The lived experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white secondary schools

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of racialised girls in predominately white secondary schools in England. Using multiple qualitative methods, thematic analysis and informed by feminist Critical Race Theory, the thesis gives centre stage to the voices of girls who, seen through a 'white gaze', describe being racialised in schools using stereotypes, racial and gendered tropes, and constructions of 'outsider' and otherness. It addresses gaps in empirical data necessary to substantiate understandings of feminist Critical Race Theory with reference to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in relation to the specific context of the English predominantly white secondary school.

I present evidence that reveals the effect of visible difference in fuelling assumptions and stereotypes about different racial groups. Racialisation leads to failures to 'see' each girl as an individual. This thesis therefore extends theoretical understandings of racialisation and racism as gendered, dependent on context, and experienced differently depending on which racial group individuals are visually most associated with, as seen through a white lens.

Having established the importance of context and visual difference, I examine how white privilege, marginalisation, racism, racialised sexism and classism function in school. Still based on the thematic analysis of racialised girls' narratives, I present evidence which extends the understanding of key tenets of intersectionality and Critical Race Theory. Consideration of what constitutes a 'hostile environment' leads to an exploration of the ability of racism to morph and remain deeply embedded in structures and business-as-usual practices of schooling. I also develop empirically-based understandings of Critical Race Theory's concepts of interest convergence, interest divergence, and retrenchment, showing the applicability of these concepts to understand a specifically UK context, and useful for analysis of the predominantly white secondary school as a hostile environment for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

Nonetheless, in this thesis, I argue that cognisant of constraints, racialised girls resist the harmful effects of a hostile environment. Despite wanting change, they do not centre all their efforts of resistance on addressing individual, institutional or systemic racism or sexism. Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls remain agentic, able to fashion their own individual and collective expressions of resistance to the circumstances that they face in the predominantly white secondary school, creating opportunities centred on their sense of who they are and their ambitions for the future.

Note on terminology and reporting protocols

At the outset of the design phase of the project, I decided upon terminology which reflected the language that the girls who were the subject of the research used when talking about themselves. As a consequence, in this thesis I use 'Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls'. Indicating the importance that the girls attach to their cultural, religious, and ethnic identities, those who identified as 'Asian' tended to use more geographically specific categories, particularly Pakistani, Indian and Chinese. Although the girls of South Asian heritage occasionally used 'brown', they tended not to use colour-based descriptors. Despite its historic use to show racial solidarity in the face of racism, 'Black' was never used politically by the girls to encompass varied Asian and Black identities. In the instances where Black was used and the girls wanted to show that they appreciated that colour-based racism applied to brown Asian girls as well as Black girls, they used Black and brown. Chinese heritage girls used Chinese or Asian.

I have chosen to capitalise 'Black' because many people of the African-Caribbean diaspora use this term either alongside or in preference to their primary racial descriptor. I follow the same protocol and logic when using the term 'Mixed-race'. Capitalising also performs as a means of communicating racialised people's agency and resistance, asserting value and pride attached to Blackness and being Mixed-race and in contrast to a history of being stigmatised. Since within white privilege, whiteness is taken-for-granted as a norm, white people in England do not generally need to use white as a noun or as their primary racial or cultural identifier. Therefore, responding to the need to decentre 'whiteness', I use lowercase with reference to 'white' people.

In large part, this decision concerning what to capitalise arose in discussion with Black and Mixed-race women. It also arose with respect to prior decisions that have been made by Black feminists, particularly from the US, in seeing a need to centre racialised girls' experience. Despite racialised girls' ongoing experience of marginality and structural and systemic exclusion, there remains a tendency to overlook racialised girls in school-based policy debates even though they are profoundly affected by school-based systems (so viscerally highlighted with child Q's experience of being strip-searched in an English school in December 2020 when she was 15 years old).

When discussing or quoting other people's work, I have reflected the author's preference and practice. This means that there are times in the thesis where lower case, 'black' and 'mixed-race' are used. When citing evidence from my research with Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, unless a focus group is referred to in the text, the quotations I use are from the girls' one-to-one interviews.

1. Introduction

Despite decades of inquiry into the issue of race and schools, including predominantly white schools (Gaine, 1987, 1995, 2005; Cline et al., 2002, Arshad, et al., 2005), the centrality of racism as a system of oppression which pervades educational institutions often remains obscured (Gillborn, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2018; Bhopal and Maylor, 2014; Chapman and Bhopal, 2019). Racism is not monolithic but is both individual and systemic, relentlessly fluid, morphing over time, adapting depending on circumstance (Gillborn, 2018). Whiteness serves as the basis of a system of privilege which accords status, access and rights (Harris, 1993). Unequal status between different groups of people remains buttressed by deeply embedded structural factors (Atkinson et al., 2018). In a school system that is not designed for girls (Paechter, 1998) and where white privilege prevails (Bhopal, 2018), this has consequences for individual Black, Asian or Mixed-race girls.

