

THE UNHEARD VOICES OF BLACK CARIBBEAN BOYS ON EDUCATION

Background

- Caribbean children as a group are underachieving in the education system (Swan, 1985).
- Black Caribbean and Pakistani pupils are the worst performing groups, with Black Caribbean pupils showing the greatest change in levels of attainment during compulsory schooling. Overall, the disparity in achievement between ethnic groups increases significantly over the course of schooling. Black Caribbean pupils make the least progress between key stages, e.g. only 48 percent of those who achieved the expected level at KS3 went on to gain five or more A*-C GCSEs (Bhattacharyya, Ison & Blair, 2003).
- UK Government statistics from the National Pupil Database in 2013 reported that pupils from Black ethnic groups are still performing below, and in particular Black Caribbean boys. Only 46.9 percent of Black Caribbean boys achieved 5 or more GCSEs (which was the lowest percentage between all ethnic groups) (DfE, 2013).
- Increasing opportunities for pupil voice to be heard has been brought to the foreground by current legislation (Children and Families Act, 2014) and is a major theme of the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014b).

Research Questions

- RQ1: How do Black Caribbean boys in Secondary Schools view academic attainment and success?
 RQ2: How are Black Caribbean boys influenced by their peers in school?
 RQ3: What attributions and motivations do Black Caribbean boys in Secondary School have in relation to of academic achievement?
 RQ4: What are the differences between Black Caribbean boys who are underachieving and achieving?

References
 Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytical tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, (3), 385-405.
 Bhattacharyya, G., Ison, L., & Blair, M. (2003). *Minority ethnic attainment and participation in education and training: the evidence*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.
 Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
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Methodology

Design

A constructionist qualitative exploratory design was used. This allowed for in-depth examination of the perceptions of individuals (Hammersley, 2013), which emphasised pupil voice.

Participants

12 Black Caribbean boys in Year 10/11 attending mainstream secondary schools in inner London Local Authorities.

Measures

Semi-structured interviews - Some open-ended questions were also included as Hollway and Jefferson (2013) suggest that this can allow greater access to a person's motivations and emotions than a closed question.

Analysis

A six-stage thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) was used to analyse the data, with an add-on to the fifth stage which has been adapted from Attride-Sterling (2001). The transcriptions were analysed using Atlas-Ti Software.

Thematic Analysis

Organising Theme	Theme Synopsis
Academia	The organising theme Academia highlights the importance of education and work that pupils struggled with or achieved in. This theme also refers to pupil perceptions of academia.
Aspirations	The organising theme Aspirations refers to any goals or motivations pupils may have, whether short or long term. It also included their hobbies and how their educational options can assist them in achieving their long term career goals.
Family Influence	The organising theme Family Influence refers to the importance of the role of parent(s) and/or other family members with regards to their education. It also highlights if family has an impact on pupils' career goals, motivations and belief systems.
Peer Influence	Peer Influence refers to the importance of learners feeling personally and specifically included, valued and supported by their peers with regards to their education.
Pupil Voice	Pupil Voice refers to pupils' perceptions and self-acknowledgements as being reflective; learning from previous experiences; continuously looking for positives; and believing that they can prove others wrong. This theme also highlights the way pupils' perceive the world and explores issues around racial identity.
School Effects	School Effects theme contributes to the learners' physiological and safety needs being met. School rules were also included in this theme.
Teacher Influence	Teacher Influence refers to staff supporting students academically, emotionally and behaviourally in a sincere and non-prejudicial way which promotes an ethos of inclusion and respect

Theme	Achieving Pupils	Underachieving Pupils	TOTALS
Academia	37	49	86
Aspirations	78	94	172
Family Influence	27	16	43
Peer Influence	35	30	71
Pupil voice	68	64	133
School effects	20	10	30
Teacher Influence	35	37	72
TOTALS:	291	312	603

Theme	Achieving Pupils	Underachieving Pupils	TOTALS:
Acad: difficult work	8	7	15
Acad: Importance of education	24	37	61
Asp: aspirations	30	23	53
Asp: motivation	17	17	34
Asp: unsure	0	10	10
Fam: parental belief	4	4	8
Fam: parental influence	5	6	11
Fam: values family	11	6	17
Peer Inf: peer influence	28	32	60
Peer Inf: peer pressure	4	5	9
PV: personal perspective	9	18	27
PV: problem owner	9	15	24
PV: racial identity	11	3	14
PV: self-acknowledgement	21	33	54
Sch Eff: school rules	8	7	15
Sch Eff: school size	2	2	4
Teach Inf: miscommunication	5	4	9
Teach Inf: teacher expectations	16	10	26
Teach Inf: teacher/pupil relationship	21	27	48
TOTALS:	230	266	496

P3: "My mum definitely cause she is always there for me, even when I am down and stuff like that, she is always there for me, she is definitely my role model."

P7: "Sometimes they help and sometimes they don't. Sometimes in lessons they bother me and if the lesson is boring. It is good to have a fun in lessons if you are always doing work but I know it is not good."

P10: "I do not like some of the rules- they are kind of unfair like if chew chewing gum you have to come in on Saturday for two hours in the morning at 8 o'clock and you finish at 10. That is it for me, just the Saturdays."

P5: "I want to become a basketball player but my mum said I need a plan B but I can't think of one yet."

P6: "Some of the teachers are difficult, sometimes I am different in terms of learning, I don't learn the same way that other people learn and some of the teachers don't understand that so I wouldn't really learn in some subjects and what is that going to do? If teachers knew how I would learn then that would help."

Results

- All the boys, viewed academic attainment and success positively. They were all aware of the importance of education and most agreed that having a university degree would help them in terms of having successful careers and good jobs.
- All of the boys in this study noted that their peers influenced them one way or the other. Most of the boys attributed external factors; such as their peers were to 'blame' for their distraction and consequently their low achievement which could be seen as attribution bias (Heider, 1958) where pupils put the 'blame' on external/situational factors.
- Many of the boys also admitted that they knew they needed to focus and do their work and try not to be distracted. Most of the boys also highlighted their 'true' peers as those that helped them to stay focused and get on with their work rather than be distracted and they seemed to value these peers.
- Many of the boys named someone in their family to be their role model (mother, father, brother or cousin) and some named a teacher or coach at school.
- Both groups appeared motivated in education and had aspirations which are a driving factor in motivation. It was also clear that the school environment impacted on the motivation to learn.
- The pupils in this study implied that teachers appeared to expect more from the achieving pupils than the underachieving pupils
- When comparing the two groups - valuing family was important to the achievers more so than the underachievers; family values differed when considering education and careers.

Recommendations for Practice

- EPs can inform school staff on cultural awareness and differentiation via INSET and/or staff sharing. Future EP practice can bring awareness to school staff on the importance of pupil voice and implementing ways in which pupils and staff can work together to support Black Caribbean boys by helping them to holistically develop as individuals while assisting them to be motivated to academically achieve and subsequently achieve their aspirations.
- Future practice can also involve family by making them aware that they too play a vital role in the academic achievement of their children.
- Future research and practice can assist in creating positive learning environments with clear boundaries and where failure is seen as part of learning (Bielby et al., 2012), regardless of their ability or need.

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