can trace their ancestral lineage to Africa through parents born in the Caribbean” (Hylton 1999, 2002; Lam and Smith, 2009). Nevertheless, recent studies have made the distinctions between Africans and Caribbeans and have focused exclusively on Caribbean heritage and experiences as a separate ethnic group when writing about education (Reynolds 2006, Goulbourne and Sterling, 2004; Goring, 2004). Conversely Lam and Smith (2009) argued that identity is problematic and suggested that ethnic minority’s identity is compounded by the complexity of ethnicity itself.

In this chapter ethnic and racial identity explored some participants’ perception of these issues. It was evident in this study that some first generation participants were made acutely aware of the visible difference between themselves and the majority white population. The ‘reality’ of their race, which is the biological difference in appearance and skin colour created an awareness of their racial identity and a lasting impression on some participants experiences of school.

In this research it was apparent that some of the narratives supported the debate on ethnic and racial identity as problematic indicated by the literature. In particular Spickard (1992) and Fenton (1999) earlier argument on the distinct differences on appearance and differential treatment exemplified this. The following narrative supports this:

you were the odd one out and the only Black person in the class  
and you feel like a kind of an alien actually and you realise



everybody's looking at you. There were certain subjects, history stands out and yeah, we did the third world and all the images that kept coming on the TV, papers was of poor people, Black people and yeah, they never did look healthy or good. Those were the images you were constantly being shown and you were made to feel like you were really privileged to be here among us. And of course I could see everybody looking at me as well and I'm sinking into the chair, and I'm thinking why you all looking at me. So yes, I was made aware of the fact that I was Black, on many occasions (Rose, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-03-2010).

This is a powerful statement and there are several issues in her comment; the first point highlights her isolation in class as was evident by the numbers of Black Caribbean children and indicative in her narrative is an element of racism. The second point refers to her racial identity, her physical appearance such as skin colour in comparison to the majority white group made her acutely aware of these differences. During this period whilst some first generation mothers in this study were at school, they experienced being unwelcomed and as a result their collective group identity was important. The other aspect in her comment suggest the manner by which teaching of 'race' and racism has been taught by white teachers or lecturers.

In a study by Housee (2008) on the ethnicity of a tutor in teaching 'race' and racism in the classroom, it was argued that ethnicity should not be relevant. Instead Housee (2008) suggested that it was important that students were able to see white lecturers teaching and leading 'anti-racist' critiques in education. Housee (2008) argued that other lecturers besides Blacks and Asians who were capable ought to be able to lecture on aspects of 'race' and racist issues. However, her study discovered that the ethnicity of a lecturer in the teaching of 'race' and racism in the classroom was

important. Black and Asian students preferred to be taught by someone who was representative of their ethnic group. In her study, the participants felt that a lecturer who was not of the same ethnicity as themselves was unable to empathise with them as this was not the lecturer's experience (2008: 419-427).

Similarly, Dickar (2008) noted Black students preferred to be taught about "Black history by Black teachers" (2008:124). She noted Black students felt comfortable and trusted Black teachers as they shared a 'common heritage'. Students believed that white teachers were unable to identify with them and were not capable of teaching them about slavery and brutalities carried out whites against Black people (Dickar, 2008:124). Further, Dickar (2008) noted that 'race was always an issue in the classroom even though white teachers often suppressed such knowledge' (Dickar, 2008: 124). The issue of race is evident in the classroom and is consistent with arguments of teachers' perception of Black students (Dickar, 2008; Strand, 2012).

This assertion is illustrated Rose's comment as she said:

so, I remember doing slavery, and the teacher was saying something about slavery and he looks directly at me. Now I wasn't involved in slavery, I wasn't there, so why he's looking directly at me I do not know! (Rose,46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-03-2010).

The suggestion of white teachers/lecturers leading the discussion on Black history is perhaps a good argument. Dickar (2008) and Strand (2012) have both shown this and reinforced in Rose's narrative, Black Caribbean students remain suspicious of white teachers teaching discussing slavery and have questioned their affinity to teach Black history. The feelings of being seen as an outsider and of not belonging were aspects that were felt by some first generation participants who attended school in the 1970s

and 1980s and taught by white teachers. The teaching of 'race' and racial issues by white teachers/lectures requires a degree of sensitivity and Black students were unable to fully accept that white teachers could empathise with them.

In contrast to Rose's narrative on her racial identity Grace, 46 for example felt that her ethnicity was reinforced by the large numbers of Black Caribbean children in her school. Grace stated that:

back then it was quite usual but there was a large population of black children in my year, and we used to meet up at lunch time and formed our own groups. It was just identity, that was cultural identity and we used to like doing things, like to play music, we use to like sharing food and just chatting over the weekend and kind of our backgrounds. What happened for you over the weekend? So you know there was quite a lot of that. We were from different Islands as well. It was lovely, so there was a richness to be gained just through that and then there was the background, the strictness, who got beat, who didn't get beat and so you identified very, very much with that (Grace, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire: 22-03-2010).

Clearly she was able to identify with the other Black Caribbean students in her class through their shared ethnicity and culture. It was evident that as a collective group of Black Caribbean students there were clear divisions between her ethnic group and her white peers. As stated earlier Fenton (1999) observed that ethnicity is about a social relationship, the way in which individuals make a distinction between themselves and other individuals. There are some similarities to Grace's narrative in relation to a collective group identity as indicated earlier on in the literature. Thus, It can be argued that as a result of a shared group identity with other Black Caribbean children in her school, Grace experienced positive affirmation of her ethnic identity and is congruent

with some of the debate on racial identity and ethnicity (Fenton,1999, 2003; Gunaratnam, 2003). As Takhar (2013) asserted:

“it is the shared otherness that marks its difference from the dominant group and from the view of structural process, forms political identity. The otherness is based around a particular sign or marker, for example colour, culture or religion, but it can also be around sexuality” (Takhar, 2013:38).

In this study there was evidence that demonstrated some second generation experiences of group identity and ethnicity was multifaceted as there was greater integration between the different ethnic groups.

I started that school and it was really a nice and really positive experience there socially. It was predominately white but there were enough of Asian, Afro-Caribbean, Chinese background not to feel the odd one out and it wasn't really a school that was segregated by your background either. Generally what you found in school you mixed with everyone and after school you mixed with your racial group, so to speak. It was a very multi-cultural school very sort of mixed religions, mixed ethnicity and I remember not feeling like the odd one out and feeling very settled and having a really enjoyable time there (Melody, 29, interview location: London, 08-02-2011).

There was an awareness of the other ethnic minority groups in school and she felt comfortable with them. In her narrative was her sense of collective group identity. Street et al (2008) suggested the sense of belonging and identification to an ethnic group empowers individuals and redefines their membership of this group regardless of community constraints. Similarly, Reynolds (2006) asserted that young British Caribbeans have applied their trans-Atlantic heritage of a wider family network which constructs and influences their ethnic identity. Thus, growing up in a multi-ethnic society has enabled broader integration to ethnic social networks promoting them to develop local identities. It has been argued that ethnicity should be recognised in context to 'social relations', essentially taking on distinct meanings in separate social

situations, (Gunaratnam, 2003:12). This was evident in Melody's account of her after school friendship.

Unlike Rose and some other first generation participants in this study who felt alienated because of their race, the second generation participants' identity was based on their ethnicity and group relationship. It can be argued that ethnic and racial identity are significant to all ethnic minority groups. It was evident in the data that the collective group identity was of equal importance to some participants in this study as it gave them the sense of identity, commonality and affiliation to a specific group based their customs and values identified in the literature.

Nevertheless, there are complexities of identification with ethnic and racial identity as was evident with Rose's explanation of her identity, whilst Grace and Melody's explanation of identity was based on their ethnicity. Ethnicity and race and have not remained static, and over the centuries have been interchangeable rather than 'universal and timeless' as previously suggested by race scientists (Gunaratnam 2003:14).

It is important to recognise that differences of ethnicity and race are multifaceted and fluid which changes over time and should not simply be reduced to colour, race or cultural generalisations and it is evident that this data supports earlier debates on ethnicity and racial identity (Gilroy, 1987; Goulbourne, 2006; Lam and Smith, 2009; Barn, 2010). Whilst many participants in this study identified with their ethnic and racial identity, school at times was unpleasant because of their 'otherness'. There is an

indication in the data that racism in school is an aspect that afflicted many participants in this study and this issue is discussed next.

### **Institutionalised Racism in School**

In 1971 Bernard Coard published a controversial book entitled, *How the West Indian Child is made educationally sub-normal by the British Education System*. Nearly four decades after this book was written, the debate on how the British Education system impacts on different racial groups is still being discussed (Duffield, 2000; Giles, 1977; Troyna, 1987; Gillborn and Gipps 1996; Tomlinson, 1998). During this time the discourse has changed and different rationales have been introduced into the debate over the continuous underachievement of different ethnic minority groups within schools (Swann Report, 1985; Office for Standards in Education, 1999, 2002a, 2007; Department of Education and Skills, 2007, 2009).

The concepts of race and racism have been debated by various sociologists and academics such as Bulmer and Solomos (2004), Troyna (1987) Coard (1971), Tomlinson, (1985, 1987) and others. Bulmer and Solomos (2004) stated that the concept of 'race' and racism is problematic and argued that there are methodological issues associated with conducting field work in that area. They argued that controversy surrounding the discourse on 'race' and racism explorations have led to these concepts being viewed more within the political realm. They suggest that the discourse on 'race' and racism is best situated within "specific social and culture environments" (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004:3). On the other hand Miles (2000) suggested that

racialisation and racism are ideological forces in conjunction with economic and political relations of domination and that this ideology has located certain populations in specific class positions and is also the result of exploitation of labour power (Miles, 2000:140-141). Conversely, Razack (2004) has argued that racism and discrimination are entrenched in our structures, institutions and within the social fabric of society. In other words this can be described as institutionalised racism. Macpherson (1999) also identified this phenomenon in the British education system where he described this as failing minority pupils and stated that many British schools were “institutionally racist” (Majors, 2001:3).

“Institutional racism describes societal patterns that have the net effect of imposing oppressive or otherwise negative conditions against identifiable groups on the basis of race or ethnicity” (Civil Liberties.com, retrieved, 20-01-2012).

Randall (2008) for example asserted that racism is both overt and covert, and is connected in three parts: “individual, institutional, and systematic” Individual racism comprises of overt acts by individuals that cause death, injury, destruction of property, or denial of services or opportunity. Second, “institutional racism is less obvious but nonetheless destructive. This includes policies, practices, and procedures of institutions that have a disproportionately negative effect on racial minorities” access to and quality of goods, services, and opportunities. Third, systemic racism is the foundation of “individual and institutional racism; it is the value system that is embedded in a society that supports and allows discrimination” (Randall, 2008:01).

Dominelli (1989) argued that racism in its broadest sense is taken to mean hostile intercultural attitudes wherever they occur, and encompasses prejudice and discrimination against any individual or group on the basis of religion, language,

culture or colour (1989:09). Mirza (1992) noted that many teachers were overtly racist. Moreover this overtly racist attitude was not always confined to one incident but was an accumulation of a long standing feud between teacher and pupil, fuelled in part by an action and the reaction of both parties (Mirza, 1992:57).

In a similar argument Wright et al (2000) discovered that in one study on ethnic minorities in schools, open racist attitudes were to be found amongst the white majority students. The teachers, Wright (2000) explained, were unsure of what racism meant and chose to either ignore the behaviour or ultimately labelled such incidents as teasing or bullying. It seemed that despite legislation on racism some teachers held onto their beliefs and prejudices about the ethnic minority child. These beliefs were often manifested in the classroom and Black Caribbean students were seen as culturally and intellectually inferior to the white students. Similarly, Majors (2001) pointed out that incidents of racist behaviour are highest amongst schools where the majority of the students are white. He suggested that teachers were ill equipped to deal with racist attitudes and had no idea how to handle racist incidents. He argued that unacceptable racist behaviour was tolerated and not dealt with in an appropriate manner, and often ignored (Majors 2001:4).

Discrimination and prejudice are aspects that despite laws and policies prohibiting inequalities in school and society, many Black Caribbeans and ethnic minorities encounter daily (Ford, 2008). Recent research by Strand (2012) found that Black students of Caribbean origin are still subjected to institutional racism in British schools and that this has a detrimental effect on their educational attainment. These studies highlight the barriers that many of the participants in this research encountered at



school be it overt or covert (Macpherson, 1999; Strand, 2012). Discrimination and racist behaviors in school was experienced by the majority of participants but more so by some of the first generation. There were varying levels of racist encounters and for some participants these occurrences were more profound than others.

It was evident that some first generation mothers who attended school in the 1970s suffered and received hostile treatment in school from their classmates and in some cases from teachers as well and supported by the earlier literature. This was documented in chapter Two on West Indian experiences of British school. Some participants described discrimination in school as not being given adequate support and encouragement in school by their teachers, low expectations, being excluded from activities in school, name calling and derogatory remarks. Racism in school was more profound for some first generation participants. This is exemplified in Anna's statement:

The racism in school was horrendous, it was horrendous! I was getting attacked in the playground and then the teachers never did anything about it. So one day I really gave two girls a going over with the hockey stick, because I'd had enough, different things that were happening, plus lots of things we suffered in junior school. We got called niggers by teachers and pupils. School was difficult there was no Race Relation Act honestly that didn't come till 1976 way after I was getting ready to leave school. It was very racist! Well I passed the 11 plus and went to a Grammar school. I knew my mum was very upset as I didn't last a term and my mum didn't understand how racist the school was. She didn't get it, she came from the Caribbean where teachers and people from church were next to godliness. So the teachers said you did such and such, you did such and such. The teachers were blatantly, blatantly racist with us apart from one Irish teacher, who was cool because they were dealing with their own level of racism as well (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-01-2010).

This is a powerful statement and there are several issues in her comment. Her narrative indicated that she was unaware of laws protecting ethnic minorities against the racial bullying in school. Racism was openly ignored and there was no one in her school to protect her from this onslaught. Her narrative demonstrates congruence with the some of literature in chapter Two and is indicative of some teachers' overtly racist attitudes towards Black Caribbean students.

Unmistakably Anna's experiences of racist behaviour and attitude were detrimental to her education as she was permanently excluded from the Grammar School that she had studied so hard to get into. She said

Yeah I wouldn't have lick up those two girls with the hockey stick I wouldn't have. But in order for me not to have done that I would have needed somebody I could have spoken to about what it felt like to be the only Black girl. They use to call me that Greek god, we did it once in Greek history and Latin history in grammar school Medusa who had all those worms coming out of her hair and my plaits didn't always sit down on my hair that was what I was called, there was nothing positive about being a Black female. That was difficult but obviously in hindsight it was a great place for an education (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-01-2010).

There are two important points in Anna's comment. First she was not given adequate support to cope with the racism in school. The school as an institution had racist practices that were insidious and deeply engrained and therefore failed in its duty to protect ethnic minority children who often felt isolated, segregated and marginalised during this period of schooling. Much of this issue on racism and discrimination in school has been documented by the literature (Goulbourne: 1998; Macpherson, 1999, Majors, 2001, Strand, 2012). In Anna's experience, she had worked diligently to gain

entrance into a good grammar school, only to be asked to leave because of the ineffectiveness of her educators who turned a blind eye to the victimisation of a young child. She was disappointed that nothing was done to support her during this time when school was a particular challenging time for children of Caribbean descent.

The second issue in her comment referred to the derogatory name-calling she experienced in school that was very difficult at times for her to manage. Troyna (1987) argued for policy documents to be more aware and inclusive of racist notions and practices that affect ethnic minority students. There may have been documentation (The Race Relations Act, 1965, 1968, 1976) which offered protection from race and discrimination of ethnic minorities, nevertheless they appeared to have done very little to protect Anna whilst in school.

Many participants explained that at some point during their schooling they experienced discrimination and isolation in school. As mentioned earlier during this period of schooling the educational authority overlooked the attitudes of racism and discrimination by the majority school population to its minority student population. Peggy 49 years old, originally from Moss side in Manchester, but now living and working in London described her experiences of discrimination and racism in school.

These were just as distressing as Anna's. Peggy recalled these events:

We were going through the same racism. Racism was about not allowing you to achieve what you could achieve. You had teachers telling you Oh could you draw where you come from you need to draw Africa or the jungle. You don't know nothing about it, you've never been to the West Indies you've never been to Africa you don't know any jungles. The names you were called golly wogs you were called chalky, can we touch your hair what do you put in your hair, things like that. So there was no great

input from teachers. (Peggy, 49, interview location: London, 23-01-10).

Peggy asserted that the 1970s were difficult times for Black school children. There is a suggestion in her comments that they were seen as 'foreign' and were made uncomfortable during school. There is a similarity in these two narratives of discrimination and racism, because Anna, and Peggy attended a school where there were very few Black children.

Peggy's and Anna's experiences of discrimination in school supported Wright's (1987) argument about ethnic minority pupils in schools. Wright (1987) contended that both the educational institution and teachers were somehow racist. Wright (1987) noted that often teachers were given the full support by the authorities when dealing with students from minority ethnic groups. She discovered particularly harsh treatments of students from African-Caribbean descent and maintained that they were not given the educational support or encouragement by teachers (Wright, 1987: 85-87). Wright's (1987) argument was later supported by various sociologists such as Mirza (1999) and Majors (2001) illustrated earlier in the chapter.

Many of the first generation participants encountered some form of racist behaviour during their time in school, but some were more expressive than others in communicating this. Similar to Anna's and Peggy's experiences of profound racist attitude in school was Dee. Dee was 50 years old, single and of Grenadian parentage. Her parents have four children and they came to England in 1957 and 1958. They could not get the work they were accustomed to in Grenada, and as a result had various factory jobs. Dee and her sister were born in England; her older siblings were born in Grenada. She is the mother to 3 girls, aged 15, 27 and 26. She has 2

grandsons aged 6 years and 11 months. She was self-employed as a freelance writer, researcher, book keeper, dress designer, and dress maker. She completed her master's degree and did her first degree 27 years ago. Dee had vivid recollection of an incident that occurred in school. She said:

I remember writing a poem either for English or drama and it was to be read to public in the hall and with an outsider observer to come in and award the prizes. I'd written this poem and my teacher, who, was a bit racist said I couldn't read it out, but someone else other than me would read it out. I thought because I was a Black person why is it that I'm good enough to write it, create it but I'm not good enough to read it out? Why couldn't I get the credit for it? So I asked my mum as this doesn't sound right to me. It's my poem she doesn't want me to read it out, she wants someone else to read it out, if it's good enough to be read out why can't I read it out. (Dee, 50, interview location: London, 08-02-2010).

Dee's comments suggested that she had an early awareness of discrimination. She pointed out that her parents, who were from Grenada, had openly discussed the exclusion of Black people in societies such as America, the United Kingdom as well as the apartheid system in South Africa. Dee's decision to challenge her teacher so early on in her school life showed her refusal to accept the decision of her teacher, and she took a stance at something she felt passionate about. It can be deduced there was an element of systematic discrimination that occurred in schools. It was clear from her comment that she was not prepared to accept the decision by her teacher. She said:

I didn't know the word was racist but I knew she was unfair and she was discriminating against me. I thought I'm not having it! (Dee, 50, interview location: London, 08-02-2010).

There is an indication in the data that the majority of participants who attended school in the early 1970s encountered a greater level of discrimination illustrated by Rampton, (1981) report. As Rose's narrative indicated she experienced discrimination very early

on in her education and her awareness of being different from the other students were communicated to her on a daily basis as there were not many Black students when she was at school. Highlighted in Anna and Peggy's accounts, exclusion of minority ethnic groups went on 'unchecked' in school supporting earlier arguments on minority ethnic children in school already documented (Wright, 1987,2000; Troyna, 1987; Stone, 1994; Mirza, 1992). Overwhelmingly these events have left a lasting legacy on many of the participants.

It was evident that discrimination in school was often ignored and this has been demonstrated in the literature. Some participants in this study suffered hostility from their classmates and in some incidents from teachers as well supporting arguments of Wright, (1987; 2003) and Mirza, (1992). These narratives have explored discrimination and racism in school from first generation participants, continuing with this theme the next section looks specifically at some second generation experiences of racial prejudice in school in relation to isolation and exclusion.

### **Isolation and exclusion**

The section on isolation and exclusion looks specifically at the second generation participants' exclusion in keys areas of their social and academic development. Mothers in this study believed that despite the changes made to the education system discrimination was still evident in school.

The Race Relations Act was introduced in 1965, amended in 1968, 1976 and subsequently amended in 2000 to include a statutory duty on public bodies to promote

race equality and demonstrate that procedures to prevent race discrimination were effective. The 1976 Race Relations Act informed parents and guardians, community groups, contractors and partners on what they can expect from school and the expectations that schools have of them (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010). In spite of these practices and policies that protect ethnic minorities in the workplace, public sphere and education, acts of discrimination and exclusion have been experienced by some of the second generation women in education. Similarly to the first generation participants, some second generation participants' recollection of their experiences of racial prejudice were vivid and painful.

Gillborn (1992) suggested teachers responded differently to Black Caribbean students. Further in his research on the City Road School he noted that:

“they tried to deal with ethnic diversity by ignoring it: the school followed a colour blind policy which argued that all students should be treated exactly the same” (Gillborn, 1992:63).

Normore *et al* (2007) argued that all children have the right to receive an equal opportunity to learn, irrespective of race and ethnicity. They stated that it is the moral responsibility of educators and community leaders to ensure that all children have access to and receive good quality education. He argued that despite the laws and policies on education prohibiting exclusion based on race, ethnicity or religion, not all children received equal opportunities in education (Normore *et al*, 2007: 664-667).

On the other hand racist incidents are defined as ‘any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any person’ (Macpherson Report in Anthias, 1999). However not all writers in this field were sympathetic to the arguments about ‘race’ and racism. Stevens (2009) suggested that students’ allegation of racism and discrimination

should be treated cautiously. He noted that “pupils’ claims of unfair treatment should not be considered as prima facie evidence of racism or racial discrimination” (2009:426). Further Steven’s (2009) argued that these incidents were open to interpretations and were used in “diverse ways, rather than simply reflecting discriminatory behaviour on the part of teacher” (2009: 427).

In contrast Gillborn (1992) critiqued some teachers, when he asserted that “Afro-Caribbean students were labelled as a likely source of trouble, disproportionately criticised and denied any legitimate voice of protest” (Gillborn, 1992:63). Furthermore, African-Caribbean students often suffer from teachers’ views of them that showed them as a challenge to classroom management (Wright, 1986; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn, 1997). There is no consensus in the terminology of differentiation between Black African and Black Caribbean and these labels remain problematic. Over the period of time various researchers have used terms such as ‘African-Caribbean’, ‘West Indian’, Afro-Caribbean, and Black British’ (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996:27). There is a contention around the use of terms such as ‘African-Caribbean’ to analyse school performance (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996). In the same way Duffield (1998) argues that different ethnic groups experience education differently in Britain (1998:159). These arguments have demonstrated the effect of teacher perception on Black Caribbean students and reiterates the inequalities in education (Mirza, 1992, Gillborn, 1997, Tomlinson, 2008).

In another argument Ford (2008) noted that there has been more resistance in the older majority white population to “race relations legislation, ethnic minority, and immigration” (Ford, 2008:638). Although there has been a decline in racism based on



colour, a new prejudice has emerged based on perceived cultural difference (Ford, 2008). Similarly, Winant (1998) argued that “like race, racism has changed over time” (Winant, 1998:760). He argued that racism was evident, and continued to thrive, however there was an uncertainty as to its meaning today. “Prejudice was an almost unavoidable outcome of patterns of socialization which were ‘bred in bone’, affecting not only whites but even minorities” (Winant, 1998:758). He argued that:

“because racism changes and develops, because it is simultaneously a vast phenomenon framed by epochal historical developments, and a moment to moment experiential reality, we can never expect fully to capture it theoretically” (Winant, 1998:765).

In other words policies and laws may in some ways attempt to eradicate racism and discrimination but the beliefs and attitudes of generations are more difficult to overcome and achieve (Ford, 2008; Winant, 1998).

There was a noticeable decrease of racism for some second generation participants. Anita, for example was 31 years old and a jewellery merchandiser. She came from a family of four, two brothers and one sister, she was the eldest child. She was a divorcee with a six year old son. She attended Southampton Polytechnic before the institution gained university status; she has a diploma in Jewellery design. Anita stated that during the period of nursery, primary and secondary school education she felt isolated and excluded. She recalled

I was actually excluded, so that caused me to be lonely, and I think I may have had some problems, fitting in. My first school, was fine, I think because it was a slightly different environment, and the teachers were different, just a totally different environment to nursery. I think I started to fit in and I made friends a lot more. I think, today you’ve got Ofsted, haven’t you? And certain laws that would protect children, from being mistreated and I think back in the 80s it was very lapsed, and, I don’t think that. I think had the system been in place today,

certain people would not be in the position that they were back then, because of certain treatments. I mean I'm not going to divulge but all I would say is one of the psychological experiences upsets me and being away from my mum. I was like being excluded from the other children, and did not know why. And to be excluded at 3 to 4 years old that is bad (Anita, 31, interviewed location: Oxfordshire 22-02-2010).

Her narrative indicated that she had difficulties in settling and making friends in school and for the most part of her school life she felt lonely and isolated. She pointed out that there were times in primary school where certain issues would come up which her teachers would chose to ignore.

Anita's difficulty in school was confirmed by her mother Grace who stated:

my daughter was isolated and she felt, she wasn't good enough and she felt again ostracised to a certain degree (Grace, 50, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-02-2010)

These were profound incidents that had a lasting effect on Anita. Similarly, Anna expressed her anger and disgust and her motives for changing her daughters' school.

Before Melody was even six I changed her school 3 times, because of the racism. She went to three primary schools before I found a school I felt was good for her and there was a Black female teacher who took an interest in her (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-02-2010).

Her comments suggested that racism, encouragement and support were lacking and not forthcoming from the school. It is evident in this narrative that discrimination and racism have been a constant occurrence for these participants. They were unfairly treated, ignored, and experienced differential treatment to other ethnic groups as illustrated earlier.

Comparable to Anita, Melody remembered being excluded from activities at playtime.

She said:

I remember in my first school being very aware that I was Black, a Black girl not so much in academic sense but playtime, social sense not being included in games not being invited to people's houses, birthday parties. If it was kiss chase not being the first person anyone would ever chase in the playground, that kind of thing. So physically, feeling that I didn't fit in, even, though, I had lots of positive role models and re-enforcement, at home. (Melody, 29, interview location: London, 08-01-2010).

Her comment highlighted issues of exclusion by her white peers. Torres (2009) asserts that racism is common place for Black students, and that inequalities in the treatment of Black students by their white peers teachers and administrators have remained (Torres, 2009: 884).