There continues to be a lack of a societal or institutional drive to effect changes in favour of social justice (Gillborn, 2005, 2018; Bhopal and Shain, 2014; Bhopal and Maylor, 2014). This obscures the impact of unintentional acts, forces and structures, perpetuating a context where racism and sexism can persist. Within Critical Race Theory, understanding a racial system or contract (Mills, 1997, 2015) denies the ongoing significance of racism but allows 'the racial order' to continue (Bonilla-Silva, 2018: 205). This works alongside systemic domination based on gender (Pateman and Mills, 2007). It also disguises tacit intentionality and interest convergence where generalised white interests are secured through a convergence between white working class and white middle class interests as these are in service to powerful vested (white) interests (Gillborn, 2010). Even whilst interest convergence seems to be based in legitimate concerns, for example, concerning the desire to address and improve white working-class boys' academic achievement, these belie the functioning of class conflict at the heart of interest convergence (Gillborn, 2010) and white privilege (Bhopal, 2018).

Although there are those who deny a systemic problem with racism in education (Sewell, et al., 2021), the denial of racism offsets the drive to overcome disadvantage and hostility. Grounded in an understanding of the operation of power and social relations, Black and post-colonial feminists interrogate the limitations of understandings based on denial (Mirza, 2010). Focusing on difference in the production and reproduction of racialised and gendered otherness and marginalisation, and as a precursor to exclusion and hostility, enables greater understanding of racism and racialised sexism. In this thesis, I use these theoretical insights as they create opportunities to understand the lived experiences of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white schools. This in turn extends the potential for my thesis to make a contribution by expanding thinking on intersectionality and

feminist critical race theory, using an original evidence-based study in three predominantly white secondary schools in the East Midlands. Furthermore, since it is important that research is specific about its context (Connelly, 2008; Francis and Paechter, 2015), this research endeavours to distinguish what could be particular about the predominantly white secondary school and to situate emerging understandings of this context within appropriately specified theoretical frameworks. Students' experiences are shaped through their encounters in the school system in complex ways (Youdell, 2006). Since the complexity of the school context cannot be seen in isolation from processes afoot in wider society, in this thesis, I also establish the value of examining wider social relations through the lens of schoolgirl experience.

Education remains an important site within which to understand 'concerns over structural racism, low educational attainment, poor teacher expectations and stereotyping, ethnocentric curricula and high levels of school exclusions for some groups' (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard, Arday, 2015: 4). Stereotyping, an absence of intersectional analysis, and the use of racialising tropes, are all seen in schools, determining both interactions and processes in education (Crenshaw, 2011; Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015). Evans-Winters, Hines, Moore and Jones (2018: 13) argue that Black girls are 'systemically left out of discussions about school reform – mainly because binary thinking about race, class and gender shapes how we frame educational issues, problems, and solutions'.

Based on a thematic analysis of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' narratives, this research explores understandings of the familiar and everyday site of their schools. Girl-centred, subjective, intersectional, and embodied, the girls' knowledge allows for a focus on their personal perceptions of their experience. Foregrounding the girls' own readings of their experience offers the possibility of breaching fixed assumptions of who they are and what they know, reflecting Critical Race and Black feminist and post-colonial understandings of knowledge.

In the remainder of this introduction, I outline the research objectives, an overview of the thesis before briefly surveying each of the chapters which discuss my school-based empirical research.

1.1. Research aim and objectives

The thesis explores the lived experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in Years 8 to 13, aged twelve and upwards, in three predominantly white secondary schools in the East Midlands region of England. The aim is to understand whether there is an impact of 'becoming raced' within an education system where it is both possible and common to deny any impact of race, or that race matters. The research examines four key research questions:

1. How does their visible difference affect the lived experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in school?
2. What support and barriers do Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls experience within their schools?
3. How do racism and sexism, and religious discrimination feature in the narratives of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls?
4. What changes would Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls like to see to improve their school lives?

1.2. Overview of thesis

Exploring the experiences of racialised girls in predominately white secondary schools using multiple qualitative methods and informed by feminist critical race theory, the thesis gives centre stage to the voices of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. The girls' narratives establish the role played by race, gender and class as features which contribute to their experience. Feminist Critical Race Theory affords insights into racism as ordinary and everyday which concurs with the girls' narratives of their experiences as these are impacted by structural and institutional racism and sexism. Theoretical intersections between Critical Race Theory, Critical Race Feminism, Black and post-colonial feminisms therefore inform the thematic analysis of the girls' accounts. These accounts include their descriptions which point to being seen through a 'white gaze', being racialised and gendered in schools using stereotypes, racial and gendered tropes, and constructions of 'outsider' and otherness.

Having conducted a thematic analysis of racialised girls' discursive narratives as the empirical basis for considering the research questions, I respond to the research aim and objectives in three findings chapters. In these I examine the impact of visual difference as something which underpins racialisation as a gendered process, and the importance of the white gaze in this process. In my analysis of support and barriers that the girls experience, and whether racism, sexism and religious discrimination feature in racialised girls' narratives, and what changes the girls would like to see, I examine the empirical evidence to analyse the functioning in school of white privilege, marginalisation, racism, sexism and classism, asking whether this amounts to, or contributes to the development of a hostile environment. In the third and final findings chapter, I examine the extent to which, although no longer confident that their schools will enact changes that would improve their situation, racialised girls create opportunities and remain agentic, able to fashion their own individual and collective expressions of resistance to the circumstances that they face in the predominantly white secondary school.

In summary, this thesis is organised in seven chapters, as follows:

- Introduction;
- Literature review and theoretical frameworks for understanding the experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in the predominantly white secondary school;
- Methodology;
- Findings 1: Visible difference, racialisation, the white gaze and otherness in the predominantly white secondary school;
- Findings 2: Understanding the predominantly white secondary school as a hostile environment: white privilege, tokenism, barriers to inclusion, marginalisation, interest divergence and retrenchment;
- Findings 3: Resistance in the predominantly white secondary school;
- Conclusion.

1.2.1. *Outline of thesis chapters*

Following this introduction, chapter two sets out a literature review and theoretical frameworks which act as a foundation for understanding the research context of the thesis. After the literature review of existing theoretical and empirical work, and the methodology, the thesis builds and develops an understanding of the ways in which race and racism, intersect with gender and sexism, and is experienced alongside racialised and gendered forms of classism by Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in their predominantly white secondary schools.

In chapter two, I survey how Critical Race Theory fused with intersectionality and feminist and postcolonial lenses serve as a critical research context for the thesis. Offering a possibility to go beyond reductive understandings of race as a feature of skin colour (Mirza, 2010; Ali, 2003, 2012; Ahmed, 1997) and account for the centrality of race and racism as features which continue to play a role in determining the everyday context in schools (Gillborn, 2018; Bhopal and Maylor, 2014), Black and postcolonial feminisms (Brah, 1996; Mirza, 2010) and Critical Race Theory (Taylor, 2016) stress the criticality of hearing (rather than discounting) narratives pertaining to experience.

Following chapter three, which sets out my methodology, including details of the thematic analysis protocols which make explicit the analysis procedures that I used, chapter four, the first findings chapter, develops the theme of visual difference. I explore the implications of whiteness as a construct that is largely invisible but powerful. I build on the literature which establishes that although whiteness is not understood to be a racial category, it determines terms of reference which instigate and re-inscribe how people are seen. Therefore, in this chapter, I respond to my first research question, asking whether there is any effect of visible difference and if so, whether this

underpins a process of racialisation. The central focus of this chapter is to investigate whether there is any predisposition to fix a set reading of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, where visible difference acts as the grounds for making of racialised meanings, constituting otherness, and constructing the other as outsider. Despite 'potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances' (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012: 10), in this chapter, I aim to explore whether prompted by embodied visual difference, the process of racialisation is critical to becoming the 'other'. In presenting original empirical data, I extend the existing literature on racialisation as a process, specifically the effect of particular norms and stereotypes based on racial categories, and attached to individuals, as though they are applicable and accurate.

The second findings chapter explores the theme of white privilege, understood as a system of opportunities and benefits conferred upon white people on account of their being white (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997) and the theme of hostility. Responding to the latter three research questions, this chapter asks whether there is an institutional effect (Ahmed, 2012) where the properties of whiteness are operationalised within the logic of power, inequality, and racial and gender hierarchies. Moreover, in this chapter, I explore whether this is coupled with an ongoing mismatch of interpretative paths used to decipher information about the nature of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Although this points to varied entanglements with privilege, in this chapter I explore how white privilege is reinforced and transmitted as an ordinary and everyday feature of the predominantly white school, asking whether this context can be understood to be a hostile environment. Despite a policy context which suggests that there is equal access to a 'quality' education (George and Clay, 2013), this chapter surveys evidence of tokenism, asking whether efforts to overcome a hostile environment for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are flawed since experiences of racism and sexism reoccur every school year. Policy initiatives such as Prevent retain the centrality of a perception of the problematic individual or group (Shain, 2013). The second findings chapter examines whether such perceptions work alongside failures to counterbalance processes which make the girls susceptible to marginalisation as well as more overt manifestations of racism and racialised sexism.