For other participants in this study there was a realisation of receiving differential treatment as documented by Gillborn (1992). Jay was 25 years old and worked as an adjudicator. She articulates those issues of exclusion in school when she said:

In London I felt there was more of prejudice than in Tipton. I felt they had more of a jaded attitude towards children of a particular ethnic background and they kind of felt that a lot of Black girls weren't interested in a lot of the activities. They kind of gave up and just didn't bother asking the rest of us to participate in these activities. We were judged by the main Black girls in the older years that hadn't paid an interest and we were disregarded. There were things going on we didn't have a clue until it had happened and you'd think why? For example the school sports club was never advertised at school yet a team would have been formulated and you would feel how did that happened? (Jay, 25, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Highlighted in her comment is the issue of behaviour. Her narrative emphasised that teacher impression was based on the behaviour of a few pupils who lacked interest.

The notion of behaviour and teacher impression of Black Caribbean students was discussed earlier and documented in the literature. Both generations encountered prejudicial behaviours and attitudes in school albeit in different ways and on various levels.

Although the subsequent amendments to the Race Relations Act (1968, 1976, 2000) have in some ways recognised the difficulties experienced by ethnic minorities in Britain, incidents of isolation and exclusion encountered by some participants have demonstrated that it has been ineffective in protecting them from the phenomena of discrimination and exclusion in school. For many participants their experiences of discrimination were at times subtle and for other participants quite blatant, whilst other participants were very aware of discrimination in school, but chose to ignore this. Basit *et al* (2007) showed that some people have experienced racism, but did not want to admit to it and for others they may not even have been aware that they were victims of racism (Basit *et al* , 2007: 296).

It can be argued that the Race Relations Act (1976) which prohibits discrimination and exclusion in schools has not been effective in addressing the issues of discrimination experienced by some of the participants taking part in this research. This study is based on the experiences of participants during primary and secondary school. However, some of these earlier experiences were manifested at university for some participants in the form of covert racism.

Having experienced isolation and exclusion quite early on in primary and secondary school discussed earlier Melody continued to experience prejudicial behaviour in university. She explained:

I recalled being told you are a North Londoner love. I was extremely aggravated by him because I come from quite a liberal college. You wouldn't have someone speaking to you like that, especially when it is someone from the faculty. Then he went onto make really derogatory remarks. He asked me about my background and he said where are, you from? I said my college. He said don't be silly you know what I mean where are you really from and I said London. He said come on lets be really, really, truthful where are your parents from. I said London, and he said where were you born I said London. He said to me that I can tell from your attitude you are Jamaican (Melody, 29, interview location: London, 08-02-2011).

In her narrative she suggested that this lecturer was being deeply offensive and indeed racist towards her. Buchanan (2006) suggested that Black students are more sensitive to the comments of their teachers. Clearly, Melody's lecturer was aggressive in his manner towards her. Torres (2009) conducted research on Black students in predominantly white institutions and concluded that "racism remained a significant factor in the lives of Black students at majority white universities" (Torres, 2009:884). Torres (2009) have shown that Black students

"continue to be stereotyped as special admit students and treated as second class citizen, who are not ready to compete with white students on an intellectual level" (Torres, 2009: 884).

Similarly, McGee and Martin (2011) asserted that as a result of racial stereotypes Black students know from very early on that there is a low expectation of their competence in mathematics and mathematic related disciplines. In these fields Black students have been forced to challenge these stereotypes in their attempt to be treated equally (McGee and Martin, 2011: 1378). These stereotypes have been illustrated by Melody's statement of her lecturer.

In this study some participants' recollection of incidents of isolation and exclusion in school was more vivid; other participants either knew of someone who had experienced exclusion. As discussed earlier, it can therefore be argued that the education structure has systematically failed some ethnic minority children in protecting them from the inequalities in education. It is apparent that despite the Race Relations Act (1965), and subsequent Acts amendments, racial prejudice remained evident in the education system.

The next section explores the relevance and importance of education to these participants despite the perceived barriers in their education.

## **Section Two**

### **Relevance and Importance of education**

It is evident that historically Black Caribbean students and their educational underperformance in school have generated a great deal of attention. A range of issues in relation to this and Black Caribbean students have been studied in an attempt to give an explanation. Tomlinson (1978) for example highlighted several factors including West Indian children in Educationally Subnormal School (ESN), ethnic minorities' parents and home and school relations (Vincent and Tomlinson, 1997). As indicated earlier researchers have investigated discrimination and racism in school (Gillborn, 1999, 1990, 1995; Wright, 1987; 2000; Strand, 2011, 2012). Some other studies explored the exclusion rates of Black males in school (Blair, 2001), Black masculinity (Mac an Ghail, 1994, Sewell, 1997) and Black girls in school (Mirza,

1992). There is an indication in the literature that educationalists, sociologists, parents and researchers have been concerned about the education of Black Caribbean children and over the past forty years or more various discourses have focused on the poor performance of Black Caribbean pupils. Black Caribbean boys, in particular, continue to receive negative attention in the media (*The Independent*, 2007; *Mail Online*, 2010; *The Telegraph*, 2011). Issues surrounding race, racism, discrimination and the performance of different ethnic groups in the educational system have been central to many of these debates (Goulbourne, 1999, 2001; Gillborn, 1990, 1995, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005).

Students learning and understanding of education is a concept that has been investigated by educationalist and academics. Education prepares individuals for membership in society and particularly the corporate world (Ballantine and Spade, 2008). Similarly, Bynner (1998) asserts that acquiring an education underpins all functions that are necessary to participate in “political and social realm, child-bearing and family life” (1998:05). Its importance and relevance of education was not only a concern for Black British born Caribbean women but generally for all communities and parents alike. For the mothers in this study their perception of education was one of awareness and importance and based on their experiences of school. For example, Osborne et al., (2004) suggested there are six different categories of applicants to Higher Education. These they described as:

“delayed traditional students-these have chosen to take time out from education but re-enter through a traditional route, ‘late starts, who have undergone a life-transforming event and require a new start; single parents; careerist- people currently employed; escapees- those who are employed but seek a different pathway and personal growers- those wanting to pursue education for its own sake” (Osborne et, al., 2004: 219-315).

A Department for Education and Employment report (1998) on further education stated that:

“This Government is committed to the establishment of a learning society in which all people have opportunities to succeed. Increasing access to learning and providing opportunities for success and progression are fundamental to the Government’s strategy. These are the keys to social cohesion and economic success” (DEE, 1998: 07).

The report set out the Government’s policy on lifelong learning through “extending learning opportunities; make education and training more flexible and accessible; remove barriers to learning through the introduction of individual learning account (ILAs) and to invest in young people so that as many as possible are motivated and enable to study beyond 16” ( DEE, 1998: 05). In other word the reports notes that through its policy on widening participation education has become readily available and accessible to individuals who ordinarily would have left school with very little or no qualifications to return to learning (DEE, 1998).

An argument posed by Kearney (2006) asserted that ethnic minorities and women have been able to aspire and achieve economic mobility through confidence, hard work, and ability through education (2006: 49). Similarly, research by Luna *et al* (2010) reiterated the argument on Black women’s achievements in education. They asserted that Black women have become more educated than Black males in society. They stated that “women of colour” in the United States of American have obtained more degrees and are better qualified than their male counterparts (Luna *et al*, 2010:01). The discourse on Black women being more qualified than Black men has been evident as some participants taking part in this research stated that they were more qualified than their partners and husbands (Luna *et al* 2010; Francis and Skeleton, 2005).



Nevertheless, this argument does not negate the fact that Black Caribbean men and boys perhaps have the same goals and aspirations as Black Caribbean women.

In this study the relevance and importance of education from a generational perspective demonstrated some similarities. For example, Rose was 46 years old, and had ten siblings. Her parents both came from Jamaica. She was a single parent with six children, three boys and three girls and has two grandchildren. She worked as a pre-school assistant with children within the age range of two to four years. In recalling her school experiences she said

I enjoyed education. All the aspects of it, I love learning, new things, so yeah, it's quite important to me. It is important to understand the world you live in; otherwise you can get left behind. A good education, sound, ground education is important. It helps you to communicate, you know, with other people on all levels, and not just feel that you are going to be intimidated and not do things, and that you don't think you're going to fit in. I think everybody needs to be able to read, to be able to write and to do some form of mathematical skill and to be able to communicate, on all levels, with anybody, and have a love of learning and if they are educated right, they will keep on asking the right questions (Rose, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-03-2010).

From Rose's perspective, education was not only about what is taught in school but was a continuous process of learning and gaining knowledge from the world. Her opinion of education was one that involved developing and learning new skills, on interacting with other members of society and she valued this experience very much. She believed that only through a 'decent education' was one able to question events and issues that may have been occurring around them. This was another important point made by Rose as she said:

We just received an education to get us all by, because for the length of time that we actually spend in schools. The education I received in school was enough to get me by and I had to top it up ever since (Rose, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-03-2010).

The system of education was unable to address all the needs of individuals. In other words, schools could only do so much in teaching their students but that the majority of learning takes place outside the formal structure of schools. Rose asserted that during her time at school, she was only given a basic education. From her perspective what she learnt during her time at school had to be supplemented after she had left school. There was an indication in her statement that individuals should not be over reliant on the educational system as schools did not have sufficient resources to prepare students in all areas of education. Rose suggested that because the educational system had been inadequate in its ability to educate her, she felt compelled to explore and investigate other avenues in order for her to continue her process of learning and development. Rose's narratives and explanation on her education as personal development supports an earlier Department for Education and Employment report (1998) on educational flexibility and development.

Conversely, Melody was 29, a divorcee with a three year old son and a graduate from Cambridge University where she studied Social and Political Science. After graduation she worked in the not for profit sector improving failing schools in London. She also worked in the city for a financial services company and had briefly taught in a private school in London. She noted that teaching was not an ideal profession for her and as a result she was returning to work in the city. Melody argued that education was very significant in an individual's life.

I am very passionate about education I think anyone that knows me knows that's the case. I think there are lots of factors that affect how well someone does. I think one thing that you have at your control to a degree is your education and I think it's a shame that a lot of people don't realise education is a key until it's too late. One, they don't know how to work the system. A lot of people even in my age group don't see the correlation of how well you do in school and your options afterwards. I remember my ex and I when we were in university we had lots of friends in London who weren't at university but had jobs, they would phone during exam periods and say come to this rave or come do this. We'd say no we've got work to do and they didn't get it. They are only now getting it ten years on (Melody, 29, interview location: London, 08-01-2010).

In Melody's statement there was a realisation that education was paramount to becoming successful in society. She observed that very often when individuals attended school there was a tendency to overlook the opportunities available to them. The significance of education resonated with all the participants. Most participants perceived education as the building blocks to their future and career path. Some participants suggested that by gaining a 'decent enough' education they would secure some form of security later in life.

Similar to Melody was Anna. Anna was the youngest of five children. Her parents came from Jamaica. Her father came to England after the Second World War because companies in Britain were looking for trained craftsmen to help rebuild, in particular, stately homes. She noted that unlike many of his peers he was interviewed in Jamaica and his passage was paid for by his prospective employers. He worked on many stately homes because he was a top cabinet maker/carpenter and joiner. He came to England in 1954 followed by her mother in 1956, a year and a half after her father. They left three children who were born in Jamaica. Anna was 49 years old with three daughters, aged thirty, sixteen and eleven. She also had two foster children. She was very candid in her opinion on education and said:

For me it's the be all and end all. A good education is a combination of things a good education means, you've gone through the education system and got a basic education through the curriculum and being able to socialize with a variety of people in terms of life. It is an education where you learn to hold your tongue sometimes and not mix with certain conversation how to move away from that. For me education was how to conduct yourself in any social setting comfortably, surrounded by people who are not from your culture you should be able to stand anywhere and have a conversation. What education is all about it's about being aware of where you're coming from historically, culturally taking an interest in others and school (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-01-2010)

Anna's argument indicated the importance of education to her. In recalling her mother's background, she stated that her mother's education was cut short when she was ten years old. In spite of her mother not having finished school, she instilled a discipline in all her children that education was crucial in their lives. Anna noted that as a result of her mother's passion and dedication to their schooling, her sister and three brothers have all been successful in their chosen career paths. Ann also stated that she was better qualified than her husband. Anna's education and qualification were more substantive than her husband and this has been documented by literature (Luna *et al* 2010; Francis and Skeleton, 2005).

Indicative in this research has been that some participants invested a greater amount of time in their self-development and saw education as a means to becoming successful. Peggy's statement typifies the significance of education. Peggy was 49 years old, the fifth child out of eight children, six boys and two girls. Her parents came from Jamaica and she was born and raised in Moss side in Manchester. Her mother was a midwife and her father worked as a bus conductor, when he retired he had

worked for the General Post Office. She is the mother of two girls, aged 26 and 24.

She stated that:

Education is the key to most things in life. What you're going to do next how you're going to achieve. What kind of work you're going to get what kind of employment, what kind of salary you can command so education for me is just, above everything. If you can't read or write you can't communicate with people, or can't be articulate. It helps you get through life much easier than if you were struggling to string a sentence together. It opens doors for you, you've got flexibility, and you don't have to stay in the U.K. The world is your oyster! You really got more flexibility to move around (Peggy, 49, Interview with location: London 23-01-10).

She asserted that the key to achieving one's aims, goals and aspiration is through education. It is only through the acquisition of further and higher qualifications that an individual can realise their ambitions. Peggy's statement on what equates to a good education has been comparable to some second generation participants who noted that education was significant but so was gaining a 'good standard' of education. The mothers acquisition of education in the pursuit of their aspirations was supported by Bynner (1998) who argued that without the necessary skills and qualifications employers are demanding it would be unlikely to gain employment (Bynner, 1998:05). Therefore the emphasis on gaining a 'good standard' of education was an argument which all participants supported. There are similarities in these narratives on the importance of education between the generations.

Just as Melody had commented on the importance of education, Cyra had just discovered the impact education had on her life. Cyra was 25 years old, single, and a mother of four young children, three girls and a boy between the ages of 6 and 4 years.

She had planned to seek employment that was flexible, enough allowing her to be available for her children. Cyra, confirmed the significance of education

Yes, it is. If you haven't got an education, you can't do anything, well you can but you have more choice of the life styles, of you know, of what you want to do when you're older, so yeah definitely education is definitely important. Some people can 'ace' everything like my cousin or some people breeze through it like my brother, you know, some people have their strong points or some people have their weak points, you know it's all different. So I don't think there is anything you can call a very good education, it's just what you want, what you're very capable of doing, if you do better than what you expected then it's bonus, so yeah definitely. (Cyra, 25, Interview location: Oxfordshire, 25-02-2010).

Cyra had a difficult time at school. She had relocated homes several times as a child and in addition she had suffered ill health. She was also excluded from school at the age of thirteen and shortly after that she ran away from home. Cyra's decision to disclose that she was excluded from school implied that she was not stigmatised by this.

There is a long history which shows that Black Caribbean pupils have been portrayed as a 'problem' since the immigration of their parents. Their behaviour in school has been discussed over the last forty years (Johnson, 2004). Research has shown that Black Caribbean children were more likely than any other ethnic group to be excluded from school and are treated more harshly (Wright, 1992; Blair, 2001; Johnson, 2004). Research suggested that students who were excluded from school suffer marginality, homelessness and unemployment (Richardson and Wood, 1999; DfES, 2003). This was not discovered in Cyra's case. Cyra's decision was to continue her education despite all the upheavals in her life. Her determination signified her desire to succeed through education.

In contrast to first generation mother Rose's experiences of education, Cyra's situation was different from many of the other participants. She was raised by her grandparents who had strong morals and values. She explained that there were periods when she experienced difficulties coping with growing up as a Black Caribbean child. She stated:

I couldn't say whether it was like a West Indian thing, or not , I mean some people I've spoken to said it can get like that with a West Indian family, but it was like all the pressure of being part of a West Indian family is like, well you're part of a West-Indian family, you can't do this, you can't do that. We want you to be become the doctor, the lawyer, which is fair enough because they always want what's best for their children, but you can't hang around with white people, you can't do this. You can't it was always very stressful, you can never be yourself, it was like you were programmed to do as they said constantly. Every time you tried to shout out but you couldn't, because you would get tapped in the head or something ridiculous to the point of you have to leave, because it gets to the point where you can't hack it no more. (Cyra, 25, Interview location: Oxfordshire, 25-02-2010).

There was a suggestion in Cyra's narrative that the stresses of family life as well as school compelled her to run away from home and she had no contact with her family for four years. In Cyra's account it was evident that her grandparents had high expectations of her. Her subsequent exclusion from school at the time could be seen as an embarrassment to the family. A report on school exclusion suggested that not only is the child excluded from school but parents are systematically blamed for the behaviour of their children and their inability to exercise control over them (Howarth, 2007).

Cyra's narrative suggested that she was a 'troubled' young person, who had difficulties following the rules of the home and school. Nevertheless, this occurred earlier in her life and she was now trying to make amends through gaining her qualifications. As Conner (2010) suggests students' accounts of their own experiences of learning are

more valid than any other measuring tool such as school tests. He argued that student accounts and understanding of education is what they were most likely to remember and reflect upon later on in life, as part of their educational experiences. Further he suggested that understanding pupils' experiences of learning has provided valuable "insights of what they know and understand" (Connor, 2010:593). Asking participants to reflect on their school experiences has provided an understanding of participants who attended school in the same period but experienced school differently.

Most participants perceived education as the building blocks to their future and career path. The value and importance of education was mirrored by Sam in Oxfordshire, who was 41 years old and married. She had 3 children aged 22, 19 and 12. She was one of seven, three children were born and grew up in St Vincent and the other four were born and brought up in England. Three of her siblings were educated in the Caribbean and the other four children were educated in England. Her mother and father both came from St Vincent, her father immigrated to England in 1961 and her mother followed in 1963. Her parents both worked in the hospital and in factories respectively.

Sam was adamant that education was vitally important to achieve a comfortable standard of living. She argued that this type of lifestyle could only be attained through education and a well-paying job. She said:

Education is very, very important to me. It is not just about achieving, not just to be able to like I said have opportunities, it is for that. I mean my kids have always had holidays amazing holidays at that, they have always had these opportunities because we've always worked and worked hard and, which is why I wanted them to do well, because the life style that we've kind of set for them. You want to have an even better life style or



be able to maintain that kind of life style. Education is important for that but not just that but for your own knowledge. For you own self-development as a person because I don't think you should go through life and just stay the same. You should be constantly evolving. You know as a person, and so if you're not educated you don't do that you stay. In the same place all the time with the same mentality all the time and that is the most disabling thing that you could possibly do you know. (Sam, 41, interview location: Oxfordshire, 18-02-2010).

Sam's narrative suggested that education was seen as a means of acquiring a 'life style'. She believed that getting good grades in education was crucial but more importantly to her, education was primarily about a standard of living that could propel her and her family up the economic ladder. Kearney's (2006) earlier argument on economic mobility is perhaps more relevant to Sam's experience in this research. Sam's narrative suggested that through education she was better able to move up the economic and social ladder.

On the other hand, Hatcher (2006) suggests that coming from a less well-off economic background clearly puts educational aspirations below par to that of someone who came from a more privileged background. Middle class families not only have the means and resources to assist their children in education but are more educationally equipped than someone from a working class background (2006:101). The idea that coming from a less well-off background somewhat limits the ambition of individuals may be the case for some. However, contrary to Hatcher's (2006) suggestions this was not discovered with participants taking part in this research.

In contrast to Sam's perception of education as social and economic mobility, Laura's views emphasised lifelong learning as documented earlier. She was 24 years old and worked in the National Health Service. Laura was 1 of 3 children and the only girl in

the family. She graduated from University in 2007 and was pregnant with her first child. She had hoped to return to study after the birth of her child. She studied Psychology at university and wanted to qualify as a psychologist. She noted that getting a 'good education' was essential as this assisted individuals to access more opportunities in life. She stated

If you have a good education you give yourself a chance at moving on in life, but then I also think if you're not the most educated person as long as you're willing to learn and show that willingness that's just as important as that will help you to get by. A good education I mean is achieving a basic level of education achieving grades that will allow you to either move on up and continue to study because obviously to like get to university you need like certain grades. So you know if you can achieve these sorts of bench mark grades then that's good but just something that allows you to progress (Laura, 24, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-03-2010).

There is a suggestion in her comments that education was viewed from a perspective of development, for further education as opposed to a lifestyle as asserted by Sam. The importance of education did not rest solely on the achievement of grades but on an individual's motivation to want to learn and discover new concepts and ideas. Her comment highlights the idea that learning continues even after completing organized or structured education. Taylor (2009) noted that "lifelong learning, was one specific aspect of education, has been seen by governments in all developed societies (and, to an extent, by employers), and also by international bodies such as the European Union, as of increasing importance" (2009:71). Further, he argued that socially, lifelong learning was seen as significant.

"Social structures were more complex, not in the least in terms of ethnic and national diversity, and with life expectancy increasing; most people can expect many years of 'post work life in which education will provide the gateway to a range of opportunities" (Taylor, 2009:71).

Taylor (2009) has critiqued the concept of lifelong learning from a political point of view where he argued that the idea of lifelong learning was a means of the Labour government of the day and other European countries to perpetuate the free market economy. Lifelong learning does not permit students to be 'critical in education', nor does it sanction any collective or community notion of education, 'it assumes an entirely individualistic frame of reference' (Taylor, 2009; Taylor, et al, 2002; Taylor, 2000, Delanty, 2001). However, in contrast to (Taylor 2000; 2009; Delanty, 2001) assertion participants in this study had a more positive view of lifelong learning and saw the process of lifelong learning, as a method of self-development and of self-growth.

It has been evident that the relevance and importance of education varied; nevertheless participants were equally aware of the impact of education on their aspirations. Some participants were more successful and benefitted through accessing the available opportunities in education. The attainment of good grades for some other participants in this research was equally as important to them to realise their aspirations. The next section discusses the aspect of educational attainment.

### **Educational Achievement**

Issues of education and achievement are of particular concern to Black Caribbean parents and communities because they are linked with the performance of their children. There are conferences, such as annual teacher conferences, reports in the media and newspapers of the performance of children in General Certificate of Secondary School (GCSEs) and Advance levels subjects. These results are keenly

anticipated and widely debated in the national press by academics and other educationalists about students' performances and attainment (Guardian, 2010; 2011; The Mail, 2011; 2010; The Daily Telegraph, 2010).

"Achievement' from the perspective of the government's league table of education and qualifications" (Ofsted, 1999, 2007; DfES, 2002a,2008,2010) refers to those who have not gained the required five or more A-C grades and therefore have been deemed as underperformed. The concept of Black underachievement is too simplistic an approach to take when discussing underachievement of Black pupils.

Sociologists and educationalists alike agree that there is an element of a 'blame culture' currently in existence in education, and that is not beneficial to minority ethnic groups (Goulbourne, 1989; Tomlinson, 2005; and Archer and Francis, 2007). The notion of apportioning the blame on minority ethnic groups for the underachievement of their children suggests that the educational authorities are not obliged to investigate and support these groups of 'failing' children. African-Caribbean families, lone mothers, and single parent families have all been blamed for problems associated with underachievement and criminal behaviour within the wider community. This debate supported some of the earlier assertion on race, social class and achievement in chapter Two. In a sense the notion of blaming the minority ethnic group for not succeeding in an educational system that was set up for the majority ethnic group removes the emphasis on what is essentially an educational system that does not work for all its citizens, and overlooks aspects of gender, race/ethnicity, institutionalised racism and class.

The national statistics on education continue to indicate that Black Caribbean children, boys in particular continue to perform poorly in the education league tables with Caribbean girls performing slightly better (Ofsted, 2007, 2002a; DfES, 2007, 2010; Strand, 2010). The DfES 2006 reports that “only 39% of Black pupils achieve 5+ A\*-C GCSE grades which denotes that Black boys are among the lowest achievers at secondary school level as compared with pupils of other ethnic minority communities” (DfES, 2006:56).

The situation had not improved and in 2010 the DfE report indicated that Black students achieved below the national level – a gap of 5.9 percentage points – with 48.9 per cent of Black pupils achieving 5 or more A\*- C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and mathematics GCSEs compared with the national level of 54.8 per cent. The DfE statistics further indicated that this gap has remained relatively static from 2008/09 but has narrowed by 4.5 percentage points compared to 2005/06” (Department of Education, December 2010).

Underachievement in the education of Black Caribbean children has been widely debated and the concept of ‘underachievement’ as it applies to pupils’ performance in school is complex. ‘Achievement’ from the perspective of the government’s League Table of Education and Qualifications refers to those who have not gained the required five or more A-C grades and therefore have been deemed as underperforming (Ofsted, 1999, 2007; DfES, 2002a). Academics such as Duffield, 1998; Plummer, 2000; Gillborn, 1990, Gillborn and Gipps, 1996, for example argued that the terms achievement and underachievement were contentious as they were structural difficulties such as class and race that needed to be considered when accessing

achievement and underachievement. Wright (1992) argued that the concept of underachievement locates the problem with individual pupils whereas it needs to be acknowledged that there are structural and organisational factors at play.

There have been theories which were used to explain the occurrence of underachievement that were influenced by philosophies of children as 'deficit systems' (Bernstein, 1970:160). In this concept children are thought to be deprived intellectually, materially and culturally. An argument by Lodge and Blackstone (1982) stated that in this notion the individual child was identified as the problem. Similarly, Wright (1992) argues that the concept of underachievement locates the problem with individual pupils; it must be acknowledged that there are structural and organisational factors at play. The theoretical foundation of the word underachievement gives the impression that the obstacle is situated within individual students whilst ignoring the operational and structural aspects (Wright, 1992).

The concepts of achieving and underachieving have been robustly debated by various educationalists and sociologists (Strand, 2012; Strand, 2011; Duffield, 1998; Plummer, 2000; Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996 Smith, 2003; Troyna, 1984). The discourse on underachievement in the education of African Caribbean children has been debated but 'underachievement' as it is applied to pupils' performance in school is not a straight forward concept. Some of these debates which were previously disputed are once again introduced in theories attempting to explain educational underachievement. Government policy and explanations that recognised the responsibility of the school on the educational results (Rutter et al., 1979) of its pupils are no longer taken into consideration.

Underachievement is one where little consensus exists over its definition and measurement (Smith 2003:120). Further, Smith (2003) noted that previous work on underachievement has tended to cluster around two manifestations of the issue.

“On the one hand, there is the comparative notion of differential achievement - often specially low achievement - as used in media commentaries and, on the other, there is its definition in psychological research as the discrepancy between an individual’s performance on a test of mental ability and a subsequent school examination” (Smith, 2003:65).

In the achievement or underachievement debate of Black pupils (Black African and Black Caribbean) it must be recognised that not all Black born Caribbean children underachieve in school. Some Black born children of Caribbean heritage have performed well academically and have gone onto further and higher education (Crozier, 2005). Research carried out by Mac an Ghail, 1988; Wright, 1992; Sewell, 1997; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000 have all given explanations on the experiences of African Caribbean children in school and reasons for their underachievement in the school system. The *BBC News* education supplement (2007) noted that although Black Caribbean pupils’ grades remain below the national level, they have continued to make improvements. The report highlighted that at “GCSE level, 49.1 per cent of Black Caribbean children obtained five good grades compared with 44.4 per cent last year an increase of 4.7 per cent” (BBC, 2007:35).