The third and final findings chapter explores the ways in which resistance can be understood in the predominantly white secondary school. It questions concepts of agency given the context of schools' failure to recognise racism as a problem, and the consequent lack of compulsion to act to offset the fashioning of a hostile environment. Within power dynamics that are neither binary nor static (Paechter, 2018), this chapter explores evidence of resistance in a complex range of activities engaged in by Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

The girls are constrained by their predominately white schools' inability to perceive the hostility that is clear to the girls themselves. However, even as they operate at the margins of existing power hierarchies, there are everyday possibilities for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. Raising their concerns surrounding racism is difficult in the predominantly white school. But in this chapter, I illustrate that the girls establish counter-narratives which contradict institutional narratives, showing that these counter-narratives enhance the possibility to further refine understandings of agency and resistance. I question whether racialised girls' awareness and evaluation of their choices enables them to repel some aspects of racism, and the effectiveness of using a range of strategies including developing their own capacity for compassion to understand their responses to their circumstances.

Evidence is also presented of the girls breaching fixed-ness beyond impositions of perceptions of who they are and can be. I ask whether they find a resource in their families and friendships and through processes of 'recuperation'. Making time for reflection, this chapter asks, are racialised girls better placed to self-define, disrupting for themselves the fixity of racial tropes and even disavowing an 'outsider' status. By the end of the chapter, I will have scoped evidence of self-determination. Knowing themselves to be multifaceted, are they able to determine what group membership means to each of them as individuals and interrogate the meaning of race and gender? I will also have addressed whether racialised girls are able to use ingenuity as a route to derail racialised ways of seeing, breaching boundaries both in their present but also in a liminal space of their future, centred on their individual aspirations, ambitions, and hopes, able to practise more collective forms of resistance by becoming part of communities beyond the confines of their predominantly white secondary schools.

2. Literature review and theoretical frameworks for understanding the experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in the predominantly white secondary school

2.1. Introduction

This thesis examines the process of racialisation, exploring whether the effect of racialisation affects the lived experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white secondary schools. In this chapter, I examine the secondary empirical literature, highlighting what work has been done that is relevant or near relevant to this research study. This literature review also highlights the timeliness of my research given the passage of twenty years since the publication of the Department for Education and Skills research report *Minority Ethnic Pupils in Mainly White Schools* (Cline et al., 2002)*.*

Setting out the work that has been done leads into a discussion of the theoretical frameworks necessary to conduct an empirical study on racialised girls. Therefore, in this chapter, I survey literature which illuminates how relevant scholars have considered each of the concepts in their theoretical studies of race, racialisation, racism or resistance, before returning to the literature of relevant empirically based studies. I set out frameworks for understanding race as a social construction which needs to be examined through an intersectional lens to understand processes of racialisation more fully, particularly gendered racialisation and racialised gendering. I also explore conceptual understandings of racism and resistance necessary to analyse the racism that racialised girls experience and their agency.

2.2. Literature review and rationale for the research study

There is an awareness of the value of applying Critical Race Theory to education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2010, 2014, 2018; Donnor and Ladson-Billings, 2018; Dixson and Rousseau-Anderson, 2018). Chapman and Bhopal (2019) use Critical Race Theory to examine the predominantly white school with reference to African American students, as well as Black Caribbean students in the UK. However, there remains little research which takes a critical-race theoretical framing as a means with which to focus on girls' experience in predominantly white English secondary schools. This is despite intersectionality also having been identified as a research priority (Bhopal and Preston, 2012), which adds nuance to studies of inequality (Strand, 2014), and enables more complex and

dynamic understandings than those offered through analysis of race and gender singularly (Brah and Phoenix, 2004).

Despite the transformation of the education system in the UK over the past decades, this has failed to address or rectify the persistent legacies of racial inequalities, and racism continues to be a feature of the lives of schoolchildren (Gillborn, 2018). Many young people themselves are keen to see change in the priority accorded social justice and are desirous of an opportunity to express their views. Racism and religious discrimination were voted as their 'number one issue of concern' by almost ten percent of the 969,992 11–18-year-olds who responded to the 'Make your Mark' survey (British Youth Council Youth Select Committee, 2016: 3).

Despite existing research concerned with educational achievement (Gillborn and Mizra, 2000; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Youdell, 2003; Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent, and Ball, 2012; Bhopal and Maylor, 2014), little has been done to shape education policy to overcome institutional contexts which prioritise policies which continue to fail children on account of race, colour or ethnicity (Gillborn, 2008, 2018). There has also been insufficient challenge made to address systemic biases and individual school failings even where efforts have been made. For example, the 'Every Student Succeeds Act' in the US was designed to respond to the negative schooling experiences of Black girls but fails to overturn deep-rooted structural inequality (Evans-Winter, Hines, Moore, and Jones, 2018). Such inequality also suggests that an ongoing portrayal of schools as operating impartially in the interest for all their students is inaccurate (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro and Id-Deen, 2019; George and Clay, 2013).

In the UK, educational attainment continues to be strongly associated with socio-economic background. Although there is a varied picture for different minority ethnic groups (Sewell, et al., 2021), and there have been some positive shifts (Bhopal and Maylor, 2014; George and Clay, 2013) and some exceptions to more general patterns of negative education statistics (Rhamie, 2012), analysis remains necessary as to why distinctions in achievement have been so enduring amongst African-Caribbean young people (Youdell, 2003; Rhamie, 2012; Strand, 2014); Asian girls (Shain, 2003); and mixed-race young men (Joseph-Salisbury, 2016). This suggests that there is a need to foreground understanding and addressing discrimination related to gender, race, and class (Bhopal and Maylor, 2014) including Muslim young people (Shain, 2012) and girls (Zine, 2006) and mixed-race people (Ali, 2003; Song, 2010; Paragg, 2017; Joseph-Salisbury, 2017).

There remains a need to consider varied educational outcomes as arising in the context of Governmental policy initiatives and priorities, and where schools themselves play a role in perpetrating educational inequalities (Bhopal and Maylor, 2014; Bhopal and Shain, 2014; Gillborn,

2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2018; Shain, 2016). A failure to acknowledge white privilege, or to interrogate the nature of hostility, furthers the potential to structure the denial of exclusion and inequality within institutions, including a denial of experiences of racism and sexism. This is not a new issue, and the specific context of the predominantly white school has fuelled inquiry intermittently through the decades.

Troyna and Hatcher (1992: 204) chart intersecting factors involved in upper junior school children's attitudes to race in predominantly white primary schools, concluding that racism is 'more prevalent, more complex and more entrenched than many educationists care to admit'. In *Still no problem here*, Gaine (1995: 11) argues that teaching colleagues in mainly white schools resist believing 'that significant levels of hostility exist'. Expanding his analysis of why ignorance persists, Gaine (2005) explains a key difficulty facing mainly white schools is a lack of familiarity dealing with race and ethnic diversity including overt racism, and discomfort in discussions about difference, and the use of inappropriate language.

There remain low levels of teachers' understanding of issues of race, racism or the impacts of white privilege (Solórzano and Yosso, 2001; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell, 2005; Joseph-Salisbury, 2016). Even where parents might be expected to secure middle-class advantage based on their cultural and social 'capital', Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent, and Ball (2012: 125) found that African-Caribbean middle-class parents could not be assumed to benefit from either their expectations for their child or their capital, particularly since white teachers continue 'to exert enormous influence'. Bhopal (2018: 76) also argues that in the context of education policy, structures, and 'teachers and a white curriculum', black and minority ethnic groups remain disadvantaged in their schooling experiences, and that this is further aggravated by being working class.

Gaining insight to minority ethnic student experience is not straightforward. Pupil experience literature has tended to focus on majority ethnic experience (Arshad, et al. 2005). Moreover, empirical research with young people often relies on 'the views and understandings of adult caretakers' (Christensen and James, 2008: 2). The 24 participants in 'Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools' are teachers (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020); Crozier (2005) explored the experience of African Caribbean and Mixed-race primary and secondary aged children from the perspective of their parents; and narratives from 62 Black middle-class Caribbean heritage parents are used as the empirical basis for Vincent, Rollock, Ball, Gillborn (2012); and Ball, Rollock, Vincent and Gillborn (2013).

Studies which focus on minority ethnic students' experience often occur where there is greater representation of larger minority ethnic populations (Arshad et al., 2005; Weekes-Bernard, 2007).

'Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools' (Joseph-Salisbury, 2020), for example, is a report on findings from the Greater Manchester area, an area which has 'a higher proportion of minority ethnic pupils than England or the North West' (Manchester Urban Institute, n.d., cited Joseph-Salisbury, 2020: 4). However, examining racialisation, white privilege, and racism and racialised sexism from the perspective of students of predominantly white schools has become critical. The demographics of both suburbs and rural areas are changing (Myers and Bhopal, 2017; Chapman and Bhopal, 2019), and mainly white schools are likely to admit increasing minority ethnic pupils than in the past (Cline et al., 2002). Black and minority ethnic parents are increasingly choosing desirable and high performing schools located outside inner city areas for their children in the UK (Gillborn, Rollock, Vincent, and Ball, 2012). This has led to ever greater numbers of Black, Asian and Mixed-race students arriving in predominantly white settings in both the UK and the US (Chapman and Bhopal, 2019).