The National Union of Teachers’ (NUT) Policy Statement (2001) noted that “achievement’ and ‘underachievement’, like other relational concepts, drift into finer and finer specificity the more data becomes available” (2001:56). This policy indicates that there are complexities surrounding and using the terminology of achievement and

underachievement. The National Union of Teachers policy statement noted that when ethnicity was taken into account, achievement became even more problematic (2011:85). The report argues that Ofsted's research of 1996 demonstrated increased levels of achievement since the Swann Report (1985), and achievement levels have been on the increase from year to year. The Ofsted (1996) report has highlighted "a dramatic increase in the examination performance for certain minority ethnic groups, even in Local Education Authority (LEAs) where there is significant poverty" (1996:35).

Nevertheless there are still huge disparities between the highest achieving ethnic group and the lowest achieving ethnic group. The National Union of Teachers (2001) policy statement noted that African-Caribbean pupils, boys especially, had not shared equally in the increasing rates of achievement (NUT, 2001). Highlighted in this report was the worsening performance by African-Caribbean children in some Local Education Authorities, and an increase in the numbers of fixed term exclusions of Black pupils (Swann Report, 1985, Gillborn and Gipps 1996; Ofsted, 1996, 1999). According to this report the highest performing group were white British girls with parents from professional backgrounds, with the lowest being African-Caribbean British boys from a manual background (NUT, 2001, Archer and Skelton, 2007).

Underachievement and Black Caribbean children's performance in school have been exuberantly debated over the last four decades. Statistics demonstrate that girls have continued to outperform boys across all ethnic groups (DfE, 2010, 2008, 2009; BBC, 2007; DfES, 2007, 2002). Accordingly, Gillborn and Gipps (1996) argue that the notion of 'black underachievement' is problematic. The concept of underachievement for Black pupils as the term "black may obscure significant differences in experiences and



achievement between pupils with family origins in the Caribbean and those of African ethnic background” (Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996). Nevertheless, Black Caribbean girls when compared to other ethnic groups such as their white peer group and Asian girls were lagging behind (Mamon, 2004). Furthermore, he argued that “there is little to be complacent about in respect to Black girls’ attainment” (Mamon, 2004: 85).

Contrary to (Mamon, 2004: 85) the data indicates commitment and aspiration of participants in achieving their goals in education. There is no indication of complacency on their educational attainment and as discussed previously for some participants there was evidence of distinctive career paths. Yvonne, for example was a high achiever. She was 18 years old and in her first year at university at the time of the interview. She had been educated privately and was studying, Sociology and Psychology. She said:

I really do love studying; that’s why I plan to do a Masters and PhD eventually. It will be a big part of my life for the next few years. Yes any education is good as long as you learn something on the way than not learning something. A good education is the foundation of everything even if you don’t go on to study further it will help you out in anything you do even if you don’t get a job, even if you just sit at home, sit at home and take stuff in, an understanding is better (Yvonne, 18, interview location: Norwich, 30-01-2010).

It was evident that Yvonne had high aspirations. She had achieved two A stars in Biology and Religious Education, five A grades and two B grades. At A Levels, she achieved two A grades and a B. Her desire to continue into higher education was a motivational factor. She remained focussed with her objectives and explained:

I’m at university for something and it’s a goal you have, if I didn’t have a good education I couldn’t be here. I’m better at being competitive of course. I’m happy I got good grades as well which

is part of an education. I'm quite chilled out I don't get stressed out over things like grades. I feel better if I did and even now when I write essays last minute and stuff. I still do okay in them because I'm just lucky but I don't get stressed out about it. But I still get disappointed if I don't get good grades as I like getting good grades. I was very disappointed with the B's, very disappointed and that was really annoying for me (Yvonne, 18, interview location: Norwich, 30-01-2010).

There is also indication in her narrative of her ability to attain top grades which was important to her. It was evident that she was self-motivated and her competitive nature inspired her to achieve. Her approach to her education can be best described as an individualist approach. Individualist approach in education has been criticised as a flaw in the education system. Evans (1998) for example argued for education to be transformed. She suggested that "the role of education at all levels must be to develop educated attitudes, incorporating core skills but going far beyond these. Core skills may enable us to survive, to stay afloat in the rapids, but they do not encourage us to think about the influences we have on our context, individuality or collectively" (Evans, 1998: 17). In other words education was becoming more of an individualist event as opposed to sharing learning from a collective perspective. Evans (1998) suggested that there was a danger that education had become so competitive that individuals' sense of community was lost.

This argument was further supported by Downs (1998) who stated that the "education system, from school to university, has tended to tell students what to learn and assessed the results against each other" (Downs, 1998: 18-19). These arguments suggest that the school system needs to look critically at the manner in which students are taught. Lingard and Gale (2007) contend that as technologies improve the work of teachers and educators will most likely change (Lingard and Gale, 2007:11-23). Whilst

educators and sociologists may agree that the education system requires a change it still does not change the fact that learning as a process is an individual experience.

The desire to perform and achieve better grades eluded some first generation participants in this study. The understanding and importance of attainment of academic grades was not understood at the time. In contrast to Yvonne's understanding of grade attainment was Liz, a first generation participant, who discovered the relevance of educational qualifications after leaving school. Liz was the middle child of seven children. She had three brothers, three sisters one of whom is adopted. Her father came to England from St. Vincent in 1959 and he worked as a General Post Officer for British Telecom. He arrived in the United Kingdom first and during this time worked, saved and brought her mother over to England in 1960. Her older brother and sister were left in St. Vincent. She was the first child born in England, followed by a sister and her two brothers. Her mother was one of ten children. Liz was unsure of the number of siblings her father had. Liz was 49 years old and was the mother of two daughters aged 19 and 22. For Liz education was the key to success and very important.

If I had known then what I know now education is the key. Education is the key! It is the key to knowledge. I was in a dead end job, in retail for how many years. It is very important and I can't express how important education is, for jobs. Education is yeah, when you got education, you get a better job. You have a better prospect, you're encouraged to expand. Yes expand and expand your brain, and push yourself to be motivated. I really wanted to encourage my daughters to have the best education that they can, to get the grades, the As and the Bs, Cs are alright (Liz, 49, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-02-2010).

In her comments there was an awareness of the importance of attaining academic qualifications. In retrospect she surmised that had she paid closer attention in class

she would not have ended up in a menial position upon leaving school. Whilst in school Liz obtained 5 Certificate of Secondary Education (C.S.Es) grades twos and threes and two Us, ungraded subjects. The attainment of top grades was important to her and she encouraged her daughters to achieve. Liz struggled academically, she explained

How can I say it, I just went to school and my mum tells me to do my best, and I didn't have no help. I had to learn everything myself, and I couldn't do maths, and that was my worst subject. I couldn't ask my mum for help, because she didn't know, and I had to do all this, and so it was a struggle. There was no one, no one there to support us (Liz, 49, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-02-2010).

Her comments assert that although emotional support was received from her mother, Liz required academic assistance. She remained silent and unable to discuss the problems she was experiencing in school. In research conducted by Phinney and Haas (2003) on first generation students attending college, they noted that these students often found it difficult communicating their fears and other worries they were encountering because they assumed their parents were unable to understand their experiences. Often students felt alone as there was no individual person available to them to share these experiences with. This scenario was an example of Liz's inability to communicate her fears to her mother about her experiences in school.

In contrast to Liz who 'struggled' academically, Jay held similar views to Yvonne with regards to educational attainment. Jay was 25 years old and worked as an adjudicator. She was a trained solicitor and was born in Tipton and her primary and secondary school were also in Tipton. The family then relocated to London where she completed her 'A' Levels in a London secondary school. Like Yvonne, she had obtained A and B

grades in eleven subjects at G. C.S.Es, and gained four A levels, one A grade, two B grades and one C grade. She was self-motivated and explained

I'm quite ambitious so if I'm attempting anything I'm attempting to get the highest possible grade. I don't believe in aiming lower I don't see the point you might as well aim for the top if you're don't get it that's a different story. If you aim for lower you can't really be disappointed if you get that. I don't think I necessarily went to the best educational institutions but I feel I made education my own. I didn't achieve what I felt I was capable of achieving but I take full responsibility for that. So the grades I achieved although they are relatively good grades, I usually aim for the top grades. So it was disappointing in terms of what I should achieve but I knew why I achieved it (Jay, 25, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Jay's comments suggested that she was highly competitive in school. She required very little motivation and education was an individual experience. The concept of achievement was significant and so was her responsibility of her achievement. Strand and Wilson (2008) noted that educational ambitions amongst ethnic minority groups were higher. These aspirations were linked to professional career and not unrealistic (Strand and Wilson, 2008). The views expressed by Yvonne and Jay supported this argument and both participants were able to achieve their goals.

Liz's lack of understanding of grade attainment was similar to Karen's, whose parents were born in Jamaica. Her father worked as a farmer and stone mason, and her mother was a telephone operator. She was unsure of when her parents came to England, but said that it could have been in the late 1950s because she was born shortly after they arrived. She was a mother to four grown up children, two boys and two girls. Karen explained

In later years it was very important because it was something that I should have done. I remembered I suffered a great deal in

my education because I was ill. I missed my maths exams because I was ill and when I left school, I didn't know what the blazes I wanted to do (Karen, 50 interview location, Oxfordshire, 19-02-2010).

Karen left secondary school with three Certificate of Secondary Education (C.S.Es) in Home-Economics, English and Needle work. Similar to Liz, Karen did not appreciate the importance of grade achievement until she had completed school. The lack of understanding of the importance of attaining better grades at school was her responsibility. As Biesta (2005) has suggested, the concept of learning as a right has now been transformed into one whereby individuals have to take responsibility for their learning. In this concept:

“the state's duty to provide adequate resources and professional support for adult learning, increasingly configures learning as a duty for which individuals need to take responsibility, not in least in order to secure their employability in the rapidly changing world of global capitalism” (Biesta, 2005:689).

In an effort to take responsibility for her education and better her career prospects Karen returned to further education and stated:

I've graduated in a subject that is close to my heart, I haven't got the full honours but I've graduated (Karen, 50, interview location, Oxfordshire, 19-02-2010).

There have been divergences between these narratives on perception and understanding of academic achievement. Significantly some second generation participants were fully conversant with the impact that achieving top grades had on their career aspirations and many participants in this research strove to achieve their goals (Strand and Wilson, 2008; Appadurai, 2004). It was argued that Black Caribbean students have continued to underachieve in G.C.S.Es when compared to other ethnic groups. Nevertheless it was evident that some second generation participants were

able to achieve above the standard government required grades. Research has shown that Black students were successful in education despite the barriers (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009).

As was showed earlier in chapter Two, first generation participants' schooling was riddled with difficulties and this explains the achievement of some first generation participants. Whilst three first generation mothers took the more traditional route into further and higher education, the other ten mothers took responsibility for their learning and returned to education. Conversely, some first generation participants were not cognisant of the impact of grade attainment until they had left education. The lack of understanding at the time on grade attainment, and structural difficulties such as low academic expectation and teacher perception were identified as barriers; these form the subject of the next section.

### **Low academic expectation and teacher perception**

Black Caribbean parents have been lamenting over the poor performance of their children in G.C.S.Es and were increasingly disappointed with the examination results of their children. Black Caribbean mothers and the community have argued that their children should be performing better in their school examinations (Crozier, 2006). Government statistics indicate that children of Caribbean heritage start off at the same level or higher than other ethnic groups, but by school leaving age they are one of the lowest achieving groups (Ofsted, 1999, 2002a, DfES 2003).

Research indicated that there is an inconsistency between the potential of Black Caribbean students and their actual performance (Office for Standards in Education,

1999, 2002a). Wright (1992) and more recently Crozier (2006) showed Black parents were often criticised by teachers for having high aspirations and unrealistic ambition for their children. In her research, Crozier (2006) discovered that “parents were fobbed off and were not being given the information they would like in order to help their children” (2006: 594). Parents and children were labelled as a package, that is bad-child equates a bad parent; and mothers were held accountable for the behaviour of their children (Crozier, 2006: 594; Crozier, 2002). Crozier (2005) asserted that “there appear to be a whole range of stereotypes conspiring together” (Crozier 2005:593).

The other aspect of low academic expectation involves teacher perception. Earlier research on teacher perception noted that Black children who have achieved academically were perceived as coming from a middle class background and of the school’s ability to address aspects of racial inequalities (Wiley and Eskilson, 1978:267). They suggested that this was the case irrespective of whether the Black child belonged to this particular class or not. Wiley and Eskilson, (1978) suggested that such perceptions “may have negative consequences for both successful and unsuccessful Black children” (Wiley and Eskinson, 1978: 267). They maintain that children’s academic ability has to be recognised as their own and not dependent on their class position. Conversely, it has been argued that class positioning has an effect on the manner in which the classes access education (Hatcher, 2006; Fenton, 1999, Bradley, 1996). Irrespective of whether children obeyed the rules or not, or belonged to a particular social class the question remained one of perception and attitudes of teachers towards Black students. As Ferguson (2003) asserted ‘the lower perceptions that teachers hold of Black students have a disproportionate negative impact on Black



students because the latter are affected more than white students are by teachers' opinions of their performance' (Ferguson, 2003; 495).

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that teachers are the biggest influence on the learning outcomes of their students (Corkett et al., 2011). McCollum and Yoder (2011) assert that "as students and teachers develop positive relationships, students become more engaged in learning and contribute to a school culture that supports academic success" (McCollum and Yoder, 2011:67). In other words students who felt valued and received support and guidance in school would generally perform better academically (Baker, 1999; Roeser, Midgley, and Urdan, 1996). Studies have showed that students who are engaged from the outset in a positive teacher-student relationship have been placed on a trajectory towards a more successful school experience (Birch and Ladd, 1997; Lynch and Cicchetti, 1992).

A negative teacher-student relationship on the other hand produces a range of adverse academic issues and difficulties with behaviour (Cicchetti and Lynch, 1993). However, other research specifically on teacher perception on Black Caribbean students revealed that these pupils were seen as a threat to the classroom management (Wright, 1987; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Crozier, 2005). Other studies have demonstrated that Black pupils' abilities and conduct in class were comparable to that of white students (Boykin, 1978; Downey and Pribesh, 2004). The negativity of some teachers of Black students can be seen to have a detrimental effect on the manner in which school is experienced.

Low academic expectation and teacher perception of Black Caribbean children was not only based on race and class but was an accumulation of other factors. Government policy and explanations that recognised the responsibility of the school on the educational results (Rutter et al., 1979) of its pupils are no longer taken into consideration. As pertains to teacher perception Strand (2012) revealed that these disparities were complex and not easily “explained by prior attainment, socio-economic status, maternal education, family composition, gender, poverty, a wide range of measures of aspirations, motivation, and effort and school and neighbourhood deprivation” (Strand, 2012:90). As Crozier (2005) illustrated and Strand (2012) arguments reiterates, that there are complexities attached to low academic expectations and teacher perception of Black Caribbean children.

Strand (2012) noted that “it is widely recognised that teacher grades are multidimensional assessments, measuring not only students’ academic knowledge but also teachers’ judgements of their effort, participation, attendance and behaviour (Bowers, 2009), as well as other factors such as the extent of parental involvement with the school (Desimone, 1999)” (Strand, 2012:90). This is consistent with research by Wright (1987), Mac an Ghail (1998), Gillborn (1990), Gillborn and Youdell (2000) and Rollock (2007), which all suggested that Black Caribbean students are measured by behaviour and not on academic ability and are consequently placed in the lower stream of examinations. Indeed Strand (2012) reiterates this arguments

“Black Caribbean British students may be disproportionately allocated to lower test tiers, not as a result of direct or conscious discrimination, but because teachers’ judgement of their academic potential are distorted by perception of their behaviour” (Strand, 2012:89).

This was illustrated by Anna's accounts who attended school in the 1970s in which she expressed her anger with her daughters' school.

I was seeing in the school and one school wouldn't even give her a reading book, not pushing her forward. The same thing was happening because we were living in a relatively poor area and my age they could tell I was a teenage mum so the stigma of that also continued in the teacher's expectation of the child. So that was happening as well I lived in a poor area and there were lots of young girls similar in ages to me with young children, Melody's age so they don't expect much. The expectations for Black children were low (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-02-2010).

Anna believed that her daughter was not being encouraged sufficiently in school. There are several issues in Anna's comments. First, the issue that she was a Black child from a single parent household, second, her daughter came from an estate and third the stereotype of low expectations and teacher perception. Several studies such as Milne *et al* (1986), Harper and McLanahan (2004), Waldfogel *et al* (2010) have pointed out that single mothers who work have very little time to spend with their children, there is minimal access to educational resources within the home, and as a consequence children underperform in school and tend not to be high achievers in education (Waldfogel *et al.*, 2010:16). As Anna's comment suggested there was a stigma attached to Black Caribbean women, compounded with the factor that she lived in poor area on a council estate and was a teenage mother. These factors, Anna believed contributed to the observation of teachers. Her comments reiterate Crozier's (2006) argument on the expectations and perception of teachers.

Further in Anna comments, there was a suggestion that the school was racist and had a negative perception of the Black child. She asserted:

I found a really good girl's school but in spite of getting her in I still had to deal with the racism of the deputy head and head in terms of getting her moved up to different classes. Instead of taking the foundation paper or intermediate paper she took the advanced paper. If you took a foundation paper the most you can get in your paper is a C and so forth. It was always about pushing with that. (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-01-2010)

There was an element of frustration with her children's school in Anna's comment. She argued that the resistance her own mother had encountered when she was in school had not changed. She was experiencing the same difficulties with school that her mother had encountered in the 1970s when she was in school. Implicit in her statement is that the school had very low academic expectations of Black Caribbean children and she had to challenge that view. Furthermore, teachers did not encourage Black Caribbean children or indeed 'push' them into achieving their full potential. Anna's concerns supported Ferguson's (2003) arguments on Black Caribbean parents who were anxious that teachers underestimate the potential of their children (2003: 467).

Indicative in the literature is that Black Caribbean children are inappropriately located in these streams because of the perception that teachers hold of them and this maintains inequality in education. Strand (2012) asserted that when compared to White British students, Black Caribbean children are underrepresented in the higher tiers for science and mathematics. This was illustrated by Peggy, who recalled her experience:

We were put in lower classes than our ability so when you got tested in your key stages you could actually jump from the bottom class to the top class. But for years you could be in

bottom classes. I don't think it was about ignorance it was very much about the teachers never expecting you to actually achieve much. (Peggy, 49, interview location: London, 23-01-10).

She explained that Black children were not tested and were not allowed to take the 'test' during her time at school because there was an assumption that Black Caribbean children were not intelligent enough. She pointed out that teachers had lower academic expectations for Black Caribbean children and as such they were not expected to achieve. Van den Bergh et al., (2010) demonstrated this point and noted that some teachers were found to exhibit more negative expectations and 'less encouragement' towards Black students (Van den Bergh et al., 2010:501).

The experiences of low academic expectation and teacher perception were encountered by some first and second generations. Teacher expectation and perception remained a challenge to some participants in this study. This was indicated by Anita as she explained

I know that for a fact it was awful in school. Because to them I would never be anything more than whatever, and that disgusted me at the time. I was like you know, and I thought at the time, but now I just thought you weren't much anyway. You never really made a difference to me. (Anita, 31, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-02-2010).

There is a suggestion in her comments which related to low academic expectations and stereotypes of Black Caribbean children. For example Okeke et al., (2009) asserted "for racial and ethnic minority youth, the expectations of others may be shaped by stereotypes about racial differences in abilities" (Okeke et al., 2009: 367). Further, Okeke et al., (2009) noted that young people who perceived themselves as less capable academically were more likely to believe racial stereotypes about Black inferiority, as opposed to youth with more optimistic awareness (Okeke et al., 2009:

387). Conversely, Aston and Esses (1999) suggested that stereotypes can be erroneous, but this may not always be the case.

In my study participants were acutely aware that some of their teachers held stereotypical beliefs of them associated with low academic abilities, race and behaviour. This encouraged participants to excel and to challenge those racial stereotypes. Participants were motivated to achieve and to prove their teachers wrong assisted them in achieving their goals. This was exemplified in Anita's statement:

I remember my mum going back to the school and told the teacher I had gone off to university and she remembers one of the teachers going bright red (Anita,31, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-02-2010).

Conversely as Peggy noted earlier during this period of schooling for her, that Black Caribbean students were systematically excluded from the top classes because teachers had lower expectation from them has been documented (Gillborn and Warren, 2001; Gillborn, 2002; Crozier, 2005). There was no effort made by the school authority to test their level of ability and had it not been for a national directive of testing, she would have remained in the 'bottom set' in school. As Aston and Esses (1999) asserted "irrespective of the causes of the ethnic group differences in academic performances, the first step to addressing the consequences of those differences must be to acknowledge that they exist" (Aston and Esses, 1999: 234).

In other words by appearing to ignore the issues of teacher expectations, perceptions and the stereotypes of Black Caribbean students these structural difficulties are unlikely to be addressed. The expectations and perception of some teachers held of Black Caribbean children resulted in negative assessment of their academic abilities. Anna's comments typifies this statement when she said:

I was put in to do C.S.E. and my mum went up there in her church hat and argued with Mr Stuart the deputy head that I could do O Levels and if it was a question of money if need be she would find the extra money. My mum was very clear I could do O' levels so I did: Biology, Chemistry and Human Biology and got a D and E. So she was very clear that I was bright enough to do O Levels (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-01-2010).

These comments were consistent with research that indicates teachers' academic expectation and perception rather than students' academic ability were used to allocate pupils to specific test tiers (Wright, 1987; Mac an Ghail, 1988; Gillborn, 1990; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Strand, 2012). Some of the first generation participants' accounts were testimony to this. Likewise, there were difficulties with getting schools attended by their children, to recognise their academic ability. Other participants recalled challenging the school and teachers' decisions to place their children in the lower ability bands for their examination.

This is exemplified in Grace's statement:

There was an occasion with my daughter that I had to challenge the school and so that went quite well. I would just say of feelings of why you responding in this particular way to my child. Basically we'd gone away on holiday, it was an agreed leave and when we came back she wanted to put my child right down in Maths and I'm like why? (Grace, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-03-2010).

There was an assumption from Grace that because she had worked in partnership with the school supporting her daughter, she had not expected this issue from the school. She had gone to great lengths to secure additional support for her daughter by employing a private tutor in key subjects (Rollock *et. al.*, 2011). Grace worked tirelessly to support her daughter through education and this was evident in her

narratives. Nevertheless, Grace found herself questioning the teacher's assessment of her daughters' ability. She asserted

It was like if there's something she can't do then tell me you know and she just got all flustered (Grace ,46, interview location: Oxfordshire:22-03-2010).

As Tomlinson (1987) suggested, curriculum option choices have placed students from ethnic minority groups at a disadvantage. She noted that the system is unequal and when it comes to choice of subjects or the level of examination that is foundation, intermediate or higher. She observed that teachers have overriding control in persuading and convincing parents which subjects their children should be entered for and the right level for their final examination (Tomlinson, 1987: 92; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn, 1998). Rather than accepting the school's explanations on levels of examination their daughters were being entered for, Grace and Anna both challenged the school authorities. They were not prepared to accept the evaluation made by teachers and challenged this judgment.

Wright (1987) asserted that teachers' assessment of Black Caribbean students was often based on the behavior of the pupils rather than their academic ability. She argued that as a result of teacher perception Black Caribbean children were placed in "ability bands and examinations sets well below their actual academic ability" more than any other ethnic group (Wright, 1987:109). Grace's and Anna's difficulties with their children schools are consistent with Wright's (1987) earlier argument. Many participants argued that they were placed in lower ability band groups and received very little support or encouragement from their teachers.



There is an indication of disparities and inequality experienced by pupils from Black Caribbean background. Low academic expectation and the discrimination encountered by Black Caribbean students has had a profound effect on their examination results and on the levels of qualification obtained (Wright, 1987; Crozier, 2006; Strand, 2012).

Comparable to Anna and Peggy, Melody had similar experiences of teacher expectation and perception on her commitment to her studies. She was candid with her response and explained:

I knew there were a couple of incidence in secondary school where I didn't think I was not getting the help or support from my school, for example I had my history coursework stolen and the schools attitude was maybe you haven't done it or just do it again. The week before my mum was on holiday in Jamaica I called her and I was like mum I need help. I'd spent all this time doing the coursework and I remember she actually flying back from Jamaica early to sort out this G.C.S.E. history coursework and by the end of the week they'd found out who had stolen it what they'd done with it and I had it back (Melody, 31, interview location: London, 08-02-2011).

Melody suggested that her school had done very little to assist her. There were low expectations for Black Caribbean children and therefore they were not very forthcoming in giving adequate support to them. Secondly, there was an indication in her statement that the school was not interested in pursuing the issue of her lost coursework. Her protestations were ignored and had it not been for the intervention of her mother she would most likely have had to resubmit her coursework. Teacher expectations and perceptions were encountered by some participants in both generations. Similarly Anna 49, Melody's mother recalled:

It makes me laugh because 20 years earlier my mum had argued for me not to do C.S.E's but O' levels and I'm now arguing for Melody to do the G.C.S.E's that she wants and last year I was arguing for Serbera to do the 15 G.C.S.E's and not the 7 or 8

they wanted her to take. I am now having the same conversation I had with teachers when Melody was at school, so what's changed? Nothing has changed (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-01-2010)

Anna's comment reiterates the earlier argument of low academic expectation and perception of Black Caribbean students. It was apparent that these two generations had to deal with racist occurrences and parents of the second generation were still challenging school authorities for equal opportunities in education for their children. The issue of Black Caribbean parents challenging school authorities for equality in education was discussed in chapter Two and remains a contentious subject. There was a belief by some first generation participants that some schools were inherently racist and this was evident in the literature. Some participants in this study remained convinced that racism and discrimination have been their biggest obstacle in the achievement of their aspirations. They continue to challenge these beliefs and to be recognised for their ability and be inspired to achieve their goals.

Whilst there was this perception on Black Caribbean pupils as difficult to manage in the classroom, some participants in this study demonstrated other traits such as compliance. There was no indication from participants in this study that they had difficulties with the authority of their teachers. This is illustrated by Grace's comments:

I enjoyed school. I was a good girl (Grace, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire: 22-03-2010).

Her comments were quite clear, she followed the rules. Grace did as she was told and at no time challenged the school authorities. Grace's comments are indicative of other first generation participants who were taught to conform to the school rules. Some

participants were instructed by their parents to follow the rules without resistance, and it is evident that they did. This was further confirmed by some other participants.

They tell you what to do just be quiet and do as you are told and don't do anything. I did actually sit quietly and did what I was told to do (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location London: 14-10-2010).

I sat quietly at the back. That is where all the Black children were sat (Liz, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-02- 2010).