The Department for Education and Skills report (Cline, et al., 2002) on minority ethnic students in predominantly white schools suggests that research needs to keep pace with social change. But this report now predates numerous critical policies and procedures, both those with specific reference to education and also measures situated within the wider societal and policy context. These include the Prevent measures (Department for Education, 2015; Shain, 2013), and the Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 which aimed unapologetically to make the UK a hostile environment, leading to miscarriages of justice, including in long established UK Black communities (Goodfellow, 2019). Young people's own expressions of concern (British Youth Council Youth Select Committee, 2016) as well as hopes that things can be improved upon (Mirza, 2018) point to a need to revisit the Cline et al. (2002) report.

Evoking the experiences of those not usually given the opportunity to voice for themselves or represent their experience (Simmonds, Roux, Avest, 2015) offers the facility to make the 'familiar strange' (Sikes, 2003). Since schools operate within a culture where norms and abiding inequalities persist and educational 'subjects' are made and remade according to persistent norms and despite policy interventions (Youdell, 2011), the predominantly white secondary school acts as a valuable site of wider societal and cultural phenomena.

There also remains little research on predominantly white schools from the perspective of girls racialised within this context in England. There is often greater interest in boys, including white working-class boys (Gillborn, 2010), mixed-race boys (Joseph- Salisbury, 2016, 2017) and Muslim boys (Shain, 2012). Whereas this research foregrounds the everyday experiences for girls of colour in school, this is something which is less well explored by researchers and policy makers (Crenshaw,

Ocen and Nanda, 2015) although more so in the US. Although there have also been important studies of racialised girls as highlighted throughout the thesis (by Mirza, Shain, Ali, Zine, Crenshaw, Ocen, Nanda, Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, Id-Deen, Evans-Winter, Hines, Moore and Jones, amongst others), these have not been in predominantly white settings in the UK. Furthermore, such research tends to study people from individual racial identity categories, such as Black or Muslim girls. This research concentrates on what can be learnt of racialisation, understanding that it affects individuals differently depending on how they are identified, but also that whatever their background, racialisation affects all Black, Asian or Mixed-race girls in the predominantly white secondary school.

In understanding the experience of 'inhospitable educational environments', it is critical to use an intersectional lens (within Critical Race Theory) as the risks faced by Black and other girls of colour rarely receive adequate attention (Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda, 2015: 9). Under the guise of neutrality, racialised and gendered power structures contribute to racialisation and marginalisation of girls of colour in school. The idea that all young people of colour who are in crisis are boys, and that the experience of white girls is 'indistinguishable' from their Black, Asian and mixed-race peers remains (Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda, 2015: 9). Some of what girls experience has parallels with their Black, Asian and Mixed-race boy counterparts, but concentrating on boys in crisis, and similarities with white girls, helps to obscure the distinct vulnerabilities and risks faced in school by Black, Asian or Mixed-race girls.

2.3. Theoretical frameworks

In this next section, I establish theoretical frameworks with which to explore the lived experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white secondary schools. As a theoretical approach synonymous with understanding and opposing racial inequality in education, Critical Race Theory is the overarching theory used in this thesis. Using this theoretical framework necessitates an understanding of race as a social construct where social processes centre on the interpretation of bodily difference, and the ways in which race is made and performed by people within racialising processes. Critical Race Theory also centres the role of race to understand historical contexts in determining inequalities and forms of discrimination that operate in school. There is an understanding that racism, or 'the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance' (Lorde, 1980: 115), continues to play a role in present-day society. Theorists using Critical Race Theory in education argue that racism is an everyday feature of society, rather than unusual (Taylor, 2016).

Critical Race Theory has long proved controversial in the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Although there have been gains in terms of understanding the nature of racism, progress towards addressing it is not assured, and has been erratic and halting (Gillborn, 2008, 2018). Racism has remained a feature of the education system, complex and relentless rather than static (Gillborn, 2018). Nonetheless there has been retrenchment away from a focus on race or racism in education. Within what is sometimes termed the 'Culture Wars', accounts in support of de-emphasising race, as a central cause for concern, suggest a need to focus on other biographical features like poverty and class background. The turn away from the explanatory power of race to explain disparities has gained political capital as exemplified in *The Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities* (Sewell, et al., 2021).