As illustrated by these three participants, they were instructed by their parents on the appropriate behaviour in school. Some first generation participants in this study were directed by parents to adhere to the rules and regulations in their school. Francis and Skelton (2005) asserted that middle class girls find it easier to maintain the ethos of achievement within the classroom setting because, from a physiological perspective, they are conditioned to accept this role, whereas there is no such expectation required by the working class girl. The idea that middle class children are instructed to follow the rules through socialisation is not disputed. However, it was evident that all first generation participants in this study were instructed by their parents to conform. Clearly demonstrated in these three narratives is that participants followed the rules and had no difficulty with maintaining the status quo.

Teacher-student relationship in those cases was not complimentary for some participants as the following comments exemplify:

On a whole the teachers never really thought you would achieve anything. You were always fighting against it. You weren't nurtured, so your brightness was never nurtured. So you had to

work extra hard (Peggy, 49, Interview with location: London 23-01-10).

The teachers there were not interested but I didn't really feel that was fair as we were all students at the same school. On my law course it's very favoured for upper class, middle class white males and a lot of the teachers themselves come from that background (Jay, 25, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

When I was in year 10, I didn't really get much help from my teachers. Not much support really (Sherrie, 21, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-02-2010)

I went to school in the 70s, teachers, some of the teachers were absolutely appalling and absolutely cruel, really cruel. This one teacher she was so nasty, she had no redeeming qualities. I don't even think she liked children. There were some nasty teachers there. I mean at the time there weren't all these rules so they can be as nasty they wanted to (Sam, 41, interview location: Oxfordshire, 18-02-2010)

Sam's comment is congruent with some of the research on teacher-student relationship. Student attitudes towards their class teachers are influenced by the manner in which teacher interact with their students (Huan et al., 2012). The support and criticism given to students is instrumental in teacher-student relationship. There is a combination of factors that perpetuates teachers' beliefs of Black Caribbean children. What has been evident in the narratives of some participants is that teacher expectation and perception had an impact on their experiences of education. Furthermore, the level of disregard for Black Caribbean students was exhibited in Karen's commentary as she recalled an incident in class.

In secondary school I was due to take my GCEs and I fell asleep in class. Whilst I was drifting off, I heard my teacher said, oh leave her alone let her sleep. On reflection on that, if you truly had a real interest in your pupil succeeding you would come down on that pupil and say well that's not right, pay attention. Although it was my fault but you just don't know, you would talk to that individual and won't let that happen again. I was never ever approached and that haunts me to this day because of that. I have asked myself about that un-interest by the teacher. So in essence that wasn't important to her but it was an important

subject to me, that was mathematics and I loved maths but it was just this flippant attitude from someone who is supposed to be in charge and have that welfare of the students and to portray that mannerism. I'm not blaming that individual for my you know short comings, in my education but that, that is one if the things, you know, has had a lasting effect on me, on my reflection of my studies ( Karen, 50, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-02-2010).

It was apparent in Karen's explanation that her teacher took very little interest in her as a Black child. Torres (2009) pointed out Black students are perceived by teachers and white students to be incapable of achieving and as mischief-makers and therefore unworthy of quality direction (2009: 886). Whilst accepting responsibility for her actions Karen was deeply upset and very critical of her teacher. She critiques the action of her teacher who failed to register an interest in whether she participated in the class or not.

Cozier (2006) noted that teacher expectations of Black Caribbean students are "often a symptom of one or more of the various stereotypes" (Cozier, 2006: 593). In her research she noted that parents believed that their children were not expected to perform well in school because they were Black Caribbean, lived in less affluent areas, and most likely to be raised in single parents households (Crozier, 2006:593). The two cohorts of women in this study were in some form of education and/ or had planned to return to learning.

Implicit in this study have been mothers' ability to challenge the teachers' assessment of their children. Parents were more aware of their rights to do so and felt it was their responsibility to protect their children from negative perceptions. However, teacher expectation and perception remained significant in the academic development of any student.

## Conclusion

This chapter analysed issues between the generations of Black Caribbean women's experiences of school. The chapter was divided into two parts. The first part of the chapter, investigated institutionalised racism in relation to ethnic and racial identity, institutionalised racism in school, and isolation and exclusion. There is an indication in the literature that highlights a contestation between discrimination, racism and the perception of racist behaviour. However, some participants in this study described discrimination and racism in school as differential treatment, name calling, derogatory remarks and exclusion from activities in school. These experiences support much of literature on the some of the hostility encountered by Black Caribbbbeans in school (Wright et. al., 2000; Strand, 2012). A significant finding in this study is that incidents of racism and discrimination were inter-generational for some mothers and daughters. Some of the issues that some immigrant mothers had to deal with in the 1970s (first generation) were evident in the second generation. However it was discovered to be more profound for some first generation mothers.

Another finding in the study was that the education system offered very little support to mothers who complained about the inadequacy of the support within the school system as well as the presence of covert racism. Furthermore mothers and daughters remained convinced that despite the generational differences racism and racist attitudes have remained in the education system, an issue that has been well documented in the literature. It was argued that ethnicity and 'race' are complex and these studies indicated the problematical nature with 'race' and racism. The perception

of racism and discrimination is a contentious subject and these findings support the literature on the entrenchment of racism and discrimination in the education system (Macpherson, 1999; Majors, 2001; McRazack, 2004; Randall, 2008).

Seemingly, the authorities have not done sufficient work to try to eradicate those incidences of discrimination in education as previously documented. In other words the failure by the educational authorities to address the issues of racism and discrimination, the stereotypes held of Black Caribbean students in relation to behaviour, intelligence, inferiority and teacher perception shown earlier in chapter Two have remained in the education system through its processes and practices.

The second part of the chapter explored the perception of education within the parameters of the relevance and importance of education, education achievement and low academic expectation and teacher perception. It was shown that participants placed a tremendous amount of emphasis in trying to attain an education that was suitable to their own requirement. The importance of education was discussed from two different perspectives. An area of discovery was that it was apparent that some first generation participants were less cognisant of the importance of education until they had left school. Second generation participants on the other hand were more knowledgeable and strove to attain top grades to achieve their goals. It was evident in this study that education for many participants was significant in their lives and others continued to pursue education as a source of personal development and this has been documented earlier. Mothers in this study were more aware of the anomalies in education, having been through it themselves.

It was discovered that low academic expectation of Black Caribbean children was shown to have affected some participants more than others. It was argued that irrespective of students' ability, low academic expectation was ascribed to them and is consistent with some of the literature on low academic expectation and teacher perception (Stand, 2012; Crozier, 2005). It was shown earlier in this study that some mothers were angry with the biased beliefs of some teachers. Consequently, they used vigilance in the education of their children, as they were unwilling to accept the assessments made by teachers of their children and successfully challenged these decisions.

In the next chapter parental involvement in the education of their children and the measures that some Black Caribbean mothers applied to assist their children in their education are discussed.



## Chapter 5

### Parental involvement and strategies in school

#### Introduction

There is an acknowledgement of the significance of engaging parents and families, and communities in raising the aspirations and achievement of young people in education (Harris and Goodall, 2008; DEECD, 2008). There have been numerous studies conducted on family support and encouragement in school. The vast majority of these studies have highlighted the benefits of parental participation in the education of their children (Christenson, 2010). More recent studies maintain that students who are given support and encouragement from the home as well as school were more likely to perform and achieve better within the school environment ( Weaver, 2007;Kholer, *et al* 2010; Adams, *et al.*, 2010).

This chapter explores parental involvement but more specifically parental engagement in the education of their children. This aspect investigates support in the home as a means of enhancing the school experience, and parental encouragement and guidance. This chapter also examines the strategies that mothers employed to assist their children in education to lessen the effects of educational disadvantage present in school such as racism and discrimination. The role of mothers in school examines mothers' role in relation to their parents and discusses the assistance received in school. The last issue explores the role mothers assume in influencing their children beyond mainstream education. It is important to establish an understanding of parental involvement as it relates to this study. These accounts show the various ways in which

parental involvement is constructed. For the purpose of this study parental involvement focuses on parental engagement and encompasses home support, encouragement and guidance.

### **Home support**

Research conducted over the last thirty years has indicated that involvement and engagement from the home has had a significant impact on the educational attainment and aspiration of children (Spinard and Losoya, 1999; Catsambis, 2001; Harris and Goodall, 2007; DCSF, 2008; Fan and Williams, 2010). Cox (2005) suggested that parental involvement in the education of their children and the success of a student are firmly placed on the dialogue between the school and the home. Henderson and Mapp (2002:76) also suggested that higher examination results, better behaviour in the school, going onto further and higher education all fall in the remit of more parental engagement with the schools. In other words there is greater synergy in the relationship between parents and schools who work in partnership. These partnerships create positive outcomes and parents are more likely to support the schools (Jimerson *et al.*, 2006:42).

Research conducted by Anafar, Jr and Mertens (2008) suggested that schools have to be more inventive in their efforts to engage parents to participate in the education of their children. They noted that schools with better pupil performance rates were the schools that have done well in gaining parental participation in the education of their children. Furthermore, the commitment of parents in the learning of their children

meant that the rates of returned home-work improved and the success rate of students in examinations was increased (2008: 62-63).

Parental support is an issue that has been widely debated across the fields of education and social sciences. These researches have asserted that there is a need for parents to take a more active and participatory role in the education of their children (David *et al.*, 2003; Simmons, 2008; Christenson, 2010; Kholer et al., 2010). Several studies have focused on the significance of parental engagement at different stages in their children's education (Spinard and Losoya, 1999; DCSF, 2008; Harris and Goodall, 2008). Moon and Ivins (2004) suggest that parents of primary school children were more likely to be involved in their children's education than those with secondary school children. Often mothers were more likely to be engaged in the education of their children. Mothers' role in the education of their children is discussed further in this chapter. Moon and Ivins (2004) argued that even with the most dedicated and avid parents there was still an expectation that the education authority should have the major role (2004:236). In other words in spite of parents wanting greater input into the learning process of their children there is still an expectation that school authorities should take the lead on issues to do with the curriculum, monitoring teaching standards and delivering a high level of education.

Conversely, Sliwka and Istance (2006) questioned the positions and duties that the home and school take in the education of children. They maintained that there are more difficulties surrounding parental participation and working in partnership with their children's school than the discourse on parental participation asserts (2006:41). Crozier (2006) for example noted that schools have become more dependent on

parents, “to monitor the behaviour of the child, to ensure that they will also produce the exams results that will reflect well in the league tables” (Crozier, 2006:127). Other arguments indicate that schools that are more open and inclusive with parents in planning, organising of school programmes and initiatives have been better placed to obtain more parental cooperation than others who are less inclusive (Epstein, 1986; Townsend, 1994).

Arguments by Coleman and McNeese (2009) and Adams *et al.*, (2010) have indicated that the parents who engage in the education of their children produce more successful children. Parental participation in the education of their children had more of an impact on the second generation than the first generation. Advice and career aspirations were discussed and guidance given in terms of further and higher education. Crozier (2006) suggested “parents have been expected to be supportive but passive” (2006:127). However, “with the marketisation of education there was an expectation whereby parents were encouraged and pressured into taking a more active role in the schooling of their children” (Crozier, 2006:127).

Over the past thirty years or more there has been academic research that has focused on family structure, class positioning, parental education, geographical location, ethnicity and racism. Researchers have observed that these are all key factors affecting the manner in which parents participate in the education of their children (Raty, 2002; Lucey, and Reay, 2002; Gillborn, 2008; George, and Mensah, 2010). The data revealed that whilst some first generation participants received very little support with their education within the home, there were a few exceptional circumstances where some second generation women also lacked support in the home.

In this study there is an indication that participants who received greater parental participation in their education were able to achieve their goals and aspirations, a point that has been argued by Coleman and McNeese, (2009) and Adams et al., (2010). The home and school support varied between the generations of women. Mrs Jay is a first generation participant who received very little support within the home. Mrs Jay's parents came to Britain from Dominica. Her father came over to Britain first in late 1950's to work. Her mother quickly followed him and they were married when she came to Britain. She was the last child of five children. The oldest was 48 and the youngest herself at 43 years old. Her father worked for a goods company as a labourer in a building trade. Mrs Jay was married and a mother of three, a daughter the oldest and two younger boys. She stated:

I would have loved to have had more encouragement from my mum and the school itself more hands on, because when I think of the aspirations I have now, if I'd had them then I'd be a lot further along now. I don't for an instant regret being a hairdresser it's been like a backbone to other things I've done and it's taken me a long time to get to this point and counselling which is something I knew I really wanted to do. Counselling if you ask my husband is something I've wanted to do. (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location, London, 14-01-2010).

Her comments showed that she had very little support or encouragement from her home. She even suggested that had she been given the support and encouragement during her time at school then, she would have been further along in her career. She was sent to school to be educated by the state and her parents had very little involvement in her education. She stated:

I think there wasn't enough tracking of our work for me, not enough parent input. That could have been the school though, and could they not have met my mum half way and involved her in some way, a bit more creativity there, encouragement to do better wasn't really there it was just like do what you can and that's it. As I say university was not even thought of. For us it

was you went to school got taught what you were taught and that's it. My parents, no, I suppose they thought you go to school to learn and just do what you can that's it. There wasn't even that thought pattern by my parents and I wasn't encouraged by the school at the time (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location, London: 14-01-2010).

There is an indication in Mrs Jay's comments that she held her school partially responsible for her parents' lack of involvement in her education. Her narrative highlighted her disappointment over the lack of parental commitment to her learning, and the difficulties she was experiencing whilst studying. This could have been minimised had she been given the support and guidance from her parents' and school. Although she was not unhappy with the her initial career path upon leaving school, had she been given the right coaching and intervention from her parents, she could have aspired to achieve her ambition of becoming a counsellor earlier in her life. Her narrative supports the various arguments on greater parental engagement in the education of their children (Anafar Jr and Mertens, 2008).

Whilst it has been evident that home and school support was lacking for some first generation participants; there is an indication in the data that there were a few exceptional circumstances in the second generation who lacked home and school support in their learning. Cyra comes from a single parent household and her mother was assisted by her grandparents in raising her which was confirmed.

No one helped me when I came home from school. My mum wasn't around that much, so mostly it was just me. Parents evening was all she attended and that's it. She never attended any other activity in the school when I was a child. She never really attends much of the activities at school, and that's why I'm always there with every little thing my children do at school. My mum still doesn't do it now, because my youngest brother is in the same year as Max, my second oldest. I do it all for my

children and I attend all the various activities for him as well (Cyra, 25, interview location: Oxfordshire, 25-02-2010).

Cyra's comments indicated that her mother was absent from the most part of her learning and parental intervention both within the home and school was lacking. Indicative in her narrative is the obligation she assumed to assist her brother through school. Cyra had a tumultuous relationship in the home and school as showed in chapter Four. Her subsequent exclusion from school meant that she had not attained any GCSEs.

Insufficient home support in education was again typified by Sam's statement. Sam was a mother of three, who worked as a community involvement officer. She stated:

It was important to me, it was important to my mum even if she didn't have a part to play in my education, she left it up to the school system but she always wanted me to do well and always encouraged me to do well and always thought I would do well, you know what I mean. So I suppose that helped. But as for home-work and things like that I just did it myself. My mum she didn't, my mum was too busy working 12 hours shift at the hospital, and whatever. She didn't even know that she had to invest in my education, she left it completely up to the school and just thought we're going to school, so we're going to get a good education, so she was quite naive like that in that kind of way, she didn't think anything different, she didn't realise that she had to invest the time and you know make sure, and I don't think she could have and I doubt if she would have understand any of the maths and stuff we were doing anyway (Sam, 43, interview location: Oxfordshire, 18-02-2010).

Whilst Sam received encouragement to perform well in school, her performance in school was based on her academic ability and not assistance from her home. She indicated that there was no awareness of parental engagement on the part of her parents. Academic support was lacking and in any event her mother who was not educated in Britain was unable to assist. Baeck (2010) discovered that teachers believed when setting homework, this work should be completed by students and there

was no expectation for parents to be too involved. In teachers' views it was not essentially 'academic support' that was required in the home but rather general reinforcement from parents (Crozier, 1999; Baeck, 2010: 323). There is recognition in Sam's narrative that her mother was unable to commit to her school programme, which requires parents to be fully participatory in their children's education. Sam's comments indicated that whilst her mother may not have supported her academically, there was an expectation for her to achieve in school. It is true that schools are increasingly expecting parents to be more actively involved in the education of their children, however, it can be argued that parents were unsure of the extent of their roles.

In some respects and similar to Cyra's and Mrs Jay's experiences of school was Catherine. Catherine was 26 years old, with two children a 6 year and an 11 month old baby. She was a full-time mother, before she had her first son she had considered going to university to study religion and education. Instead she was now doing an interior design course but she was a qualified dental nurse. Catherine had two sisters; her older sister is 27 years old and a younger sister who is 15 years. She was raised by her mother as her father was absent from her life. Catherine had a difficult childhood in that herself and sisters were placed in foster care because her mother was too ill to look to take care of them. She had very little support within the home, she said:

We never had anyone come to parents evening or help at home  
(Catherine, 26, interview location, London: 08-02-2010).

These two daughters' circumstances between the home and school were comparable. They were both raised in single parent households. However it is evident that in comparison to Catherine, Cyra was supported by her extended family. Catherine on the other hand was put into the care system and was guided by her foster mother.



Whilst Cyra's and Catherine's accounts are not dissimilar to Sam's and Mrs Jay's narratives, the difference is that Cyra's and Catherine's parents were born and educated in Britain and were aware of the expectations that British schools had of parents. There have been numerous studies that have highlighted the benefits for parents to fully engage in all aspects of their children's education (Elliott et al, 2003; Parsons et al., 2003; Estyn, 2005; Tikly et al., 2006).

Therefore the question is why were some parents in this study unable to engage in their children's schooling? Several studies such as Milne et al., (1986), Harper and McLanahan (2004), Waldfogel et al., (2010) have pointed out that single mothers who work, have very little time to spend with their children. There is minimal access to educational resources within the home, and as a consequence children under perform in school and tend not to be high achievers (Waldfogel et al., 2010:16). Similarly, Harris and Goodall (2008) argued that parents not taking an active part in their children's schooling was due to work commitments. Single parents in particular have a difficult time and are less likely than a two parent family to engage in school activities because of childcare difficulties and time constraints (Harris and Goodall, 2008: 282). In a counter argument however, Jacobs and Harvey (2005) argued that coming from a working class background or a single parent family does not necessarily mean that these students would have been less ambitious (Jacobs and Harvey, 2005:432). In other words, coming from a single parent family does not automatically represent educational failure, as low achievement is featured in all family structures.

The accounts of second generation participants Cyra and Catherine were similar in parts to those of the first generation; however, there were clear differences. The major

differences between the generations were that their mothers who were born and educated in Britain, were more knowledgeable of the school system having been through it themselves. In contrast the immigrant parents of first generation participants had no idea of the British education system (Tomlinson, 1984; Phillips, 2010). Catherine's mother held a first degree but was unable to participate in her education because of her illness. Cyra's on the other hand had difficulties with authority in the home and school.

Indicative in this research is that some participants were low achievers. Whilst many sociologists and educationalists asserted that class is relevant when discussing education (Lucey and Reay, 2002), Black Caribbean middle class families in Britain encounter very similar barriers in education to families from working class backgrounds (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). In this study, class was not perceived as a determining factor to mother's and daughter's success or failure in education. In chapter Two there was a debate on class which automatically linked Black Caribbeans and other ethnic minorities to the white working class (Edward and Redfern, 1988). Although structural difficulties such as social problems, lack of guidance from both school and home, parents' lack of experience with the school system have all been shown to affect the home support, this study showed that class positioning was not found to be the major factor, since the issues raised were found to affect them equally irrespective of class.

The next section continues the theme on parental involvement as engagement but looks specifically at mothers' encouragement and guidance of their children education.

## Encouragement and Guidance

Encouragement and guidance deals with parental engagement in the learning process of their children. In the context of parental involvement, encouragement and guidance highlight some of the methods parents employed to support their children through the education system. This phenomenon was explored and analysed from the perspective of support that participants deemed they required from the home during their time in school. The home support received from parents has been a critical factor to all participants taking part in this research. The level of encouragement varied amongst participants but nevertheless, support from the home whilst in school impacted on all the participants. West et al., (1998) suggested that parents were engaged in the education of their children in various ways (1998:479). This argument was supported by Hebert *et al* (2009) who asserted that parental support and guidance were manifested in a variety of forms. For example participation can range from taking part in activities within the school to supporting their children in decision-making about their career options (Herbert et al., 244:2009).

Harris and Goodall (2008) pointed out that “parents who worked long hours had difficulties with time; this has been a significant factor that has affected parents’ ability to fully engage in their children’s education” (Harris and Goodall, 2008:282).

Parental involvement in the education of their children highlighted the positive outcomes such as higher grades and achievement (Fan, 2001; Sheldon and Epstein, 2005). However, there has been research that notes Black families are less engaged in the schooling of their children. Acker (1999) has described class as having various aspects in term of hierarchies of material wealth, authority and status, linked to the

occupational structures (Acker, 1999:45). These characteristics are not available to the working class. There have been recent studies that have indicated that children who were born with rich parents would remain rich. In the same way those children with parents who were graduates became graduates. Likewise, for children who came from a lower socio-economic background they were more likely to remain in that same social class and to “sink further into financial and intellectual impoverishment” (Cohen, 2005:31).

Conversely, Driessen et al., (2005) assert that “it is indeed true that schools with numerous ethnic minority pupils consider the involvement of parents to be very important and devote considerable time and effort to this but with little or no success” (2005:528). In their research they discovered that ethnic minority parents were involved very little and at other times parents had no involvement in the school (Driessen et al., 2005: 529). Driessen *et al.*, (2005) argument of insufficient support in school have been evident in some second generation participant’s narratives and was demonstrated in Cyra’s and Catherine’s earlier explanation.

In this study participants success in school was dependent on support and encouragement from the school as well as the home. For some participants like Louise, who stated that her parents were actively involved in all aspects of her learning. Louise was 22 years old and the eldest of three children. She was unemployed and doing a part-time Information Technology course. She had relocated from Oxfordshire to Birmingham and was looking for a full-time job. She said

Encouragement is important in a way to know what you’re doing, and in a way to give you more confidence, to know that you’re doing the right thing and that your efforts are going somewhere it is important in that way. Just having more resources to learn

and encouragement and someone just showing you what your options can be. What you can achieve what you can do and just knowing what is out there is important (Louise, 22, interview location: Oxfordshire 18-02-2010).

Her comments suggested that without sufficient encouragement in the home then learning in school becomes very difficult as it could have an effect on an individual's confidence. Whilst in school, Louise received a considerable amount of guidance and encouragement from both her parents. In her narrative there is a suggestion of her dependency on her parents for encouragement and guidance in school. Indeed, research has advocated greater parental engagement in the education of their children. For other participants the support and encouragement of their parents were essential to their achievement in education.

In contrast to some second generation participants, some first generation mothers were very disappointed with the lack of parental encouragement and guidance in their education. Nine first generation participants out of the thirteen interviewed asserted that they received no parental support in school. They argued that parents had very little time as they were working long hours or worked various shift patterns, which often meant that children were frequently left alone. They noted that parents struggled with factors such as supporting two families, that is children left in the Caribbean as well as supporting elderly parents and therefore unable to invest time in their schooling.

Mrs Jay expressed her dissatisfaction with her parents as she noted

My mum, I'd say had a slave mentality so just do what the white man says. That's how she kind of brought us up. I felt to myself I'm going to be different I don't see why that should be my position. So I decided I'm going to make something of myself. I decided to work hard in school. Fortunately, in primary school it didn't seem to affect me much but moving up to secondary the

lack of input from both my parents did affect me. Both of them didn't come from educational backgrounds. My dad even less he could just about read, my mum could read and write. They both worked so hard they were too tired they never came to parents meeting. I remember begging my mum to read my school report so she could give me some input but it just wasn't there. I worked hard because I wanted to, so very self-motivated it wasn't because of my mum. When I say slave mentality a Black person must know where their place is and do what they are told to do. They are not allowed to have a voice, or an opinion. They are not allowed to feel valued a bit like being back in the slave house where you're told what to do. You have to take cotton and that's your job, you do not object, do not say anything and that is how she seemed to live and seem to have done that. Slave mentality because if she didn't have that mindset she'd been more involved in my education. Or all that you want to be if you wanted to be a doctor then why not, but there was nothing there. The only thing, I can remember my mum saying is do not become a nurse. I do not want you to clean people's bed pan out. That's the only thing I can remember my mum saying (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location London: 14-10-2010).

This is a very powerful statement and her perception of slave mentality was quite clear. Her parents had been conditioned to accept this position and therefore there was very little to aspire to. There is an indication in her comments that unlike her parents she was unwilling to accept this position and as a result developed ways to navigate through the education system. Mrs Jay's parents were not involved in her education and she would have preferred if her parents had taken a more active role. Her distress over parents' lack of involvement in her schooling reinforces the need and relevance of greater parental participation and support in the education of their children.

The other aspect in Mrs Jay's comment relates to her parents' education. Her parents were not educated past secondary school and as a result were unaware that they should participate in her education. This was indicative of the situation of some early migrants who had little or no access to education as demonstrated in chapter Two.

Phillips (2011) asserted that “parents from the Caribbean generally came from relatively small, manageable communities where the importance of education was accepted without question. Teachers had the implicit trust of most parents, and the goals of the school were widely accepted and supported” (Phillips, 2011: 01). Parents of that era did not have an understanding of engaging with the school as indicated by Mrs Jay’s narrative. As was stated earlier there is an indication that some working class families are less engaged in the education of their children for a number of reasons. It could be argued that Mrs Jay’s parents due to their lack of education would be construed as working class and therefore suffered the same plight as white working class families. Mrs Jay’s and the other seven participants insisted that their education was left entirely up to the state has been document by earlier research. Mrs Jay’s comments suggested that her parents took for granted the schools’ ability to educate her is congruent with Phillips’ (2011) argument.

Another issue highlighted in Mrs Jay narrative is that of conformity in school. Mrs Jay’s account is testimony to this conformity. She said:

I suppose they thought you go to school to learn and just do what you can and that was it. I mean not even homework it’s not as if she was checking; I could have gone through life and done nothing. But there wasn’t that aspiration that you can do so well that you could go to university or something. There wasn’t even the thought pattern by my parents and I wasn’t encouraged by the school at the time. I don’t think many Black people at the time were encouraged or that university was even an option. It was seen as an elite thing for people who had money and usually the people who had money where white people. To me university wasn’t even something I would have considered (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location London: 14-10-2010).

There are arguments which illustrated that middle classes parents teach their children to be self-directed. Working-class parents on the other hand were more likely to teach their children to conform (Kohn, 1969; Beinstein, 1971). “Parental values are understood to be extensions of the behaviours that are important for parents in the occupational structure, which privileges self-direction for white-collar works and conformity for blue-collar workers” (Wiggan, 2007:316). In other words parents who are from the middle classes instil in their children the ability to be critical and to be more ‘self-directed’ as opposed to working class parents who teach their children to conform to the rules without question.

However, Mrs Jay’s situation contradicts this notion of working class conformity, where she disclosed that she had become self-reliant in school as there was no one to support her or to encourage her to achieve her potential. In other words, she became more independent and took responsibility for her own learning and education. It could be argued that this reveals a higher level of self direction compared to what is espoused in the literature above, as it was borne out of necessity as opposed to a emanating from a position of privilege normally associated with the middle class.

Unlike Mrs Jay who was a first generation participant, Mary was a second generation participant who had different experiences of parental engagement in her education. She asserted that encouragement for her was about achieving the best that she could at school. Mary was 19 years and at university studying Criminology. She was the elder of two with a younger sister who was fourteen years old and came from West London. She noted:

My mum encouraged me to do everything. She encouraged me to do my SATS to get into secondary school to do my G.C.S.Es to get into sixth form, to do my ‘A’ levels, to get into university. I remember throughout the whole time, “do your work, do your work, and do your work” constantly. But right now I’ve got to the



point now in university she doesn't have to say anything to me anymore because I know I have to do it. It took a while for it to get stuck in my head. I was encouraged to do the best I could. My mum said it doesn't matter what you get as long as you tried your best. If you get a D at least you know you tried your best. If you got an A then, fantastic she never said she wanted A's she said try your best and that's all she's ever wanted (Mary, 19, interview location: London, 22-01-2010).

From her accounts, all the encouragement Mary received came from her mother. It was her mother's engagement in her education that encouraged her to go university. Similar to Louise's account Mary acknowledged that the encouragement she received had been beneficial. She continued

If I'm not sure whether I'm doing anything right in myself I think I do need the encouragement, I always ask is this right? Like read this for me. I always ask for encouragement to put my mind at ease. I'm always thinking I'm not sure about that I was always seen as average always seen as "Oh she's alright" I was always seen as I'm not bad not brilliant but in the middle. I was always in the middle so I suppose in some ways looked over because I was not on the radar. She'll get there she always gets there (Mary, 19, interview location: London, 22-01-2010).

Although she was at university, there was a suggestion in her account that she still required that continuity of encouragement. Mary's desire for parental support in school was experienced by many participants in this study. Reis and Diaz (1999) argued that individuals who had strong self-belief and a supportive family network were more motivated to achieve their aims and aspirations, regardless of their background. These individuals were very confident about their ability to succeed irrespective of their circumstances: be it poverty, peer pressure or other family problems (1999: 52-53). Mary's situation revealed that although the journey through education can be daunting, the pressure of parental expectation provides the motivation and desire to succeed in school.

There were other first generation participants with similar experiences as Mrs Jay's description of her parents' lack of support in school. Karen, another first generation mother, recalled that she had received limited support and encouragement from the home and school. In some way her experiences were comparable to the events occurring in Mrs Jay's school life. Karen's parents were born in Jamaica and her father worked as a farmer and stone mason, her mother was a telephone operator. She was unsure of when her parents came to England, but it could have been in the late 1950s because she was born shortly after they arrived. She was a mother to 4 grown up children, 2 boys and 2 girls. She was very candid in her response and less harsh in her judgment of her parents and said:

My parents they did horrible work in terms of it was from morning till evening and then the supper got ready and you know it was like go and do your home-work, but there wasn't anyone sat there, saying oh, let's have a look, let's have a check, so it was basically left to whoever was teaching me at school to pick up. You know what I had missed out and corrected that and advise me. I would say this if circumstances were different for my parents, if they didn't have to struggle to make ends meet and put so much emphasis on the work as it were to try and feed us all and you know make sure they get in on time because there was seven of us that is a full house and I mean in those days 60s, 70s, that was tough. As soon as my father comes in from work, my mother's out, because he used to do late night shift, so we really didn't get that communication on a level with my father because it was I've got to sleep now. He had get to sleep during the day so we had to be quiet if we went out to play it would be in the back garden no way not making any noises. Sometimes we would scream and shriek and then we would get an angry parent to stop that noise and you know so there was that sort of restrictions (Karen, 50, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-02-2010)

Karen recalled that when she was growing up her parents' priority was about providing and sustaining the family. She argued that these were particularly hard times and her

parents did not necessarily have the time or energy to invest in their children's education. In relation to encouragement from her parents Karen asserts that her parents had very little time to encourage them because of the jobs that they did. In Karen's view support and encouragement were very crucial to her development at school irrespective of its source.

Karen's and Mrs Jay's experiences suggested that parental guidance and encouragement would have benefited them more. These two accounts of inadequate parental engagement in their education demonstrated that these participants required nurturing and supervision during a time when schooling for Black Caribbean children was particularly difficult. Tomlinson (1984) asserted that Black Caribbean parents who immigrated to the Britain were not knowledgeable of the British education system. She noted that parents were unaware that schools in the Caribbean and Britain were different and performed different roles. Philips (2011) argued that the inner city schools that Caribbean children attended in the 1960s were already experiencing difficulties. He noted that "there were misunderstanding on both the part of the school and on that of students and their families" (2011:01). This argument, however, does not deny parental responsibility in the education of their children but explains why some Black Caribbean parents were not involved in the schooling of their children.

This section highlighted the significance of parental engagement in children's education. This is congruent with the numerous research findings that have indicated the importance and relevance of parental engagement in the education of their children (DCFS, 2008) on achievement (Epstein et al., 2002) and on behaviour (Fan and Chen, 2001). The study revealed some first generation received support from their

parents. Whereas others mothers felt that their education was left up to the state to instruct them when their parents should have taken a bit more control of this aspect of their lives. They expressed an awareness of the difficulties their parents had to contend with in the wider British society as immigrants. Parents often had to work long hours not only to support the family in Britain but also the family left back in the Caribbean (Cole, 2004; Fenton, 1999). There was an appreciation that these were difficult times, therefore, some participants were more forgiving. Highlighted and also consistent within the data is the sympathy felt by some of the participants for their parents' inadequate knowledge of the British education system (Tomlinson, 1984; Phillips, 2010) and as result of their parents' limited knowledge of the education system they have chosen to be more involved in their own children's education.

In the next section the discussion centres on the strategies employed by mothers to assist their children in order to combat any educational disadvantage prevalent in school.

### **Strategies employed by mothers**

The role that the first generation Black Caribbean women assumed and maintained in assisting their children through school have been important to the educational success of their children. Some mothers perceived the school system as being prejudicial and has been documented and discussed at length by the Black Caribbean community and educationalists (Demie, 2003, 2005; Goring, 2004). Racism and discrimination in school is still prevalent but less overt and more subtle than when they were in school (I.O.E report: 2008; Strand, 2012). As a result of their earlier experiences in school many mothers in this study took a more active part in their children's education and

devised strategies which they believed would help to combat education disadvantage. Deslandes (2001) observed that family members who engaged in the education of their children did so under the belief that their efforts and that of the child would be rewarded. Home-work help, extra tuition, supplementary schools and financial support have all been shown to be beneficial to their children (Epstein, 1996; Edwards and Warin, 1999; Whiston and Keller, 2004; Lee *et al.*, 2006).

These strategies included relocation of the family home, private tuition, the use of Saturday school, after school clubs, private school education, and monetary incentives and rewards. The different measures that mothers employed to assist their children in school have been researched. For example, a report by the Runnymede Trust (1997) stated that the influence of supplementary schools has been underestimated. In this report there is an argument that shows parents who have utilised these schools appeared to be embarrassed by this (1997:35). The 'stigma' over the use of the supplementary school or Saturday school as mentioned by the Runnymede report (1997) was not discovered in this research. What was evident in this research is that mothers made use of all the available resources to assist their children through school. A report by the Institute of Education (I.O.E) (2011) discovered that Black middle class parents were

“resourceful, agentic and resilient. Parents make use of a range of cultural, social and economic resources to monitor carefully their children’s progress through the education system and actions of their children’s teachers” (2011: 06).

Although resourcefulness is normally ascribed to middle class parents as the quote above suggested, mothers in this study demonstrated that they were engaged in various activities with a view to enhancing their children educational experiences.

Stacey-Ann was one of four parents who made the decision to use all the avenues available to her to secure the best education for her children. Stacey-Ann was a 47 year old mother of three teenage daughters. The eldest was eighteen, and the twin girls were sixteen years old. She was going through a divorce. She was a self-employed dance instructor. A graduate, with a Master of Art and a Certificate of Qualification in Social Work. Her parents came to England from Grenada and she had one other sibling, a brother, who is one year older than her. Her mother was a teacher in Grenada, but when she immigrated to England she was unable to get a teaching position and so, like many other immigrants to Britain, she worked in a factory and did other jobs in the home. Stacey-Ann asserted that her method of participation in her daughters' education was different to that of her mother's. She argued that in the course of her daughters' education she was able to allow more flexibility to learning:

From the time when they were babies I've always read to my girls. They're great readers, all three love reading. I've always done some sort of educational games with her. When she was at nursery, how I inter-acted with her like taking her out to an art gallery, baby gym and anything for their age group at her primary school and in secondary school I tried to encourage a sense of self independence. Education isn't just about what you learn at school it's about life skills as well. I wanted her to go to a good school but I also feared the cost. She went to a very good private school but the Black thing and it's a white thing that Black kids don't go to private school was also a concern of mine. I had all that in my head that I'm selling out, also my dad's a Labour man and I'm sending my daughter to a private school (Stacey-Ann, 47, interview location: London, 14-01-2010).

Stacey-Ann suggested that her first priority was for her to secure a better education for her daughters. From her point of view she had received a grammar school education, but decided against her former school because the standard of teaching had deteriorated. In spite of having very little disposable income left after paying for all

the extracurricular activities for her daughter, she stated that it was worth it, in order for her daughter to be better equipped as a Black girl in British society. Stacey-Ann's comment corresponds with the I.O.E report (2011). Stacey-Ann suggested that educating her daughter privately was going against the wishes of her father, but she remained convinced that her decision to educate her daughters privately would be more beneficial to her children in the long term than educating them in the state schools. Her comments about having long term plans for her children as she monitored their progress in education are supported by research (I.O.E; 2011).

The desire for educational success of their children was important to mothers in this study. Mothers who were economically less well-off used different means to ensure the success of their children in school. Research has asserted that that Black Caribbean parents have been involved in the education of their children to overcome some of the negative influence of their locality and racism (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009). An aspect that is clearly evident in this research. This view was echoed by Peggy, as she explained

I always collected them from school when they were in junior school, always looked through their books, always went to parents' evening took part in things that was going on in the school. Listening to when they told me, and when things weren't going right and I'd go to the school. I was always there so if something wasn't right, and if the girls told me. I have two daughters, one who will always tell me what was going on and the other one; I have one I have to prise it out of her. One daughter was more laid back so you would have to spend more time looking through her books. The other one was always independent to make sure things were going right. I came from the understanding that if I invested in my children I expect returns (Peggy, 49, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Peggy suggested that her mother had instilled in her as a Black child growing up in a predominantly white neighbourhood she had to work twice as hard as the white child to achieve good grades. As a consequence of the teachings of her mother, she was of the same opinion that Black Caribbean children had an equally difficult task in school to achieve the top grades in their examinations and to remain competitive with white students. Peggy stated that there were occasions when she was growing up that her mother was unable to assist in her school work. Nevertheless, rather than being put off by her inability to help her, her mother would find someone, for example a family member, who could. This 'behaviour' by mothers of seeking assistance has been documented (Deslandes, 2001; Goring, 2004).

In her own experience as a mother her strategy was to engage private tutors. This is confirmed by her comments below. She stated:

I had spent a great deal of time as well as money into providing my daughters with the best private tutors to assist them in school (Peggy, 49, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Similarly, Grace's strategy was to engage private tutors and the use of Saturday school. She explained:

I engage so thoroughly with my children's education. I take education very, very seriously and to be honest I decided to put in the time in when she was at school. I did pay for additional tuition at one time and I did it for all of them if their grades were slipping behind. In fact it was almost a threat, extra tuition, so they usually picked up again and they attended Saturday school. I felt with my children's education I always engaged in a three way partnership with the schools that went fairly well. I think any disparities were soon highlighted and ironed out. (Grace, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-03-2010).

It was clear from Grace's comments that she participated in the learning of her children. The idea of not being able to participate fully in her children's education was



out of the question. Her comments indicated that she had spent time preparing her children for school. Her comments supported a Department for Children School and Families (DCSF) 2008 Report on the impact of parental involvement on children's education. The report described parental involvement as reading to their children at home, becoming a school governor, assisting in the classroom and at lunch breaks, and helping with home-work (2008:03). Grace noted that she continued to take an active role in her children's education insofar as when her daughter went to university she continued to support her through the process of education.

Conversely, Anna used the strategy of relocation of the family from a deprived Borough to a more affluent one to ensure her daughter had access to better education provision. Anna had a very complicated time, both in terms of education and also health problems from a very early age. She was a teenage mother who was pregnant at the age of nineteen, she was in the middle of sitting her 'A' levels and was able to pass her examinations. During the period of her pregnancy she was estranged from her mother and was forced to go into a mother and baby home. Anna stated that this was a very difficult period for her, but she was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to become a nursery assistant and as a consequence she was able to work her way up the career ladder and became a deputy officer in a local authority. She noted that in spite of all the upheaval in her life the education of her child had remained very important. She said:

Before Melody was even six I changed her school 3 times, because of the racism. I investigated three primary schools before I found a school I felt was good for her and there was a Black female teacher who took an interest in her. My other daughter, the comprehensive school she went to they weren't able to get the quality of science teachers and Sophia ended up doing the syllabus on her own and by doing that she got C's. I

wrote to the school complaining about her grades (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-02-2010).

Anna suggested that the school was failing her daughter academically and also that they held racist attitudes. She stated that she was doing a great deal to support her children in education, so much so that she had relocated with the help of her mother from a disadvantaged area in London to an area where she felt there were better schools. Nonetheless, moving from one location to another did not stop the issue of racism, but for her it was about taking the lead and supporting her child through the education system. She explained further:

A terrible thing happened, once a girl stole her coursework. Thank goodness Melody found a draft paper so she was able to show that the girl copied her work and even copied her spelling mistakes. I had to really tell the school off about that, because had she been white and from a different part of London they'd have looked more closely at that. All they really said to Melody was that she'd have to re-do the work. So I said that wasn't acceptable. When Melody did do the work she then gave it to her teacher who then lost it. Lost the coursework and said don't worry I'll mark it as a C. I said no you bloody well won't she's been averaging A's that's what you're going to give her coursework that's what we've been dealing with (Anna, 49, interview location: London, 08-02-2010).

Anna's comments suggested that regardless of all her efforts to assist her children through the educational system, racism and low expectations from the school and teachers of Black Caribbean children were still very evident. These issues were discussed in chapter Four on institutionalised racism in school. Anna asserted that she had participated in all aspects of her children's education. She was fully engaged with her children's school and made a point of visiting their schools even when it was not parents' evening, to discuss their progress. Low academic expectations and teachers perception were discussed in chapter Four. Anna's narrative suggested that without her intervention in her daughter's education that she would have not achieved

academic success in school. As discussed earlier there have been a number of studies which support these arguments on the benefits of parental involvement in school (Muller, 1995; Lareau, 2000; Epstein, 2001).

Some mothers used external strategies, such as private tuition, Saturday school and relocation, Sam's strategy on the other hand was to assume the role of a private tutor. Sam, like Anna was very active in her children's education. Sam was 41 and a community care worker who was interviewed in Oxfordshire. She recounted the lengths she went to in supporting her children through school. She said:

I took an active part in their education; you know if they brought home- work home, we made sure they did it. We would set our children home-work because home-work from school wasn't enough as far as we were concerned. We'd set them extra home-work, much harder home-work as well, probably too much, they probably did too much, every day. They could not watch TV or go out, until they'd done their home-work, but not just home-work from school, home-work we'd set them, and that would take them like an hour and they have been to school already. I was always involved, I done projects in school, I made and sewed aprons for the schools, we were very much involved and in the after school clubs as well (Sam, 41, interview location: Oxfordshire, 18-02-2010).

Sam's comments demonstrated that she had done all she could in working with the school to support her children through the education system. She asserted that she had probably done a great deal more than most parents by working so closely with the school to support her children with their education. She stated that a key aspect for all this support in school was because she wanted her children to achieve and aspire to do their best.

The preceding section discussed the strategies used by mothers in relation to their daughters. This section now focuses on the second generation daughters' perception of their mothers' strategies. In relation to mothers' strategies, initiatives and rewards in school, Laura confirmed one of the techniques her parents employed in her own education. Laura was a 24 years old and Psychology graduate. She made it clear:

Especially at GCSEs time we had the sort of incentive you know if you do well then you know you can get some money towards driving lessons in the future. I mean it was, it was sort of like you were told to do well but also like on a real level just to make sure you did well. We did have our incentive like I think I had money towards driving lessons so that was nice (Laura, 24, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-03-2010).

There was a suggestion in Laura's account that her parents applied the resources available to them to encourage and support her through school.

Similarly Jay said:

My mum and dad have always played and taken an interest in what I wanted to do, and they always made it feel like nothing was unachievable. So it wasn't do you want to do this or that it was what do you want to do? Yes it's very important to me and that's what's driven me throughout my education from primary school to current day (Jay, 25, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Gracia et al., (2011) discovered that family life was significant to individuals in assisting and determining careers paths. They suggested that parental contribution was important, as to the whether it is beneficial or not is determined by the individual (Gracia et al., 2011:30).

Similar to Laura, was Zara who was 26 years old was a student. Her mother made use of all the available resources to assist her in school. She stated:

Monday to Friday was school, Saturday was Saturday school, and Sunday was Sunday school. We didn't have a day off school but now growing up I appreciate it because I got a lot of help. I achieved, you know I was encouraged to achieve good grades. It was really important because I am one of those persons who have a lot of pride. (Zara, 26, interview location: London, 18-03-2010).

There was an assertion by Zara whilst in school she could not understand why her mother would insist on taking them to all these additional classes. However, it became more apparent to her as she became an adult that without the support of her mother she was unlikely to have achieved in school. There is an argument which asserts that parents have a vested interest in encouraging and supporting their children in education. Jones et al., (2004) noted young people have become more reliant on their parents, not only for encouragement but also financially. "Parents have been brought into young people's decision making in all social classes, to a greater extent than they were a generation ago, because they often bear the cost of the economic dependence of their children" (Jones et al., 2004:224). Whilst appearing to encourage their children, parents of this generation were taking the autonomy away from their children. In their research they observed that "parents can have both a negative and positive effect on young people's life". At the other end of the spectrum are young people without parental support who were likely to drop out of school, and experience aspects of social exclusion such as unemployment (Jones et al., 2004:224). However, my research reveals a more positive aspect than the one espoused by Jones et al (2004). The argument of parents being stakeholders in the education of their children is demonstrated by Jay:

I think they've invested so much in our education that it's only right that they expect some reward for it and I think every parent aims for their children to do a bit better than what they did (Jay,25, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Hong et al., (2010) illustrated that “children need their parents’ continued support to do well in school” (2010:435). The implications of sustained parental support underpin parental involvement, reinforce and improve pupils’ learning abilities. They argued that children were more likely to perform better in school, achieve their full potential and be successful because of the awareness of parents’ expectations of education (Hong et al, 2010:435). However, children understanding of “parental involvement may be just as important as or more important than actual involvement” (Hong et al., 2010:436). They suggested that parents may not be fully active in all aspects of their children’s learning but rather it is the children’s perception of their parents’ involvement which was more important. Hong et al., (2010) noted that children’s ideals and performances are directed by their parents.

Black Caribbean mothers in this research were more aware of the potential difficulties that their children could encounter in the education. Many mothers employed various methods of participation and strategies in the schooling of their children to secure the best education. Stacey-Ann, a first generation mother chose to educate her daughter through a private school in an attempt to ensure that she received the best education that she could afford. In her daughter’s case she ensured that her daughter passed the entrance examination and was able to receive a partial bursary that would assist her with paying the school fees. Her decision to have her daughter privately educated was her way of securing better access to the top universities and improved job prospects.

Similarly Peggy's and Grace's positions on their daughters' education was to employ the best tutors. Despite not being able to afford a private education for their daughters they had made adequate provision by ensuring they achieved the best grades in their final examinations. Conversely, Anna was very perceptive in choosing schools for her daughter. She was adamant that her daughter was not going to experience some of the exclusion and discrimination that she had encountered and would not tolerate discrimination in any form against her daughter. Her strategy of relocation can be seen as a means of protecting and securing a better education for daughter.

Equally, Sam was involved in all aspects of her daughter's education because she had placed the education of her children as a priority. Sam's earlier experience of the education system was at times fraught with disappointment and, as such, she wanted to ensure that her daughter received the best experience at school. Several mothers in this study invested in their children's education not only financially, but by working closely with schools to ensure that their children reached and received a high standard of education. The decisions taken by these mothers to engage and become fully participant in their children's education was based on their own experiences of the educational system and as such for many participants, ambitions and achievement of children were very high on their agenda.

It was evident that first generation mothers in this study applied different measures to support the educational success of their children in school. As Rogers and Theule (2009) noted parents who apply a:

“supportive and encouraging style of involvement, they provide their children with a sense of initiative and confidence in relation to learning. Supportive and encouraging parental involvement, such as rewarding learning-related behaviours with

encouragement and praises, is typically associated with higher school achievement” (Rogers and Theule, 2009:35).

Clearly some mothers in this study went to great lengths to assist their children in the school system. Mothers who were financially better off chose to educate their children through a fee paying school, for others private tutors were employed. Those who lacked the funds chose the supplementary school. Significantly most mothers in this study employed the resources that were available to them in securing the educational success of their children. The next section examines the role mothers continue to assume in their children’s education well beyond mainstream school.

### **The role of mothers in school**

There is considerable literature and research on the benefits of mothers who engage in the learning process of their children (Epstein, 2001; DCFS,2008; Topor *et al.*, 2010) but more significantly the discussion on parental involvement mainly relates to the roles of mother in the education of their children (Reay, 2000). The primary role of rearing and caring of children is firmly placed in the remit and responsibility of women (Vincent and Ball, 2002). They maintained that fathers’ roles are often secondary regarding the caring responsibilities of children. Vincent and Ball (2002) argued that “fathers remained bit players in a drama whose key actors are the mothers, the female carers and the children’s” (2002:642). Other studies have demonstrated that even in two parent households it was predominately the women who assumed the responsibility for the development and learning of the children (Reay, 1998a; Mann, 1998; Lareau, 1989; Vincent, 2000; Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001). More recent



research by Prins and Wilson (2008) showed the reality is that parent education profile is directed towards women. Women are the ones “whose time and energy will be directed towards children’s schooling” (Prins and Wilson, 2008:578).

Other studies have argued that there are differences in the manner by which children are influenced by mothers and fathers (McBride and Mills, 1993). For instance it was found that in Western societies mothers took on the more “functional and work-related task’ and fathers were more likely to be more interactive in play activities with their children” (McBride and Mills, 1993; Lamb, 2000). In other words help with homework and other school related activities was the responsibility of mothers. Involvement and participation in the learning of children have been a major aspect of family life for women, along with the caring and rearing responsibility of children (Becker, 1981; Parke, 1995; Lamb, 1997). Likewise, Hus et al., (2010) conducted a study on the parental involvement in the academic achievement of Taiwanese children discovered that mothers were more involved than fathers in learning of their children. Research have illustrated that it was the involvement of mothers that was a major contributory factor to the academic success of their children (David et al., 2003; Ball *et al.* 2003; Hus et al., 2010).

In another debate and similar to the argument of Ball *et al.*, (2003), David *et al.*, (2003) suggested that there were significant difference in parental roles in their children’s education. They argued that often fathers’ part in their children’s education was more distant (2003: 35). Irrespective of whether fathers were in the homes, or the parents divorced, or single parent families, that fathers’ participation in the school life of the child was less engaging as the mothers were more predisposed to supporting their

children in the education system. Ball et al., (2003) and David *et al's*, (2003) argument is congruent to West *et al.*, (2006) suggestion on parental responsibilities.

Other research have highlighted that the education of parents and their engagement in the learning process has an impact on the growth and advancement of their children. More crucially is that children of graduate parents by the age of three are more advanced in education than children with parents who are not graduates. Notably in some of these research is that the education level of parents and the performance of their children in education are intrinsically connected (Millennium Cohort Study, 2006, 2008; Spears, 2010).

In a counter argument Bokhorst-Heng (2004), argued that coming from supportive home surroundings is more beneficial to the education of the child; much more so than the educational level of parents, family finances, or cultural heritage. Further, these children who are supported during their education were much more likely to be better behaved in school, attain better examination results and aspire to achieve their goals (Bokhorst-Heng; 2004:40). Bokhorst-Heng's (2004) assertion is in contrast to research which suggested that parental education and children's school performance are linked (Millennium Cohort Study, 2006, 2008; Spears, 2010).

In this study there were generational differences in the support that participants received from their mothers during their time in school which is the focal point for this discussion. The first generation mothers parents were migrants to Britain and many migrants did not have access to higher education previously documented in chapter Two (Brock, 1984). The system of education in Britain differed to that of the Caribbean

schools and therefore immigrant parent's education could not be connected to their children education. This aspects is in contention with Millennium Cohort Study, 2006, 2008; Spears, 2010, notion on parents level of education and performance of their children. However, in first generation mothers, where their 'immigrant mothers' were unable to assist then this responsibility was taken over by the extended family. In this study it was discovered that some first generation mothers were supported through education by older siblings who were more knowledgeable on the system of education. For example Grace, who was 46years old and a graduate. At the time of the interview she had completed her first degree. She noted that it was support from home was a collective affair rather than individually by her mother. She explained:

I was supported in school by my mum and my dad, and then by some of my brothers and sisters, as well, and they were very keen that we did our best at school (Grace, 46, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-03-2010).

Though most research indicate that mothers provide the most educational support for their children in this study support came from other members of the family. For example Grace's narratives above highlighted the family involvement in her education. Grace's comments indicated that the responsibility for her education was assumed by the whole family. There is a suggestion that as the last child in the family to go through the education system, her older siblings through their experiences of school were better placed than her parents to assist her in her education. The responsibility of her parents or indeed that of her mother was not based on academic support but one of reinforcement as a parent. This was confirmed by her comments:

My parents were there if I needed them, everybody was there if I needed them, a bit of everybody. It was really a bit of everybody, so, very much so. School work was important, I wouldn't say you necessarily got the time to do it but it was encouraged. (Grace, 46, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-03-2010).

Grace's narrative highlighted that her position of learning can be seen from a more privileged point to other participants in this study, as this can be viewed in terms of the support she received from her siblings in school. Like many first generation immigrant parents, Grace's parents had very limited knowledge of the British system of education. Her siblings who were older acted as her guardians in school. In contrast to her mother who received assistance from her older siblings with her education, Grace assumed full responsibility for her children schooling.