Despite political and institutional resistance in education to a focus on race, Critical Race Theory provides a theoretical context which frames how racial difference functions. Firstly, it argues that 'business-as-usual' racism affects the experiences of people of colour; and secondly, it points out that apart from its most overt forms, racism is difficult to perceive because it is ordinary and normal rather than aberrant (Delgado and Stefancic, 2013; Weheliye 2014). Within a framework which recognises the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992), racism cannot be understood simplistically, as either a feature of individual behaviour or choice, or because of systems and structures which organise society and institutions. It is both systemic and structural but also shaped by individuals' actions, as Gillborn (2018: 67) notes:

> Racism cannot be adequately understood by a perspective that focuses only on the separate beliefs, actions, and fears of individual social actors, but neither is purely a facet of a depersonalised system.

Gillborn argues that there are ramifications of racism for people of colour within both the legacies of racial thinking and how this continues to shape educational systems and structures in the present day. Nevertheless, it remains difficult for many educational professionals to accept that race plays a role in explaining some students' negative experiences of school.

There is also theoretical priority within Critical Race Theory accorded to understanding experience. Everyday lived experience occurs in the context of social relations. How people interpret their experience occurs in the context of how difference is defined within the terms of social relations, specific histories and contexts for exclusionary and discriminatory practices (Brah, 1992). Experience occurs in the context of power inequalities fashioned by structural racism, sexism and classism, and inter-personal manifestations of racism, sexism and classism.

Rather than accept normative accounts which do little to question current power dynamics, Critical Race Theory sees an inductive theoretical imperative to learn from counter-narratives with which to understand people's experience. Research which uses Critical Race Theory offers a framework that 'explicitly recognises and encourages people of colour to name, speak and theorise about their experiences as shaped by racism' (Rollock, 2012: 67). These narratives serve to undermine attempts to rationalise the status quo by the group most dominant through its vested interest in power hierarchies as the system has been and is currently structured (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). This leads to a theoretical stress, also arising from Black feminist epistemological approaches (Collins, 2000, Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1982, 1984, 1989; Bhopal, 2010), on the importance of personal narratives from which to counter normative accounts of relations, structures and systems (Delgado, 1990).

Critical Race Theory is also a useful framework to deepen understanding of processes and barriers that non-white students face in school regarding their race but also their gender, class as well as other features that have been used to subordinate people. The effect of racism on individuals varies according to gender, other biographical features and context (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015). Intersectionality can be understood as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, which creates overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage, and exclusions and marginalisation within each category (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality increases the possibility of understanding social hierarchical relations of power (Yuval-Davis, 2006a). Since this thesis is centred on girls in school, intersectionality contributes to both nuance and analytical clarity within Critical Race Theory.

Although disrupting individual frames of analysis is important, retaining the explanatory power of 'race' in understanding 'difference' remains critical (Mirza, 2010). This compels a need to prioritise or address the 'primacy' of race within intersectional analysis (Preston and Bhopal, 2012: 216) and a need to be alert to distinctions in racialisation that occur through gender, and conversely understanding gender as racialised (Bhopal and Preston, 2012). To account for a need to focus on the distinctions in girls' racialised experience (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015), has led some theorists to use an explicitly Critical Race Feminism as a frame for analysis (Evans-Winter and Esposito, 2010; Bhopal and Preston, 2012; Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019).

For the remainder of this chapter, I establish the theoretical implications for the continuing significance of race and racism, understanding whiteness and white privilege, racialisation including gendered racialisation, the white gaze, and otherness as experienced in relation to white normativity, structural racism and the institutional structuring of marginalisation and exclusion.

Finally in this chapter, I set out a theorisation of resistance in the context of Critical Race Theory and using Black feminist, intersectional and postcolonial theoretical frameworks.

2.3.1. *The continuing significance of race and racism*

The use of 'race' as a signifier with which to explain difference between people remains common in society (Yancy, 2017). Conceptions of race and racism remain foundational in how we come to understand present-day social relations and power hierarchies (hooks, 1989; Collins, 2000; Mirza, 2010; Taylor, 2016). Over time 'race' has been produced as a 'categorical object' within a deceit of 'racial knowledge', one cloaked in nominally scientific knowledge, formality and supposed universality (Goldberg, 1993: 149). Critical Race Theory recognises that although race is socially constructed, as a category race retains explanatory power with which to examine everyday experiences.

Although biological determinism has been discredited as a term of reference for understanding race (Alexander and Knowles, 2005), race continues as an 'ineradicable marker of social difference' (Brah, 1992: 126). Within 'cultural' based readings of race which follow on from a widespread discrediting of biological racism, 'culture' alongside race is deployed within a nominally neutral ideological framework of difference (Visweswaran, 2010). 'Culture' distinguishes a symbolic domain from that which might otherwise be characterised as 'natural', producing falsely legitimised knowledge and 'common-sense' readings of race through established patterns of representation (Hall, 1997a). This has led to ever more complex renderings of race, and the expansion of social and cultural constructions associated with racial categories to include cultural, religious and ethnic difference.