I tried to, very, very, much with all of them, from the start to kind of ensure, that the basics are in place because that to me is really, really, important. They were all reading and writing, before they hit that school, in fact, before they hit nursery and they were reading and writing all throughout this time. I try to support them as much as possible, where I could, and if not I would get additional assistance for her (Grace, 46, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-03-2010).

It is evident that Grace invested a great deal of time and effort in ensuring that her children were better prepared with a good level of literacy before they entered the system of education. Parental participation was a key aspect to the learning of her children and in this role she ensured that her children were more equipped for school. As discussed in earlier, Brookes (2003) and Whinston and Keller (2004) showed how parental participation in education have been beneficial to the academic success of their children. It was found that mothers were charged with the responsibility of all aspects of learning particularly literacy and numeracy, and /or academic progress. This corresponds with Grace's narrative.

Both Liz and Grace whose role as mothers was to create the environment that prepared their daughters for schooling. Liz was 48 years old, a single parent and a mother of two girls. She was candid in her response

You had to do your housework first, and then find time to study. Yes, we did, all of us did. We all had chores, and when my mum cooked one had to wash up, dry up, clean the stove, mop the floor and yes, so, after all that you were dead. You couldn't do the home-work, well, we did the home-work after the chores but it was just like, rushed because you then had to go to bed. With my daughter, there was more. I think there's more flexibility now with my daughter and at my school it was just rigid. Not with going to home to do housework, as a Black person. Do your housework and then find time to do your homework. (Liz, 48, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-02-2010).

Indicative in her narrative is the aspect of her own school experience. As the eldest girl in the family, there was no one to turn to for assistance with home-work. She stated:

I was in the bottom class, all the Blacks that time was in the bottom class, and the bottom group. Then, for some reason I got moved up, to the middle group, where I felt, really alone, I was detached from my friends and I didn't know nothing in there (Liz, 48, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-02-2010).

Her comments indicate that she had difficulties in school. Her mother was unaware of the problems she was experiencing. As illustrated earlier Bokhorst-Heng's (2004) showed the more parental support and guidance that a child received within the family home, whether it is a single parent household or a two parent family home, the more likely they were to achieve. It was evident in her comments that she would have liked more support in school.

Bokhorst-Heng's (2004), Prins and Toso, (2008), and Hus et al., (2010), showed the aspect of greater parental intervention in the education of their children, primarily the intervention of mothers on the academic success on their children. This was significant in this study and has been found to be true. Liz believed that she was not successful

in school as she did not pursue further education. However, she recognised the importance of education and her role in the learning of her children. She explained

I made time for her to do her home-work and when she comes home from school do your home-work first while I make dinner. So yes absolutely, she's got the time to do it then she could go to the library. She can stay after school on the computer (Liz, 48, interview location, Oxfordshire: 22-02-2010).

Liz's account demonstrated the importance of her presence in the learning of her daughter. Mehan et al, (1996) argued that educators were unaware of the roles that working class and ethnic minorities played in the schooling of their children. It was discovered that low income families and ethnic minorities in America supported their children through education by making sacrifices for their children to attend better schools and to limit the number of chores in the home (Mehan et al., 1996; Auerbach, 2007). This aspect is pertinent to Liz because whilst she may have been a single parent, this factor did not detract from her goals for her children. She took an active role in assisting her daughters in all areas of their schooling in order to make the process of learning easier for them and eliminated household chores.

The significances of mothers role in the education of their children is consistent with the discourse on caring and rearing of children. West et al., (2006) pointed out it was generally mothers who assumed the responsibility for their children both in and out of school. Mothers were available to assist children in most aspects of school work and there are differences between the sharing of responsibilities in families (West et al., 2006:481). Mrs Jay's comments exemplifies this

I want the best for my children and them to do well and not to be held back, so I fight his case. With my son now wanting to do this G.C.S.E., if that had happened to me where you can't do that G.C.S.E that would have been it. I would have accepted it, my parents would have accepted it, because they wouldn't think

they could argue their point, it wasn't an option, they said that's it and that's it. Whereas now I know where I'm coming from, I know my value I know my importance, (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location, London: 14-01-2010).

Mrs Jay's determination in providing support for her children in school was as a result of insufficient assistance or encouragement in her schooling. This was discovered in many first generation participants' narratives of school. As illustrated earlier Mann (1998) and (Ball *et al*, 2003) argued mothers were more instrumental in the lives of their children's education. This was indicated in Mrs Jay's comments on her role and responsibility in her children education. Women's engagements in the education of their children were more contributory than factors such as family involvement and ethnicity. Notable in this research is that most mothers, whether qualified or not were influential in all levels of their children's choice of secondary and tertiary education. This characteristic is congruent with much of the literature on mothers responsibility in the caring and rearing of children (Ball *et al*. 2003).

Likewise for Grace, who actively worked with her children before they started their education and during their attendance in school. The role that many first generation mothers assumed in the learning of their children was different to that of their immigrant parents. For many first generation mothers their experience of the education system was not pleasant, because they encountered discrimination, and racism in school previously talked about in chapter Four. Indeed the assistance received in school by Grace and Liz from their mothers could be described as 'emotional capital' (Auerbach, 2007) rather than academic help. Emotional capital in this instance demonstrates the psychological support and encouragement they received from mothers to work to the best of their ability. Remarkably, as a result of their own

experiences of school many first generation mothers took the decision to actively contribute more to the learning process of their children. This is in contrast to their parents, they were able to fully engage in most aspects of the education of their children.

The data also showed that the mother's role was pivotal to the success of their children in school and documented by the literature. Notwithstanding the 'emotional capital' (Auerbach, 2007) but also the measures they employed in the pursuit of academic success for their children which was different to that of their mothers already highlighted in chapter Four. Mothers used their own experiences of school to assist and make decisions on the education of their children.

### **The influence of parents in education**

The influence of parents in the education of their children has a significant effect on the learning outcomes of the children (West et al., 2006; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Rogers et al., 2009; Hornby and Lafaele, 2011). Unlike their immigrants parents before them who were unaware of the part that they should assume in the British education system, the first generation of parents in this study were involved in all aspects of the learning on their children. Although these involvements were at times compounded with difficulties. Goring (2004) showed that Caribbean families at times may have had a fractious relationship with the schools they chose for their children but there was a willingness to work with the school to ensure that their children were adequately provided for in the educational system. The influence that mothers maintained on the education of their children continued long after they leave organized education. Parents guide and influence the career making process of their children (Gracia et al.,



2011). Brooks (2003) reiterates this argument and asserts that ‘young people’s parents and stepparents play a pivotal role in informing their attitudes to Higher Education (Brooks, 2003:287). Similarly, Jones et al., (2004) suggested that “some young people choose which career path to take in collaboration with their parents, with parents encouraging and supporting this choice with financial resources” (Jones et al.2004:211). Likewise, Whinston and Keller, (2004) suggested that young people “aspirations and expectations” are influenced by parental assistance (Whinston and Keller, 2004:532). Duckworth and Sabates (2004) indicated that parental engagement has an impact generationally.

A study by Spera (2006) highlighted the correlation between school work and the motivational outcomes of children (2006:486). Consistent with other research on the importance of parental involvement, Spera (2006) noted that it is essential that educators recognise parental contribution in the education of their children (Spera, 2006; Harris and Goodall, 2007). Sheppard (2009) suggest that the level of support and guidance given by parents to their children depends on the support that they previously received from their parents (2009:09).

Some mothers in this study were more assertive in directing their children into choosing particulars careers than their parents before them and other participants were supported financially. Peggy’s example typifies the influence her mother had on her career choice.

Why did I stop and do nursing, because mum wanted us to be nurses so myself and my sister did nursing and she is still in it today (Peggy, 49, interview location, London: 23-01-2010).

Peggy's comments suggested that her mother directed her into the nursing profession and that it was not her first career choice.

I think it's the way I went around doing things, because I sort of did my A' levels at 18/19, so looking back I should have just gone to university (Peggy, 49, interview location, London: 23-01-2010).

Jay, on other hand was assisted with finances

I just completed my legal practice course and it was a really expensive and very intense course. They suggested that you don't work when you're doing it so obviously for a year I was out of work and my parents supported me financially ( Jay, 25, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Jay conveyed the influence her parents had on her career path. Likewise for Zara, she was 26 years old, married with two young children, aged four and two. She was a full-time student studying law at a London University. Zara was extremely grateful of the influential and continuous support that she received from her mother. Zara came from a family of six and was raised in a single parent household. Her comments confirmed the influence her mother had on her career path. She explained

I thought I wanted to go back and finished off for a bit now and then my mum suggested Ruskin, so she encouraged me and I thought, you know, I like this. So, I went along, I think that was the best year I ever had. My mum found all the literature and she gave it to me (Zara, 26, interview location, London: 18-03-2010).

Zara's comments indicated that her mother researched the details of the course and she was guided by her. The influence that some parents exert on the education and career decisions of their children have been documented (Lee et al., 2006).

Similarly for Louise, her parents have been influential and very supportive in her school life. She noted that when it came to choosing her subject options her school was not very forthcoming with help and advice.

I came home and I got my mum and stepdad to help me to choose but they mostly said to do what you find most interesting, what you're going to learn from. What you're going to enjoy doing because there is no point in choosing something and then you're not interested in (Louise, 22, interview location: Oxfordshire, 18-02-2010).

Louise's comments demonstrated the direct involvement her parents had on her education. Louise's narrative indicates that she actively sought her parents' opinion on her career choice. This has been confirmed by Peterson et al., (1986) with reference to students citing their parents as having the biggest influence on their career plans.

Comparable to some second generation participants', parental influence was discovered with a few first generation participants'.

I was told to be a nurse. My mothers' sister was a nurse so I just did it (Dion, 48, interview location: London, 11-01-2010).

Dion's remarks highlighted the influence her mother commanded over her career decision. There was no indication in her narratives that she offered any resistance to her mothers' choice. On the other hand Peggy's, earlier narrative suggested that she too followed the rules at the time. Nevertheless, unlike, Dion who has remained in the same profession, Peggy was able to retrain and choose a different career path.

Some first generation mothers who received assistance with their education assisted their children in the same way. Other mothers in this study gave their daughters more latitude in the decision making process regarding their careers. These parents

suggested that they were available to offer advice and guidance should their children require it. They were always on hand and ready to intervene if necessary. Generally, first generation mothers despite not having had full parental support in their education went to great lengths to assure that they were actively engaged in their children's education and subsequent careers.

Parental involvement and the influence that mothers exert on the education of their children was discovered in the two generations. It is evident and imperative that parents are fully engaged and involved in all aspects of their children's schooling and education. Indicative in this study is the significance of parental engagement and strategies mothers employed in supporting their daughters in education and this is congruent with the literature. However, for many participants in this study parental involvement did not end with mainstream education but continued in the form of influence on the career pathways of their children.

For some participants the supporting influences of their mothers have indeed been manifested in the support they have been able to give to their own children. In this study parental influence has been highlighted in the career paths, achievements and aspirations of some participants and is congruent with related research (Reid, 2008; Flouri, 2006; Brooks, 2004; Standing, 1999). Noteworthy, has been the scenario of one participant who initially accepted her mothers' guidance but changed career direction when she was given the opportunity to do so. The next section concludes the chapter.

## Conclusion

The discussion of this chapter focussed on parental involvement in the education of their children. This was discussed in five key areas; home support, encouragement and guidance, strategies employed by mothers, the role of mothers in school, and the influence of parents in education. Parental involvement in this instance was defined as parental engagement.

Home support demonstrated that there were divergences in the assistance received in the home. It was evident that some first generation participants were encouraged to perform to the best of their ability in school, but it was discovered that very little time was invested in the home supporting them. The ignorance of their parents of the British educational system and of their lack of understanding of the expectation of parents by British schools were seen as factors accounting for insufficient assistance from some immigrant parents. Their limited/ lack of knowledge of the system supports some of the arguments documented in the literature (Tomlinson, 1984, Philips, 2011). They were unaware of the extent to which their participation in school was expected.

Although sociologists argued that class differentials were a factor to children's ability to achieve in education, this was not discovered to be the case in this study. Home support showed the various ways in which mothers engage their children in the home and school and it discovered that guidance and support coming from the home, was significant to all the participants.

Encouragement and guidance showed that reassurance and approval from the home was crucial to all participants. The role that mothers assumed beyond mainstream education was also discussed. It was discovered that mothers continued to support

their children with advice and guidance and in effect influenced their career paths. In this chapter there was an illustration of the various strategies that mothers employed to assist their children to overcome some of the educational disadvantages in the education system.

Significantly the more guidance and support that some participants received from their parents the more they were motivated to aspire to achieve their aims and aspirations and this finding supports some of the literature already documented (Harris and Goodall, 2007; Hebert *et al*, 2009). Another key finding was that, some first generation mothers despite not receiving the guidance and support and assistance in the home were more participatory in their children's schooling.

As a consequence of inadequate help and assistance in school, some first generation participants made a conscious decision to actively engage in the education of their children. In an attempt to combat inequalities in education mothers engaged private tutors, Saturday schools, relocation, monetary rewards and incentives. This is contrary to some of the literature that asserted Black Caribbean families were not active participants in the education of their children. The next chapter investigates the educational options and the opportunities available to the generations.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Educational opportunities**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter parental involvement in the education of their children encompassed several aspects and although not exhaustive the discussion was focussed on the impact of involvement. In this chapter educational opportunity explores the options that were available in school to determine career choice. These issues will be discussed within the broader parameters of parental educational aspirations and expectations, intricacies of school choice, and perception of opportunities and education.

Educational opportunities continue with parental involvement in the education of their children but delve into the aspirations and expectations that parents have for their children. The intricacies of school choice explores the desire of participants to attend specific schools and demonstrates that for some mothers the decision on their chosen school was confined to tradition, demographics and recommendations from friends.

In the perception of opportunities and educational differences in school, the intergenerational perspective shows that options were limited for first generation participants and there was a lack of awareness by some participants of alternative routes in school. The second generation on the other hand had clear ideas of these options available to them and for the most part capitalised on these opportunities.

#### **Parental educational aspirations and expectations**

Parental aspirations and expectations have been seen to have an effect on the educational progress of the children and have received extensive attention from sociologists and psychologists alike over the last twenty years or more. Many mothers in this study held high aspirations of their children and showed their commitment in the schooling of their children. There are various definitions of parental expectations, however most studies have regarded it as the beliefs and or judgements that parents hold of their children's future attainment (Alexander et al. 1994; Goldenberg et al. 2001; Glick and White, 2004; Yamamoto and Holloway, 2010).

However, there is another argument on parental aspirations that discovered that academic achievement did not necessarily equate to successful outcomes. Rather, it was based on prior attainment of the child. Seginer (1983) noted that there are differences with expectations and aspirations of parents, where aspirations are the desires, wishes or ambitions which parents make and have in relation to their children futures, and is in contrast to what they genuinely believe and expect their children to accomplish.

There is a vast expanse of literature on the influence that parents assert on the educational attainment and aspirations of their children; this was illustrated in Chapter Five in terms of parental involvement and strategies. Parental expectation and aspiration for their children has proven to be positive (Catsambis 2001; Benner and Mistry 2007). This is an aspect that is evident in this chapter. Studies have showed that the aspirations of parents are reflective of their own belief system of education, including their ambitions as well as community norms; and are based on encouragement in achieving professional and personal success (Astone and



McLanahan, 1991; Carpenter, 2008). Yamamoto and Holloway (2010) assert that parental expectations are founded on the academic abilities of their children as well as resources given in supporting their children's academic attainment in school. In other words the academic success of their children in school controlled parents' expectations for their children (Lee and Bowen, 2006).

Similarly, Goldenberg *et al.*, (2001) have suggested that parental aspirations may be partially based on the academic success of their children. Spera, *et al.*, (2009) noted that despite the inequalities in education ethnic minorities parents have high expectations for their children irrespective of their academic performance. Similarly, Strand (2011) noted that "Black Caribbean students (and their parents) have higher educational aspirations, have a more positive attitude to school, a higher academic self-concept and are more likely to be actively planning for the future"(Strand, 2011:214).

In this study it was discovered that parental participation in their children's education is significant (Fan and Chen, 2001; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). They participated in various ways and had high expectations and ambitions for their children. For example Peggy, discussed her aspirations and expectations of her daughters.

I've given them the tools and everything to make them do well. I think there is a contradiction with me if you're the kind of child who hasn't got the ability then putting them through mathematics would be demoralising. I recognised that. I recognise the two of them had the potential to do very well, one needed very little coaxing the other one you had to be on her back so I knew when to stop one and start. I think both girls knew I expected high academic results and nothing below that would do (Peggy, 49, interview location: London, 23-01-2010).

Clearly she was ambitious in her expectations and aspirations for her daughters. Her comments indicated that as a result of her expectations of her children she ensured that her daughters were equipped with the necessary tools. There is also an indication in Peggy's suggestion of the type of support she gave to each child. As Weiser and Riggo (2010) asserted parents who exercised a degree of sensitivity and provided emotional support for their children had an impact on their confidence towards their academic attainment. Similarly, Grace's comments mirrored those of Peggy

I made it very clear that I had a keen interest, that I wanted these children to do well and that I was willing to work in partnership with the school to ensure that they got a good education and that they participated and I participated (Grace, 46, interview location: Oxfordshire, 22-03-2010).

It was apparent that she had high aspirations for her children and for their success in education. There is a suggestion in her comment that her aspirations for her children were based on her values and importance on education. Similarly Sam, whose statement echoed that of the previous two participants, expressed her desire for the success of her children in school.

We just wanted them to do so well, you know and to be that step ahead, of things (Sam, 41, interview location: Oxfordshire, 18-02-2010).

Evident in Sam's account was the desire for her children to achieve their potential in school. As discussed earlier Davis-Kean (2005), Pearce (2006), Vartanian et al., (2007) have all demonstrated that pupils whose parents believed in the ability of their children in school were successful in attaining higher grades in examinations. These students stayed on longer in education than those whose parents held low expectations of them. There is credibility in this suggestion on aspirations and expectations of parents and this is illustrated further on in this chapter.

Nevertheless this was not the case for Tania. She was 42, with aspirations and ambition for her daughter and this was based on the belief in her daughter's capability to achieve academically.

I told her that it was important for her to get a good job and move on. It's important for her life but I don't know how she viewed it. I was disappointed because I didn't understand how someone that I know is intelligent and someone that I know can just read things and remember it couldn't do well in G.C.S.E and it baffled me (Tania, 42, interview location: London, 26-01-2010).

However, her comments highlighted the frustration she felt with the situation at her daughters' school. Tania believed and expected her daughter to have achieved better examination results. Clearly, Tania had high expectations of her daughter. When her daughter was younger she had expressed the importance of attaining successful grades to her daughter before her examinations. Strand (2011) found that parental influences on attainment have greater impact on younger pupils than older students. The involvement in education, educational aspirations, and resource provision are all equally important in conceptualising attainment at age fourteen. They improve the amount of variance in educational attainment that can be explained from one-quarter to one-third (Strand, 2011:216). Tania assumed her daughter was capable of achieving of academic success. However, as shown earlier by Strand (2011), Tania was unable to affect her daughter academic results. The other point on aspiration and expectation related to the idea that belief and reality is contentious. As discussed earlier, there is merit in Seginer (1983) assertion of perception and actuality and evident by Tania's disappointment in daughter GCSE results.

Mothers in this study had high expectations of their children; mothers' own experiences in school and the perceptions of their treatment in school affected the degree to which they have participated in the schooling of their children. The desire for high educational aspirations documented earlier in the literature (Spera, *et al.*, 2009; Strand, 2011) was found to be consistent with all mothers in this research, mothers expected their children to have achieved the best possible grades and to have attended college or university. This is congruent with studies which have illustrated that parents with high aspirations of their children have had a positive impact on the higher grade achievement and on the number of students who enrolled on university courses (Milne et al. 1986; Astone and McLanahan 1991; Catsambis 2002).

The discussion has centred on the parental educational expectations, and argued that it had an impact on the outcomes and success of children. However, there is another argument on parental aspirations that discovered that academic achievement did not necessarily equate to successful outcomes rather it was based on prior attainment of the child. This is a credible argument and is illustrated in Tania's narrative on her expectation of her daughter.

It was evident that some mothers in this study held high aspirations and expectations for their children and were able to support their children in achieving their goals. For some of the mothers, their educational aspirations for their daughters resulted in improved performance and this was demonstrated by Peggy's and Grace's narrative. The next section continues the theme and explores the intricacies of school choice and their decision of a school for their children.

## **Intricacies of school choice**

There is a considerable amount of research in the discourse on school choice (Reay *et al.*, 2005) and parents exercise their influence in the education of their children in a number of different ways and these have been well documented (West *et al.*, 2006; Spera, 2006; Herbert *et al.*, 2009). Parental decision in choosing what they deemed to be the right school for their children has been debated by educationalists and academics over the years (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Reay and Lucey, 2003).

It was argued that parents have greater autonomy in their ability to have the choice of their desired school but this notion has been critiqued through the years (Cullingford, 1996). The Education Reform Act of 1988 authorised parents to be granted their requests for a particular school for their children. The Act gave parents the right to appeal against the decisions taken by their local education authority (LEA) if they wished (Stillman, 1990). However this structure was based on student allocation, based on the result of their examination and therefore parental choice was limited (Pohman, 1956; National Foundation for Education Research, 1969). The Conservative Government's 1988 Education Act gave parents the right to choose their desired school and the Labour Government's 2006 Education Act continued the tradition (Heath, 2009:539).

In an alternative argument Carvel (1996) and Chitty (1996) suggested that rather than parents having the option to choose a school, increasingly some schools were

choosing their pupils. Haydn (2004) argued that despite some parents' unhappiness with this structure the idea of going back to the old system was not one they would contemplate. In the old system pupils were allocated a school place by the Local Education Authority (LEA) and parental preference for a school was not taken into consideration (Haydn, 2004:425). The idea of parental autonomy in the choice of school for their children is now firmly placed in the education discourse. Gewirtz *et al.*, (1995) and Tomlinson (2005) argued that for many ethnic minority parents, getting access to their first choice of school has become increasingly more difficult. Choice of school was similarly criticised by Ball *et al.*, (1996) and Gillborn and Youdell (2000) who argued that this policy has created more division in schools by social class and ethnicity.

Conversely, Reay and Ball, (1998) suggested that working class families' decisions' on the choice school is based on two factors; these were children's friends and location. Reay and Lucey (2004) noted that the choice of schools for working class children only becomes effective if they are able to relocate from one area to another that seems to be offering the better education choice. In other words coming from a working class background and living in an inner city area in London, the choice of schools is limited. The working classes, unlike the middle classes, are unable to relocate from one area of London to another simply because they do not have the financial means to do so. "Where funds are already limited, the cost of transportation from one borough into another makes the concept of choice problematic for the working classes" (Reay and Lucey, 2004: 39). In later research Heath and Brinbaum (2007) noted migrant and ethnic minorities are often forced to settle in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; these

areas are often associated with deprived housing, poorer schools, low teacher retention and unfavourable learning conditions (Heath and Brinbaum, 2007:302).

Whilst there have been much research on school choice there is a dearth of literature on the individual process in which educational choices are made in families (Reay and Ball, 1998). Heath (2009) argued that the parental choice of school and the tradition of choice are related to each other. Parental choice of school is in part located in the area in which they lived and indeed in the availability of schools within that area (Heath, 2009:248). Levine-Rasky (2009) noted parental school choices were based on expectations about the children's future, and on the opportunities that a particular school has to offer (2009:332).

An argument by Byrne and Tona (2012) noted that choosing schools was often an 'emotional process'. Parents were not simply anxious about what children learnt, qualifications gained, but also they were concerned with the type of friends and social networks their children were to be part of (Byrne and Tona, 2012:35). Furthermore, Byrne and Tona (2012) suggested that irrespective of class differences, when choosing a school for their children parents, observed the behaviour of the children outside of school (Byrne and Tona, 2012:35).

These are all credible arguments and have proven some justification in this research. Nevertheless, the intricacies of school choice investigate the decision making processes of some mothers in this study. Whilst most participants accepted their parents decisions on the choice of school, there was one participant who remained convinced that had she been given the option to choose her school, her career path

would have been different. The autonomy of choice to attend a secondary school for some participants was not given to them and parents maintained a significant role in decision making. This was shown in the previous chapter as mothers engagement in the education of their daughters affected the outcome of their schooling. For some participants the decision taken by parents to enrol their children in particular schools was taken in terms of practicality. Tania's narrative is testimony to this.

I had to go there; I had to go to that school that's what it was. The school I went to was called Langland Community School and it was a massive school. It had massive grounds and we had a tennis court. Not as close as I would have liked because while everyone else used to take the bus we used to have to walk to and from school which I would say was at least over a mile from where we lived. My mum had five children and she wasn't giving us money to take the bus so we had to walk and so that's what we did every day, we walked to school every day and we walked home. My dad worked for London underground my mum was a nurse (Tania, 42, interview location: London, 26-01-2010).

There are two points in Tania's comments; first the choice of school was entirely made by her mother and second, although the school was on a bus route, her mother could not afford the expense of transportation. Thus, the decision of choosing a school for her children was based on two aspects, which were location and finances. In some respects she mirrored her parents' decision on the choices they made for her. She explained:

It was closer and because of past history I did ask the neighbours. They said it was ok, but I should have had a really good look at their children and I would I have really known how good it was or not and realized how bad their children were after the event (Tania, 42, interview location: London, 26-01-2010).

In her comments there was a suggestion that she should have conducted her own investigation rather than rely on the advice from neighbours. As discussed earlier Reay and Ball (1998) noted that working class families choice of schools are limited and



based on accessibility and the network of friends. Choice of school was limited in the area Tania lived in and her choice was based on the recommendation of her neighbours. This supports the earlier observation of Heath and Brinbaum (2007) who noted that often ethnic minorities resided in less affluent areas in inner cities. There was an element of dissatisfaction with her choice as Tania admonished herself for not having taken the necessary steps in observing her daughters' perspective school.

Tania was a single parent with three children. Reay and Ball (1998) argued that in some working class families that it was apparent these children have the autonomy in deciding on what school they wished to attend. "This ascription of educational expertise to the child is even more exaggerated in a number of working-class immigrant families but is also significant within the power dynamics of middle-class immigrant families" (Reay and Ball, 1998: 434). Reay and Ball (1998) suggested that often, these decisions were based on children desire to be with their peers and on demographics. Perhaps some working class families may have given their children the option to choose their particular schools but this was not discovered in this study. The choices Tania made for her children school had to do with practicality of location and finances. Her decision on choice of school corresponds to Reay and Lucey (2004) earlier argument on the limitation of school choice for working class families.

Comparable to Tania was Tracey; she had two other siblings and was raised in a single parent household. Her mother had three children and her father had four children. She worked in a university as a support technician in the Information Technology Department. Her mother's choice of school for her was based on location and mirrored Tania's comments:

Number one it was close to home, within walking distance and I wouldn't say there were that many options with schools around there. Also my little brother he had to go to school in another area, so if my mum wasn't around to pick him up one of us would have to. So for us walking back from school which took us 15-20 minutes, we could easily pick him up by whatever time he needed to be picked up. The choice of school was made by my mum (Tracey, 22, interview location: London, 14-01-2010).

There was very little choice of schools in the area she lived in and her school was selected primarily on location and out of convenience. She asserted:

I didn't think there were many schools around my area. When we did move to that area we were looking for schools and I don't think my mum wanted to send us to Ilford Community, but the only other one was Bedford School for Girls and my mum didn't like what she saw when she went in. So she said right it's off to the Community school then guys (Tracey, 22, interview location: London, 14-01-2010).

As discussed previously, Reay and Lucey (2004) and Heath and Brinbaum's (2007) arguments on location and accessibility to education for ethnic minority groups and working class families was reflected in Tracey's comments on her mother's choice of school for her. The family had relocated to an area where access to and choice of school was limited.

In Tania's case, her parents were unable to choose a different school for her to attend because there were five children in the family and the added expense of bus fare would have put a strain on the family budget. Similarly, Tracey's mother was a single parent and her finances were also limited. Overwhelmingly, for some participants the decision made by their parents to send them to particular schools was based on location and the cost of transportation. This aspect was consistent with Reay and

Lucey (2004) and Heath and Brinbaum's (2007) and others contention on school choice talked about earlier in the chapter.

Many of the first generation parents' decision was based on already having children attending the school, and the convenience of location. An example of this process was made by Karen; she was a single parent with four children. Karen recalled

No, it was family tradition. Right , because my older sister went to that school, and my other sister went to that school and my other sister went to that school then I went to that school, and my brother went to that school and I sent my children to that school as well. My parents made the choice and then likewise I made the choice for my children (Karen, 50, interview location: Oxfordshire, 19-02-2010).

Karen stated that the decision to send her to this particular school was based primarily on 'family tradition' because all her siblings were already attending that particular school. Karen was carrying on the 'family tradition' by sending her children to this particular school. As stated earlier Heath (2009) suggested that there was a complexity around the issue with choice and for some mothers in the study, choice of school was not only based on locality and accessibility but on family tradition as seen in Karen's narrative.

The question of autonomy in the decision making process of choosing a school to attend appears to be more significant for some participants. Other participants appeared to have been happy with the decision made by their parents. Nevertheless one participant was very unhappy with her mother's choice of school. Anita was 31 years old, divorced and a single parent, unlike some of the participants who appeared to have accepted the decision made for them by their parents, she was unhappy with this choice and this observed in her forthright statement

No, it was my mum decision. I did not even want to go to the school that I went to. I wanted to go where all my friends were going and my mum wouldn't allow me. I really, I really would like to know if I had gone somewhere else would I still have made the choices that I made, because I went to a different school and I still hadn't gotten further to where I wanted be and it's like and I'm thinking if I went there what would have happened? My mum sent my sister to a different school and my mum was like, oh, that school was very good for my sister, and it's like wow, well that's great I wanted to go there and you won't allow me to. So, you know when I think back about her choice of school for me I do get annoyed (Anita, 31, interview location: Oxfordshire 22-02-2010).

The decision made by her mother to send her to this particular school was still a contentious issue. Her mother had made her decision on this school which was contrary to what she had wanted. All her friends attended a different secondary school and she was upset at her mother. She studied fashion at college where she attained a Higher National Diploma. She was increasingly unhappy with her situation as she was finding it quite difficult raising a child on her own and finances were very limited. She was very candid in her response when she said:

You know what, I'm thinking now I won't have gone to somewhere like Northampton, perhaps I would have wanted to go to somewhere like London instead but I thought it would be too much competition, there's always going to be someone better than you and that kind of put me off but maybe I should have just gone for it anyway. I would have went somewhere but because I didn't know how, how to apply myself to getting what I wanted and I didn't have any contacts either well I just became lost and I just came back home (Anita, 31, interview location: Oxfordshire 22-02-2010).

Anita's argument suggested that had she been given the option to make her own decision regarding the choice of school she attended perhaps her subsequent career path would have been different. Implicit in her narratives was she held her mother accountable for this decision. Anita lacked the confidence to try new ventures; the

school she attended was not supportive which she saw as contributory factor to her low self-esteem.

There is an absence of literature exploring the parental choice of school and conflicts surrounding this decision. Reay and Ball (1998) pointed out “underpinning the sense of not knowing best in relation to children’s education, are difficult and complex issues of adult passivity, lack of wider social power and educational knowledge, often set against children’s apparent power and agency in these matters relative to their parents”(Reay and Ball, 1998:434). There was no indication in this study that illustrated immigrants parents of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s from the Caribbean permitted or indeed were assisted by their children in the decision making process on the choice of school. Very few second generation participants in this research were given the choice to choose their secondary school. This is contrary to the earlier literature on ethnic minority parents giving their children the choice to do so. Generally, all first generation participants attended schools that were within close proximity to their homes and so did many second generation participants. The decision taken by parents to send their children to particular schools was often made out of necessity and on a practical basis and this discovery has been document by the literature (Ball, 1997; Gordon *et al.*, 2000). There is an indication in the literature that choice of school remained a controversial issue (Heath, 2009). Middle class families’ choices were based on the social demography, school policies with reference to streaming, whereas working class decisions are based on locality (Reay and Ball, 1998; Reay and Lucey, 2004).

Indicative in the literature is the social class division and decisions in the manner in which the classes access education (Hatcher, 1998; Reay and Ball, 1998). For the working classes choice of school is limited to access, vicinity, financial ability, and all of which were significant issues to both generations (Reay and Lucey, 2004).

However, it can be argued that choice of school is a multifaceted iterative procedure constructed on perceptions set within a number of significant circumstantial influences (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Hemsley-Brown and Foskett, 2000; Foskett and Hemsley-Brown, 2001; Ball et al., 2001). It suggested that some working class parents had difficulties in enrolling their children in the better schools, and these choices were based on several factors. In chapter two there was an argument which suggested that children from lower socioeconomic background would not achieve academically. The argument suggested that Black Caribbean children were mainly from deprived backgrounds (SCORRI, 1969:64). This argument was not accepted by Black Caribbeans. The literature showed that by focussing mainly on 'class', issues of race are overlooked. The relocation of the families for access to the better schools is more prevalent in areas of London (Williams et al. 2001). Although literature on social class have shaped some of the argument on aspects of class in the intricacies of school choice, this have not been pursued because there was only three families in this study who were most affected by social demography and locality. In the next section participants' perception of opportunities and education differences is examined.

## **Perception of opportunities and educational differences**

Perception of opportunities and education differences in school examines the notion that career options and pathways were limited in the generations. It looks at participants' belief in terms of access and availability of these opportunities in school. For one participant in this study her perception of opportunities and education was connected to the education league. The education league table was introduced by the Conservative government in the 1980s and 1990s "sought to undermine the influence of the education establishment and to regulate the learning more closely schools, local education authorities (LEAs) and higher education institutions" (HEIs) (Easen and Bolden, 2005:49).

League tables for primary and secondary schools are published every summer and attract a great deal of "public and media attention" (Easen and Bolden, 2005). The league table acts as a comparative analysis between institutions, and encourages those who are lagging behind to improve their standards. It gives the public information on these institutions and more choice in their decision making (Turner, 2005: 353). The educational league table has not been without its critics. One criticism is that the education league table highlights the inequality in education, as some families from lower socio-economic status (SES) are excluded from access to the better schools (Power and Frandji, 2010:386).

Conversely, Galotti and Mark (1994) suggest that a student who comes from a home with more highly educated parents tends to be more aware of further educational opportunities because of the parents' knowledge. Similarly, other arguments assert

that parents with no higher education experience were often unaware that there were tertiary education opportunities available (Pugeley and Coffey, 2002). In contrast, students whose parents had not been through higher education opportunities were more likely to seek advice and guidance from other agencies such as advice and guidance officers (Galotti and Mark, 1994: 605).

On the contrary, Al-Yousef (2009), who conducted research on parental involvement in the decision making process of young women in higher education choices, argued that parents' own experience in higher education was irrelevant and not contributory to the decision making process of daughters or their knowledge of tertiary education alternatives. Al-Yousef (2009) asserted that whether parents were highly educated or not, often girls were more self-reliant in seeking out information of higher education selection (2009: 796).

Pugeley and Coffey (2002) assertion on parents who were not educated to higher education were unaware of further/ higher education opportunities resonated with some first generation mothers in this study. As discussed previously in chapters Two and Five, some immigrant parents had very little knowledge of the British education system a subject previously discussed (Tomlinson, 1984; Brock, 2004; Phillips, 2011). For example Mrs Jay was training to be counsellor; who received limited parental participation in her education stated that:

It's different because I don't remember us having any league tables or anything like that. One of the big differences is you went to a school, which I think is one disadvantage you went to the local school across the road. You went to the local primary school and the nearest secondary school within walking distance, which was where you went to. When we went to school it was just, we went to school and that was it. To me every school should be aiming for high standards and now it seems if you've



got money, you're going to get into a good school. I'm concerned about this competition type mentality in schools. Overall schools are a lot better than when I was growing up, there's a lot more opportunities there for you, if you want to do your best, you want to try to do well (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location, London: 14-01-2010).

There is an indication that the thought of attaining a university degree was not something she would have even contemplated. Her narrative is consistent with earlier research which suggested that in the later part of the 1970s and early 1980s there were very limited career prospects and options for Black people (Fenton, 1999). There are several issues in her statement to consider; schools are now being closely monitored by the government through the league tables, not being able to access the better school because of financial constraints and the availability of more options in school. These issues have all been documented in the literature which indicates that ethnicity minorities and the working class had limited access to the better school (Reay and Lucey, 2004). The other suggestion in Mrs Jay's comment is that the school system had changed considerably and debates around school educational league tables were sometimes disconcerting. The educational league has been examined earlier and this highlighted the inequality in education and limitation to school choice (Power and Frandji, 2010). The education league tables have only served in confusing her as choice of school remained very limited to her (West and Pennell, 2000; Power and Frandji, 2010). Like some first generation mothers in this study, Mrs Jay attended schools that were local to her and within walking distance this attribute remained consistent with the literature (Ball, 1997; Reay and Ball, 1998; Gordon et al. 2000). Highlighted earlier in this chapter was that lower socio-economic status did have an impact on the ability of three families to access the better education establishment but this was not discovered in all the participants.

In terms of perception of opportunities in school between herself and her daughter, she noted that

School is better for her than it was for me. Definitely, yes it's better for her than it was for me. I was at the tail end of coming out of an environment where Black people were seen as second class citizens really. So I think in that sense it's better for my daughter growing up now. Whereas when I was growing up it was well, don't argue back just do as you're told so you end up with the education they want you to have. I'm going to make sure they get the opportunities they deserve. (Mrs Jay, 43, interview location, London: 14-01-2010).

There are several issues in her comment; there is the issue of race and racism, her educational aspirations and expectations for her children and her participation in the education of her children. These viewpoints were explored in chapters Four and Five. There is also a suggestion that she was not passive or submissive in accepting what her children school had told her compared to her parents. In other words she was unwilling to accept decisions made by the school about her children's education and career prospects. Mrs Jay suggested that she established full participation in all aspects of her children's education and this was discussed in the preceding chapter.

There is also an indication that the opportunities available now in the education system were not accessible to her in school. Through her aspirations for her children she was determined that they took the opportunities available to them. In contrast to her parents who were unaware of their rights, she was determined to be an active and participatory parent, who was willing to argue her children's case with the local school authority. Another aspect in her narrative explains the value and importance she placed on education. Crozier (1997) for example asserts parents who were involved in the education of their children were aware of the importance of education and wanted to

ensure that their children were sufficiently equipped for their future career prospects (Crozier, 1997:191; Power et al., 1998). This position is apparent in Mrs Jay's comments that she was influential in all areas of her children's education and took a more directive role in the career choices of her children.

Conversely, her daughter Nicole recognised that she has been more fortunate than her mother when she compared their school experiences.

Opportunities, we have so much more opportunities than my mum had back then. She had a more restricted career path. I think you were expected to go down this road or that road. It wasn't so much you had the opportunities to go to university or travel. There are so much more opportunities that we have now. You could take a gap year and then go onto university (Nicole, 19, interview location, London: 14-01-2010).

Nicole was very sure of her career path and the opportunities available to her in education. Brooks (2003) for example suggested that students, who from early on in their education identified attending university, frequently have motivational parents. Furthermore, Brooks (2003) asserted that these students often tended to see themselves as high achievers and with the assistance of their parents were more likely than others to investigate various openings and prospects within higher education. This notion was indicative in Nicole's narrative and she had a very clear idea of going into higher education. This was also illustrated in her mother narrative, her mother Mrs Jay was motivational in the education of daughter.

In this study it was discovered that there were some participants who were more motivated than others. They described themselves as high achievers and were very ambitious, with clear ideas of their career path. For example Jay's, comments typifies this:

On both sides of the family are high achievers and to be honest growing up I didn't know any different. So it wasn't that, I was pressured to do well I wasn't made aware of failure, if you see what I mean. I don't think my parents came down hard on me at all, but myself I'm quite a perfectionist. I'm quite motivated and ambitious, I don't like to fail anyway, it's just something I don't really consider failure when I attempt anything (Jay,25, interview location, London: 23-01-2010) .

It is evident from Jay's account that with the support of her family she was able to realise her aspirations in school. She recognised that there were expectations from her parents and was able to achieve her goals. There is a robust association between parental involvement and on academic achievement in this study. This has been documented in the literature by various educationalist and sociologist in chapter Five and in this chapter.

The argument highlighted two different perspectives on high achievers. In the case of Nicole, it was her mother who was the motivating influence in her education; her mother had limited opportunities in education and her goal was to ensure that this not replicated in her daughter's education. Whereas there was an expectation by Jay's parents that she would be a high achiever.

As discussed previously and highlighted in the data, the greater the parental commitment in the learning process of their children the more successful these students were in their aspirations (Grolnick and Slowiaczek, 1994; Miedel and Reynolds, 1999). In terms of her comparing her mothers' school experience, Jay was of the same opinion as Nicole, when she said:

I don't know if it is better, but it's definitely different but sometimes when I hear my parents talking about school it seems it was a lot more disciplined and although, it sometimes seems extreme discipline some point of the discipline, it reflects in their

character, that we sometimes lack. So, I feel like they were kind of fighting a different battle. The opportunities weren't vast, like they are now especially for someone from an ethnic origin. She is more focused and a lot more discipline than I sometimes I feel I am. I feel that's more of her education experience, and sometimes when you have a lack of opportunity, you appreciate what you do have and work with it a bit more (Jay, 25, interview location, London: 23-01.2010).

She recognised that her school experiences have been better and pointed to the relative lack of opportunities experienced by her mother. In her opinion this appeared to have made her mother more determined. There is a suggestion in her narrative that having too many opportunities may have somehow resulted in being unappreciative of these opportunities. On the other hand her mother's generation, who had very little or few opportunities were more appreciative of what they received. Whilst there is an awareness of limited options in education of her parents, there was the suggestion of differences in the discipline in school. With reference to discipline, Jay referred to the physical chastisement of a pupil in school by teachers. Canning of pupils by teachers was outlawed in 1973, nevertheless the practice continued among teachers until the Education (No.2) Act 9 (1986) (Parker-Jenkins, 1999:165). Whilst Jay acknowledged this form of punishment was excessive, there is a suggestion that this reprimand made her parents stronger people, which was lacking in her generation. In contrast to Jay's school experiences and opportunities, Peggy, her mother stated that

I feel that it's more positive for them, from what I saw you still have to fight for them to get a good education, but on a whole teachers were getting themselves geared up to teach multi-racial groups than in the 60's. I think it's better for my children. I think expectation wise there is still the racism there (Peggy, 49, interview location, London: 23-01-2010).

There is an indication in her statement that the school experiences of her daughters were better than her own. There is a suggestion in her comments of institutionalised

racism as this was still evident in schools. These were aspects that Black Caribbean children encountered in the school system. Institutionalised racism in school was discussed previously in chapter Four. Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) described modern-day discrimination as subtle racism in contrast to overt racism. Mellor *et al.*, (2001) for example noted that subtle racism is a daily routine for ethnic minorities and has a negative effect on those who experience it (Mellor et al., 2001: 474). However, Peggy recognised that in comparison to when she attended school, many more teachers were trained to teach in schools that are more ethnically diverse.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that despite new teacher training taking in the more diverse nature of British schools, many Black and ethnic minority parents are still complaining about the education hierarchies and the inadequate assistance given to their children in school. This issue was demonstrated in chapters Four and Five with some mothers' anger and frustration with their children schools.

The perception of opportunities and educational differences delve into the options that were available in school to the two generations of women in this study. There is an indication that for some participants their perception of these differences ranged from discipline in school to more options in further education. Indicative in Jay's and Peggy's narratives were clear differences and Jay's comments suggested that she had access to better and many more opportunities in education to that of her mother. Peggy's comment reiterated Jay's statement on the lack of options during her time in school but added racism was still very evident in the school system. Although education had become more inclusive, the issue of discrimination and racism was still evident in the school system, albeit on a more covert level (Mellor et al., 2001; Gillborn,

2005). Indeed Parsons (2009) has argued ‘the potential for racism is embedded in the structure and delivery of neo-liberal education policies and is manifested through exclusion, ineffective monitoring and enforcement procedures, and a weak political response to the problem’ (Hill, 2006; Parson, 2009: 250).

There is an indication that for some first generation mothers in this study the opportunities available to them were not attainable because some Black Caribbean people were not aware of or had the financial means to pursue a university education. As a consequence of this perception, they were not encouraged to continue onto further or higher education, but rather to seek out employment. It can be argued that the school and the education system through its structures and procedures have continued to undermine the confidence and the academic success of Black Caribbean children.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explored educational opportunities in relation to career choices of the participants. In this chapter three key areas were investigated: parental educational aspirations and expectations, intricacies of school choice and perception of opportunities and education differences.

Educational aspirations and expectation continued the theme of parental involvement discussed previously in chapter Five and discovered that many first generations

participants held high expectations for their children. This was discovered with all the mothers in this study. This finding supports some of the argument already presented in the literature.

Another key area of discovery was that children whose mothers worked with the school in supporting and encouraging them led to these children being successful in achieving their goals. It was evident that mothers' roles were crucial to their children's overall achievement in academia. This supported much of the research on parental involvement in education already documented in chapter Five.

Remarkably, it showed that where very little assistance in school was given the participants were not as successful. Notably, it was evident that comparable to their mothers in this study, first generation Black Caribbean mothers took the responsibility for the education of their children more seriously and made every effort to ensure the success of their children in school. Significantly, it was illustrated that all mothers regardless of their background demonstrated their commitment to the success of their children in education and this should be acknowledged by the educational establishment.

The intricacies of school choice argued that there are complexities involving the choice that parents make when deciding on schools for their children. It was argued in the literature that immigrant families left the decision of choosing up to their children. The findings of the study were contrary to this. It was discovered that this was not the experiences of some first generation mothers. Likewise, some first generation mothers' decisions were based on the same aspects as their parents. Whilst this study



recognises that socio-economic factors have hindered some families in gaining access to the better school, it was discovered that this was mainly prevalent in London Boroughs (Williams et al. 2001) and could not be generalised in this research.

Finally, perception of opportunities and educational differences showed that in contrast to first generation mothers, second generation participants had more options available to them in education. Perception of opportunities and education differences compared and illustrated the differences between two mothers and two daughters of the same family; it was evident that the younger generation believed that there were more options available to them. Noteworthy, was the suggestion that discipline in school produced better and more rounded individuals.

Furthermore, both generations believed that there were better and more educational opportunities for advancement for the second generation. It was evident to some participants that there was better access to those educational resources by the second generation. It was found that some first generation mothers believed that the second generation were better equipped in terms of parental involvement in education. Whilst this was acknowledged some participants asserted that racism and discrimination remained a barrier in education especially in relation to resources. Although, modern day British schools have changed and policies introduced (Race Relations Act, 1965, 1968, 1976, 2000) and are now in place to address racist behaviours in school, discrimination remained apparent albeit more subtly and supported by literature (Mellor et al., 2001).

The next chapter focuses on the overall summation of the research and on understanding the intergenerational experiences of education of Black British born women from a Caribbean heritage.

## Chapter 7

### Understanding intergenerational experiences of education

#### Introduction

This thesis has been an examination of the generational differences between the first generation of Black British born females of Caribbean descent who attended school in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and 1970s and their second generation daughters. The study analysed the educational experience and attainment of the two generations. It explored the issues they faced and the anxieties of first generation mothers, and the measures they applied to ensure the educational success of their children having been through the educational system themselves.

This research showed the many ways in which mothers were involved in the education of their daughters including encouragement in the home, monetary incentives, Saturday school, Sunday school, private tuition and private school education. Fundamentally, it was the ambition of first generation mothers in this study to assist their children in their education in order that they achieved their aims and aspirations in life and not to be seen as educational failures.

In this final chapter the strands of this study are drawn together in the form of a synopsis of findings.

## **Summary of research findings**

There is a long history of anger and discontent by Black Caribbeans, educationalists and observers of the education of their children within the British education system (Coard, 1971; Tomlinson, 1987, 1985; Troyna, 1981). In the education statistics Black Caribbean students continue to be at the bottom of the educational league table (DfES, 2010). In the discourse on education Black Caribbean children and their families have been blamed for their academic failure. Various arguments have been posited by academics and educationalists who have offered diverse explanations on the reasons why Black Caribbean children underperform in school (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Stevens, 2009; Strand 2012). One of the common reasons cited for this poor performance is the lack of parental involvement in the education of Caribbean children. Whilst this might have been true of some early migrant parents, this study has found that mothers were mostly active participants in the education process. The study revealed that mothers' experiences of the school system compelled them to apply different strategies to protect and assist in the academic achievement of their children.

Chapter One introduced the study along with the scope and objectives of the research. Chapter Two gave the historical context for the study. Migrants from the Caribbean anticipated a school system which was similar to schools in their homeland. As was the case in the Caribbean, parents sent their children to school to be educated. Parents were unaware that the British school system had expectations of them to be participatory in the education of their children. However, they discovered that their children were not successful in education and they were blamed for the educational failure of their children. Different explanations were given in relation to deficit theories

which implied that their culture and genetics were all connected to the home. Implicating the home and families, meant that schools, governments and their policies were therefore not accountable in their obligation concerning Black Caribbean children. This chapter gave an account of the arguments and efforts of Black Caribbean communities and activists along with their anger and frustration with the education system. The initial focus was education but this was connected with aspects of race and immigration compounded by aggression and resentment from the indigenous population about the increasing numbers of immigrants. The links between race and education with issues of discrimination and racism continues albeit covertly in the debates surrounding Black Caribbean students in school and in this study.

Chapter Three gave a detailed account of the structure in terms of methodological and theoretical issues. It presented the theoretical framework of the study and argued that a significant aspect of feminist methodology in research has been to remove male biasness. It explained the concept of the feminist methodology and gave the rationale for the feminist approach in this study. This methodology was applied as it gave a marginalised and polarised group of women an opportunity to speak about their experiences and frustration of the British school system both as children, mothers and the experiences of their daughters.

The chapter explored the methods in the research. Secondary research was conducted by analysing various government documents, statistics and other literature pertaining to Black Caribbean children in education, and provided historical and contextual analyses for the research. Semi-structured interviews were applied in the study and grounded theory assisted in the development of themes.

It noted that reflexivity as part of the research process recognised the researcher and the research participant. This was acknowledged as part of the research process and explored in terms of myself as part of the research process, the insider/outsider position and power relations. The issues and dilemmas experienced during the course of the research were highlighted and demonstrated that there are limitations in data collection in research. Nevertheless, it was noted that the technique applied for gathering data in this study has been appropriate. The interviews conducted have assisted in telling the story of mothers and daughters' worries and anxieties on race and education in some British schools. In other words giving participants a 'voice' this is an aspect which is traditional to the feminist approach.

Chapter Four investigated Black Caribbean women experiences of racism and race issues in school during the 1970s-200s, in terms of ethnic and racial identity, institutionalised racism in school and isolation and exclusion. It demonstrated the levels of discrimination and prejudice encountered in school by some participants. Indeed some first generation and second generation participants noted that they were excluded from certain areas of the curriculum and at times were not made aware of other activities taking place in their school. Many first generation mothers in this study experienced an intolerable amount of isolation, exclusion and prejudicial behaviours while they were in school and for other participants these memories were very vivid. In spite of their experience in school, the majority of first generation mothers were determined that their children would not experience the same prejudicial behaviour that they had encountered. Mothers in this study tried to shield their children from these racist attitudes. However, there were some second generation participants who

encountered discriminative behaviour in their school which could be ascribed to deeply embedded and insidious beliefs (Harris, 2012), and institutionalised racism (Major 2001; Civil Liberties, 2011).

A significant finding in this study is that incidents of racism and discrimination were inter-generational for some mothers and daughters. However it was discovered to be more profound for some first generation mothers. Some of the issues that some immigrant mothers had to deal with in the 1970s (first generation) were evident in the second generation.

Another finding in the study was that the education system appeared to have offered very little support to mothers who complained about the inadequacy of the support within the school system as well as the presence of covert racism. Furthermore, mothers and daughters remained convinced that despite the generational differences racism and racist attitudes have remained in the education system an issue that has been well documented in the literature. It was argued that 'race' and ethnicity are complex and these studies indicated the problematical nature with 'race' and racism. The perception of racism and discrimination is a controversial subject and these findings support the literature on the entrenchment of racism and discrimination in the education system (Macpherson, 1999; Majors, 2001; McRazack, 2004; Randall, 2008). Seemingly, the authorities have not done sufficient work to try to eradicate those incidences of discrimination in education as previously documented (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Archer and Francis, 2007).

In other words the failure by the educational authorities to address the issues of racism and discrimination, the stereotypes held of Black Caribbean students in relation to behaviour, intelligence, inferiority and teacher perception shown earlier in chapter Two seemed to have remained in the education system through its processes and practices.

The relevance and importance of education, education attainment, low academic expectation and teacher perception were explored. Indicative in this chapter is that participants recognised the significance that education had on their career prospects and this was discussed from both mothers and daughters perspectives. The premise of this discussion relates to the feminist approach in research discussed previously in chapter Three as it gave participants a platform to tell their side of the story. It was evident that some second generation participants' education was based on the acquisition of skills and knowledge to better equip themselves for employment. For many second generation participants education has been a significant part of their life. These participants were committed to their education and their long term career prospects. They were aware that in order to achieve their aims and aspirations they were required to achieve and attain the government standard of grades.

The ability to learn, to gain understanding, to use this knowledge to start and to take on new ventures was critical to both generations. An important aspect for both generations was that the process of learning did not end when they completed schooling, as they saw learning as continuous. For many participants the importance of education did not only encompass what was described by the national school curriculum, but entailed aspects of their culture, spirituality and involved a holistic



approach to learning. It was evident in this research that education was seen as empowering to both generations and for some other participants it was a means to achieve their goals.

The study discovered that some first generation participants realised the importance of education only after they had left school. Many participants believed that although gaining good grades was an important aspect of learning, the knowledge and understanding obtained through education was ultimately more important to them. Some first generation whose parents had an understanding of the school system were better equipped to succeed in their examinations. However for some others whose parents were unaware of the importance of attaining 'good' grades they were not as successful in school.

Some mothers and daughters with the guidance of their parents were fortunate enough to take the more traditional route into higher education and others, who were received less assistance in school, took a more indirect route into further and higher education. The perception of achievement taken from participants' perspective has been important insofar as their experiences of school had been tumultuous, and despite the earlier barriers in school many were motivated and passionate enough to continue to learn and to excel in their chosen career path.

Low academic expectation and teacher perception was an issue that afflicted both generations. Some participants believed that some teachers and schools held negative views about Black Caribbean students. First generation participants felt that some teachers and schools held onto outdated beliefs which has been documented

and reviewed (Jensen and Eysenk, 1970). Often some of these issues were related to the inferiority of Blacks in terms of intelligence. It was shown in the chapter that this notion had a negative impact on Black students and their academic performance. This illustrated a convergence based on ability and they were seen as incapable of academic achievement. Consequently, mothers in this study were more aware of these disparities, remained vigilant and challenged the assessments made of their children's ability.

Much of chapter Five focused on the differences in parental involvement in the education of their children. It highlighted the significances of parental engagement which is an important issue alongside encouragement and guidance in school. These issues have been more influential in the second generation than the first generation and the role that mothers maintained through their education has been paramount to all participants. Mothers role explored the significance of mothers in the education of their children. In this study the importance of mothers in the caring and rearing responsibilities of their daughters was evident.

Many second generation participants were of the view that without the encouragement of their mothers their achievements would have been impossible. They were motivated to achieve the best possible grades and asserted that they wanted their mothers to be proud of their accomplishments. Encouragement for many participants was about being told that they were able to achieve their goals irrespective of what they encountered in their school.

In this study it was evident that for some participants perception of success and achievement did not relate to performance to the government educational league table. Some other participants stated that they were not supported or encouraged through the education system or their school because their teachers had little or no confidence in them and expectations of them were low. There were three second generation participants who required a minimum amount of support and encouragement because they believed they were highly motivated and had very clear ideas on what they wanted to achieve in education.

The other ten second generation participants were unsure as to what career path they wanted to pursue upon leaving school, and therefore required more encouragement and guidance from their parents. There was an indication in the data that revealed some participants required more help and assistance than others. Despite the varying levels of encouragement and support received by these participants it was apparent that both generations required assistance and guidance from their parents whilst they were in school.

The level of success attained in school by these two generations of women varied and for many first generation participants the greater the level of participation in their education the more successful they were in achieving better examinations results. This was discovered in much of the literature on the virtues on parental involvement in the education (Bokhorst-Heng, 2004; Anafara, Jr and Mertens, 2008). Conversely, the second generation participants had a greater level of parental engagement in their education and many of them were able to achieve and pass their examinations as was demonstrated in the chapter. However, three out of thirteen second generation

participants were more successful in achieving A\* to C grades in G.C.S.Es and A levels.

Much of the discourse on parental involvement in the education of children was discovered to hold an element of truth; where there was greater parental involvement and interventions, the participants were more successful at achieving 'B' grades and above. Another area of similarity between the generations is the influence of parents during their education. Some immigrant parents of the first generation Black Caribbean women were able to guide their children through the system of education, which at times were fraught with difficulties such as racism and discrimination. Other migrant parents who were knowledgeable of the British school system challenged the school's decisions pertaining to their children's examinations.

Mothers employed various strategies to assist and prepare their children to be successful in the education system. In terms of strategies to support their children in school many mothers in this study went the extra mile in supporting their children through the examination system, where possible, by utilising the Saturday schools, extra tuition, and private school. More importantly, it was evident that these mothers did not want their children to be seen as educational failures.

Many first generation mothers were given very little guidance, and at times had no one to support or assist them in school. As a result they made a concerted effort to ensure that their daughters were going to achieve their aspirations. The levels of support received during the period that participants attended school had an impact on the level of their success. It was discovered that many first generation mothers had very little

input from their parents in their education because their parents were unaware that they should participate in the education of their children. It showed that many of them were sympathetic to their parents who were not knowledgeable enough or understood the British education system.

Chapter Six examined educational opportunities in terms of parental educational aspirations and expectation; intricacies of school choice and perception of opportunities. Parental educational aspirations and expectation indicated that all mothers in the study had high expectations and aspirations for their daughters and for their education success. Examination of parental involvement in the decision-making process on the children's education led to the discussion of choice. There was an indication that all first generation mothers were not given the choice to school that they wished to attend. There was a similarity in experience by some second generation women of not being involved in the decision-making process of their education. The decision on the choice of school that many first generation mothers attended often had to do with proximity to their homes, finances and also choice based on 'tradition'. Tradition meant that if the first child attended a particular school then the remaining siblings were all expected to attend this school. The aspect of 'school tradition' was consistent in some of the first generation and some second generation participants.

The intricacies of school choice argued that issues around social class could not be generalised in this study as demographics and locality in school choice affected only three families in this study.

In respect to the options and opportunities in school, many first generation mothers had very limited access to the opportunities in the school system. Some others were not aware of the opportunities available to them within their schools. The general consensus was that there have been more available opportunities for the second generation than there were for first generation mothers. Unlike their parents before them, first generation mothers in this research made certain that their children benefited from these educational opportunities. Despite the Education Act (1944) choice of school remained contentious.

Most of the discussion on parental involvement referred to mainstream school, however mothers in this study continued their involvement and influencing their children's career path past secondary school level. In other words all first generation mothers taking part in this research aspired for their children to be more successful in their schooling than they were. An area of discovery was that participants whose mothers assisted them in school by encouragement resulted in these children being successful in achieving their aspirations.

Generally, mothers were more aware of these anomalies in education, having been through it themselves. Significantly, the aim for most of these first generation mothers was to ensure that their own experiences of learning were not replicated by their children in the school system.

## **Conclusion**

## **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study investigated whether the educational failure in the first generation of women had continued into the second generation. The premise of the study was based on feminist methodological approach that gave mothers an opportunity to speak about their experiences of school as children and as parents. The comparative aspect of the research included the daughters' experiences. It provided a different perspective into whether the idea of educational failure is projected across the generations and highlighted the strategies that mothers employed and their perception of education success or failure.

It was evident in this research that first generation mothers having already been through the British education system were knowledgeable of the school system and therefore created more of an impression in the schooling of their children. In contrast to their migrant parents many first generation mothers in this research advised and guided their children in their examinations and were more readily available to attend various activities at their children's schools.

Significantly many first generation mothers placed a greater emphasis on engaging and participating in the education of their children because in their opinion their parents had left their learning entirely up to the education authorities and they wanted to be more engaged in their children's future career options. Fundamentally, what has been evident in this research has been the persistence, presence and desire of some first generation mothers in the education of their children to affect the negative stereotype of Black Caribbean children being seen as educational failures. Mothers in this study successful challenged some of these preconceived notions and were able to secure educational success for their daughters. The enduring legacy of all the mothers in this

study was to ensure that their negative experiences of school were not replicated by their children.

### **Possibilities for further research**

In terms of possibilities for further research, there are several avenues for advancing a study of this kind. The focus of this has been women (mothers and daughters) However, there needs to be an investigation on men (fathers and sons) on their educational experiences. This would resonate particularly in exploring the impact that fathers have on the education of their sons. In Black Caribbean families there is a history that many households are matriarchal and thus high absenteeism of fathers. Research of this kind on the roles that fathers assume in the education of their sons would offer a different perspective on fathers and the impact if any they have made on the successful outcome on the education of their sons.

This has been a small scale in-depth qualitative study of twenty-six women, however there is capacity for further research in the form of a national survey to unravel the extent of mothers involvement and participation in the successful outcome of the education of their children. Thus, the proposal would be extensive research looking at mothers and daughters education experiences in inner cities outside of London in particular areas with a high number of Black Caribbeans for example, in Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. This would involve working with different Caribbean associations, family centres, churches and youth organisations who work with Black Caribbean women and families.





## Appendices

### Appendix 1: List of anonymised participants

Number	Name	Age	Location	Date of Interview
1	Anna	49	London	08-01-2010
2	Melody	29	London	08-01-2010
3	Dion	49	London	11-01-2010
4	Mrs Jay	43	London	12-01-2010
5	Nicole	18	London	12-01-2010
6	Tracey	22	London	14-01-2010
7	Stacey-Ann	47	London	14-01-2010
8	Mary	18	London	22-01-2010
9	Jay	26	London	23-01-2010
10	Peggy	49	London	23-01-2010
11	Tania	42	London	26-01-2010
12	Yvonne	18	Norwich	30-01-2010
13	Dee	50	London	08-02-2010
14	Catherine	26	London	08-02-2010
15	Sam	48	Oxfordshire	18-02-2010
16	Louise	22	Oxfordshire	18-02-2010
17	Karen	50	Oxfordshire	19-02-2010
18	Anita	31	Oxfordshire	22-02-2010
19	Liz	48	Oxfordshire	22-02-2010
20	Sherrie	21	Oxfordshire	22-02-2010
21	Sheba	45	Oxfordshire	25-02-2010
22	Cyra	25	Oxfordshire	25-02-2010
23	Zara	26	London	18-03-2010
24	Rose	46	Oxfordshire	19-03-2010
25	Laura	24	Oxfordshire	22-03-2010
26	Grace	46	Oxfordshire	22-03-2010

## **Appendix 2: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

□

**Study title: Two generations of British born Black Caribbean women's experiences of the educational system.**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of the study is to examine the educational experiences of British born Black females of Caribbean descent who attended school in the UK in the 1960s and 70s and their daughters.

### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been asked to participate as you fit the gender and ethnic profile and the research intends to conduct interviews with twenty-four Black British born mothers and their daughters of Caribbean descent.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The research specifically aims to explore the educational experiences of both mothers and their daughters. Therefore, if either mother or daughter choose to withdraw at any time during the research, it will not be possible to proceed with either participant.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will participate in an interview which involves answering a list of prepared questions related to your experience of school in the UK. The interview will last between one and two hours and I would like to tape record your responses so I can listen carefully to what you have to say and not have to take notes. I will destroy the audio tape recording of this interview as soon as my research is completed. If you do not want me to audiotape your responses, then I will just take notes. As we are discussing your experiences of the British educational system I require you to be open and honest as I am seeking to compare the experiences of two generations of Black British born women of Caribbean descent, mother and daughter. Your participation is voluntary and therefore no payment will be made for your time.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding about the potential reasons why Black British born girls of Caribbean descent may fail to achieve their full potential whilst attending schools in the UK.

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is shared with others (eg. in reports and publications or is shared with a supervisor) will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Information provided by mother and daughter will not be disclosed to each other and their confidentiality will be fully respected.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

This research forms part of my PhD thesis. I hope to complete my studies by June 2011. A copy of my thesis will be available at London South Bank University Library after this date. You will not be identified in any report/publication.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been approved by London South Bank University Research Ethics Committee.

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you have any questions about this project, you may contact my supervisors, either Professor Harry Goulbourne, London South Bank University on 0207 815 8063, E-mail: [goulbohd@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:goulbohd@lsbu.ac.uk) or Dr Shaminder Takhar on 0207 815 5748 or E-mail: [takhars@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:takhars@lsbu.ac.uk).

Complaints can be addressed to the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee c/o the University Secretary's Office.

Thank you for reading this and taking part in the research.

I hope you are willing to participate in this work. If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss the research further please contact Greta Franklin-Brown on 0207 815 5723 or [franklig@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:franklig@lsbu.ac.uk)

## Appendix 3: INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM

□

Title of Investigation: Two generations of British born Black Caribbean women's experiences of the educational system.

**Investigator: Greta Franklin-Brown, London South Bank University**

I have read the attached information sheet on the research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I confirm that:

- The Investigator has explained the nature and purpose of the research and I believe that I understand what is being proposed.
- I understand that my personal involvement and my particular data from this study will remain strictly confidential.
- I have been informed about what the data collected in this investigation will be used for, to whom it may be disclosed, and how long it will be retained.
- I have agreed to the interview being tape recorded.
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason for withdrawing.

I therefore fully and freely consent to participate in the study.

**Participant's Name: (Block Capitals)** .....

**Participant's Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

As the Investigator responsible for this investigation I confirm that I have explained to the participant named above the nature and purpose of the research to be undertaken.

**Investigator's Name:** .....

**Investigator's Signature:** ..... **Date:** .....

If you have any questions about this project, you may contact my supervisors, Professor Harry Goulbourne, London South Bank University on 0207 815 8063, E-mail: [goulbohd@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:goulbohd@lsbu.ac.uk) or Dr Shaminder Takhar on 0207 815 5748 or E-mail: [takhars@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:takhars@lsbu.ac.uk).

## Appendix 4: Letter of Invitation to Participants (Daughters)

**Greta Franklin-Brown**

Research Student

Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences

London South Bank University

103 Borough Road

London SE1 0AA

Tel: 020 7815 5762

Mobile: 07903 424 799

E-Mail: [Franklig@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:Franklig@lsbu.ac.uk)

Dear

**Title of research: Two generations of British born Black Caribbean women's experiences of the educational system**

I am writing to invite you to participate in the above research I am undertaking as part of my PhD thesis. I would like to interview Black British Caribbean women who attended school in the UK between the 1990s and 2007 about their educational experiences. My research focuses on the inter-generational experiences of mothers and daughters. I would be grateful if I could interview you and your mother.

I have enclosed (i) Participation Information Sheet, and (ii) Consent Form. I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope and would appreciate you completing the enclosed paperwork and returning it to me if you are willing to help me in my research.

Many thanks in advance for your time and co-operation. If you require further information or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Greta Franklin-Brown

LSBU Research Student

Enc

## Appendix 5: Letter of Invitation to Participants (Mothers)

**Greta Franklin-Brown**

Research Student

Faculty of Arts and Homan Sciences

London South Bank University

103 Borough Road

London SE1 0AA

Tel: 020 7815 5762

Mobile: 07903 424 799

E-Mail: [Franklig@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:Franklig@lsbu.ac.uk)

Dear

### **Two generations of British born Black Caribbean women's experiences of the educational system**

I am writing to invite you to participate in the above research I am undertaking as part of my PhD thesis. I would like to interview Black British Caribbean women who attended school in the UK between 1960s and 1970s about their educational experiences. My research focuses on the inter-generational experiences between mothers and daughters. I would be grateful if I could interview you and your daughter.

I have enclosed (i) Participation Information Sheet, and (ii) Consent Form for your information. I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope and would appreciate you completing the enclosed paperwork and returning it to me if you are willing to help me in my research.

Many thanks in advance for your time and co-operation. If you require further information or have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Greta Franklin-Brown

LSBU Research Student

Enc

## Appendix 6: Initial Questionnaire

Number: .....

## Two generations of British born Black Caribbean women's experiences of the educational system.

Investigator: Greta Franklin-Brown, Research Student

London South Bank University

### Initial Questionnaire

**Full name:**

**Date of Birth:**

**Place of Birth:**

**Address:**

**Post Code:**

**Daytime phone:**

**Evening Phone:**

**Mobile:**

**E-mail:**

**1. What was your experience of primary school?**

*Please tick the box that applies to you:*

Negative     Neither Positive or Negative     Positive     Don't know



**2. What was your experience of secondary school?**

*Please tick the box that applies to you:*

- Negative     Neither Positive or Negative     Positive     Don't know

**3. What type of school did you attend from the age of 11:**

Please tick the box that applies to you

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Modern     | <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grammar              | <input type="checkbox"/> Private school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boarding school      | <input type="checkbox"/> Academy        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single Sex           | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saturday school      | <input type="checkbox"/> Schools Aboard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state: |   |

.....

**4. Please tick the grades you achieved at school or college.**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 'A' levels            | <input type="checkbox"/> AS level               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A2 level              | <input type="checkbox"/> 'O' levels             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GCSEs Grade A-C       | <input type="checkbox"/> GCSEs Grade D or below |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CSEs Grade 2 or below | <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state:   |

.....

**5. Please tick the qualifications you achieved in Higher Education.**

- Degree
- Postgraduate
- Diploma
- Higher Level Certificate
- Other, please state:

.....

**6. Overall, at the age of 16 how did you consider about your academic achievements?**

- Underachieved
- Achieved my potential
- Progressed to FE/HE

**7. Do you have any further comments about your experience in school, college or higher education?**



**Thank you for completing this questionnaire**

**Please return the completed questionnaire to Greta Franklin-Brown.**

**Contact details: 0207 815 5723 or [franklig@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:franklig@lsbu.ac.uk)**

**Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, 103 Borough Road, London SE1 0AA**

## **Appendix 7: Mothers Questionnaire**

## **Section 1**

### **About yourself**

1. Can you tell me a bit about your family background, for example your parents' occupation, how many children do your parents have?
2. What was school like for you?
3. Did you enjoy school?
4. Tell me why you liked or disliked school.
5. In your opinion do you think that school has changed much since you were a student?
6. Who would you say helped you the most with your school work?
7. Growing up did you have any role model?
8. What is it about your role model that you identified with?
9. Do you wish you were like this person? Give reasons
10. Was encouragement important to you?
11. Were you encouraged to achieve good grades at school?

### **Education and Family life**

1. Did you take an active part in your daughters' education?
2. Did you attend parents' evenings? And if not why?
3. Did you attend school sports day?
4. Did you attend the schools nativity play?
5. Did you attend the schools assemblies?
6. Does your partner support you with the children?
7. Who would you say participates more in your children's life?
8. Do you discuss the options available to your daughter in terms of what she would like to do upon leaving school?
9. Did you help her with her choice of subjects or was the decision all hers?
10. How important was her achievement to you?
11. Do you think her school experiences are different from yours and if so, in what way do you think it has been different?

### **Gender and Ethnicity**

1. Do you think you were treated differently because of your racial category?
2. In your opinion does belonging to one ethnic group over another makes a difference in schools?
3. Do you think the treatment received in school by your daughter would have been different if she was from a racial category?
4. Do you think that your experience in school is the same as your daughter? And if so can you give examples.

5. In your opinion do you think that you and your daughter's ethnic group have held you back? Please give me reasons for your answer?

### **Gender division**

1. Do you think your life chance would have been different if you had been a male?
2. Do you think that your daughters' life chances would be different had she been a boy?
3. In your opinion do you think that girls and boys are treated differently in schools?
4. Who do you think performs best at school boys or girls?
5. Who would you say receives the most attention in the classroom?
6. Were there particular subjects you were encouraged to take by your teachers or by your parents?
7. Did you think that you were given the same subject options as boys being a Black girl?
8. Were there particular subjects that you were encouraged to take by your teachers or by your parents?
9. Did you think that you had the same subject options as boys?
10. Did you advise your daughter on her subject choice?
11. Looking back at your time in school would you have made different subject choices if you were at school now?

### **Class**

1. In your opinion did the area you lived in have any affect on your education?
2. In your opinion do you think that the area you live in has any affects on your daughters' education?
3. Do you think that you or your daughter was treated differently because of the area you lived in?
4. Living in the area you did, did that affect your choice of schools for your daughter?
5. Were you given a choice of schools to attend when you were growing up?
6. If yes, who made the choice? Yourself or your parents?
7. Did you choose your daughter school? Who made the choice?
8. Why did you choose the school your child attended?
9. In your opinion did the school you attend has any affects on your life chances?
10. Do you think that living in certain areas affects the way in which you are viewed by people
11. Do you think that having money has an impact on the type of education you received?
12. If money was not a problem where would you have liked to be educated?
13. If money was not a problem where would you have liked to educate your children? Give reasons for your answer.

### **Educational System**

1. How important is education to you?
2. Do you think education is important?
3. Do you think that getting a good education is important and if so tell me why you say so?
4. In your opinion what would you consider to be a good education?
5. In your opinion do you think you received a good education?
6. In your opinion did your daughter receive a good education?
7. How important was it for you to have gained good grades?
8. Can you tell me what subjects you did and the grades you obtained?
9. How important is it for your daughter to have gained good grades in GCSEs and A levels?
10. Were you happy with the results of your exams? Were they what you were expecting?
11. Were you happy with your daughters' exams results? Were they what you were expecting?
12. Do you think that you could have done better if you had received more encouragement?
13. Do you think she could have done better if she had received more encouragement?
14. Has your level of education held you back?
15. What would you have liked to have done?
16. Looking back on your experience of school how would you compare your experience of school to that of your daughter?
17. In your opinion has it been better for her than it was for you? Give reasons for your answer.

## **Appendix 8: Daughters Questionnaire**

### **Section 1**

## **Yourself**

12. Tell me a little bit about yourself, your name, your age, your occupation.
13. Can you tell me a bit about your family background, for example your parents' occupation, how many children do your parents have?
14. What was school like for you?
15. Did you enjoy school?
16. Tell me why you liked or disliked school.
17. In your opinion do you think that school has changed much since you were a student? If yes give reasons why you say so?
18. Who would you say helped you the most with your school work?
19. Growing up did you have any role model?
20. If yes what is it about your role model that you identify with?
21. Do you wish you were like this person? Give reasons
22. Was encouragement important to you?
23. Were you encouraged to achieve good grades at school?

## **Family life**

12. Did your parents take an active part in your education?
13. Did they attend parents' evenings? If they did not attend did they say why?
14. Did they attend school sports day?
15. Did they attend the schools nativity play?
16. Did they attend the schools assemblies?
17. Were your parents supportive when you were at school?
18. Who would you say participated more in your school life?
19. Did your parents discuss the options available to you in terms of what you would like to do upon leaving school?
20. Did they help with home work?
21. Did you get help with your subject choice, or was all your decision?
22. How important was your achievement to you?
23. Do you think your achievement is important to your parents?

## **Gender and Ethnicity**

6. Do you think you were treated differently in school because of your racial category?
7. In your opinion does belonging to one racial category over another make a difference in school?
8. In your opinion do you think that your ethnicity has held you back? Please give me reasons for your answer?
9. New anti-racist legislation was implemented in all schools in 2002. Do you think that this has made improvements in school? Can you give reasons for your answers?

10. Bearing in mind this new policy, what, in your opinion, are the differences between your time at school and your mum's, or are there any differences?

### **Gender and Education**

12. Do you think that your life chances would have been different had you been a boy? Give reasons for your answers.
13. In your opinion do you think that girls and boys are treated differently in schools?
14. Who do you think performs best at school boys or girls? Please give me reasons for your answer.
15. Who would you say receives the most attention in the classroom? Why do you say so?
16. Were there particular subjects you were encouraged to take by your teachers or by your parents?
17. Did you think that you were given the same subject options as boys?
18. In your opinion were you ever advised to take a different subject because you were a girl?
19. Knowing what you know now are there any subjects you would have liked to have chosen?

### **Class**

1. In your opinion do you think that the area you live in has any affects on your education?
2. Do you think that living on an estate had any affects on your education?
3. Do you think that you are treated differently because of the area you lived in?
4. Living in the area you do has that had any affects on your choice of schools?
5. Why did you choose the school you attended?
6. Was it your parents choice?
7. In your opinion does the school you attend has any effects on your life chances?
8. Do you think that living in certain areas affects the way in which you are viewed by people? Give reasons for you answer.
9. Do you think that having money has an impact on the type of education you receive?
10. If money was not a problem where would you have liked to educated? Give reasons for your answer.

### **Educational System**

18. Is education important?
19. How important is education to you?
20. Do you think that getting a good education is important and if so tell me why you say so?
21. In your opinion what would you consider to be a good education?
22. In your opinion did you receive a good education?
23. When you were at school, how important was your grades to you?
24. Can you tell me what subjects you did and the grades you obtained?

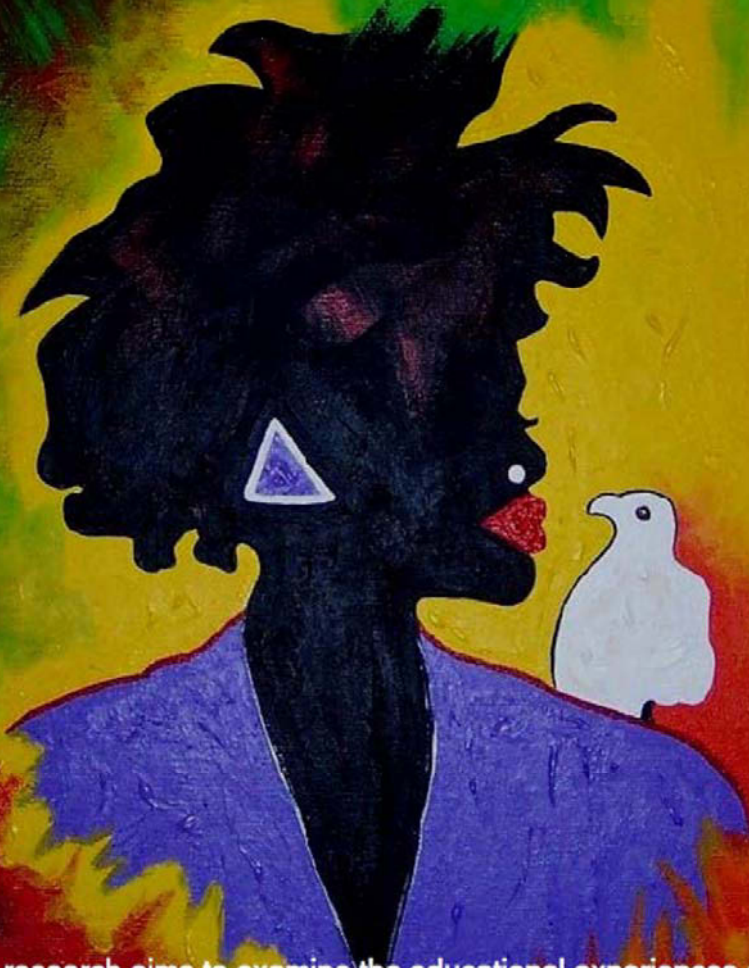


25. How important is it for you to have gained good grades in GCSEs and A levels?
26. Were you happy with your exams results? Were they what you were expecting?
27. How important is encouragement to you?
28. Do you think you encouragement is needed to achieve good grades in school?
29. Do you think you had received sufficient encouragement in school?
30. Has your level of education held you back? Why you say so?
31. What would you have like to have done?
32. Looking back on your experience of school how would you compare your experience of school to that of your mum?
33. Do you think there are any differences? Give reasons for your answer.
34. Would you say it was better for you or has it remained the same?

## **Appendix 9: Recruitment Poster**

**Calling all British born women of Caribbean descent**

**Are you interested in volunteering to participate in some research?**



**The research aims to examine the educational experiences of British born females of Caribbean descent who attended school in the UK in the 1960s and 70s and their daughters.**

**Interested? Please contact Greta Franklin-Brown  
Office: 0207 815 5762 Mobile: 07903 424799 E-mail: franklig@lsbu.ac.uk**

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