The renewal of 'difference' means that race can function within society as an organising principle that works through gender, class, and other social identities, able to continue to determine the contours of racial inequality (Leonardo, 2004). Culture joined to race has an impact where racism, without sole reliance on 'race,' can be explained through an articulation of cultural difference, or '*uncommon cultures'* and 'incomprehensibility', and where 'adverse outcomes arise from such cultural difference' (Visweswaran, 2010: 8). Without overt reliance on biological explanations, this expansion of the domain of race, extends the potential of culture to give rise to new manifestations of racism through culturally based arguments, or cultural racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Alignments between difference, culture and race illuminate the ways in which race is a social construction. Race is constructed and reinforced in the way it is 'made and re-made by people at the level of the everyday – race is *performed* in mundane encounters between individuals as well as at the interface between people and structures' (Alexander and Knowles, 2005: 2). However, as well as being performed, the materiality of racial and cultural otherness is established through the body.

Critical Race Theory challenges an understanding of the body as having an innate or natural raced identity but accepts that there are ongoing consequences within society of the ways that race is made to count through processes of racialisation and static understandings of what race 'means'.

Representations of bodies are shaped by Western concepts of race. Skin colour remains one of the most salient markers of race over time, but religious, ethnic and cultural definitions also feed ideas of what shapes the formation of racialised identities. For Douglas (1970), what is critical is not actual difference, but a social concern for what differentiates and boundaries bodily distinctions between people. Embodiment foregrounds questions of difference and power through establishing and reinforcing hierarchical binaries, crucial to the construction of women's secondary status (Grosz, 1994), maintaining the borders of 'racially constituted categories'(Hall, 1992b: 255) and without an obvious need to counteract what amounts to hierarchies and idealisations established in relation to whiteness (Bhopal, 2018, 2020).

Whiteness

Within a context where the greatest power to define and impose meaning is accorded whiteness as the centre, what race means has been decided in relation to whiteness (Wynter, 2003). Although whiteness remains largely invisible and unmarked, it differentiates between those who are white and those who are not (Dyer, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Ahmed, 2006). What 'race' is 'supposed' to mean is imposed on people on account of their racialised and gendered identity in an episteme where whiteness and Western Man act as a normative centre, where 'Man' comes to classify itself as if it were the human itself and others are less (Wynter, 2003). There is an amnesia of colonialism as a system which made the 'world "white", a social as well as bodily given, or what we *receive* from others as an inheritance of this history' (Ahmed, 2006: 111). As an inheritance of colonialism, whiteness has structured what social and bodily difference means into present-day relations. White, Western, ontological and philosophical systems have established racial hierarchies (Wynter, 2003). Within the symbolic work of language, representation, discourse and discursive practices signify and create meanings which in turn crystallise knowledge systems and hierarchies (Hall, 1997a). Expanded understandings of difference are subsumed within the category of 'race' (Visweswaran, 2010) and remain fashioned around whiteness as an episteme (Wynter, 2003) or racial discourse (Leonardo, 2002). 'Whiteness is not a culture but a social concept' (Leonardo, 2002: 32) which has power even though race fails to 'make sense' in the postmodern and postcolonial world (Ladson-Billings, 1998: 9).

Where the parameters of whiteness are established in the context of the myth of a post-racial society (Bhopal, 2018), theorising the implications of whiteness within Critical Race Theory is often

portrayed as a critique of white people. However, theoretical priority within Critical Race Theory is accorded to overcoming the ubiquity of knowledge centred on whiteness to define the terms by which race is understood, and racial inequality perpetuated. Theorists applying Critical Race Theory aim to overturn racial binaries and hostilities between people within schematised racial knowledge. Critical Race Theory's focus is to critique the power vested in whiteness and the ways that justifications for ongoing disparities between white and other people are socially reinforced (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995).

Rather than encounter 'conceptual whiteness' as conscious or explicit, Ladson-Billings (1998: 9) argues that constructions surrounding race have become 'more embedded and fixed' and that:

> this embeddedness or "fixedness" has required new language and constructions of race [where] denotations are submerged and hidden in ways that are offensive though without identification.

In this way, whiteness can carry 'conceptual categories' like "middle-classedness", "beauty" and "intelligence" as normative categories of whiteness without being overtly racial (Ladson-Billings, 1998: 9). Conceptual whiteness acts as a definitional centre, or an orientation in processes of categorisation (Ahmed, 2006). Ladson- Billings (1998: 9) argues that whiteness is positioned as normative:

> *everyone* is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition. These categories fundamentally sculpt the extant terrain of possibilities even where other possibilities exist.

Carrying positive attributes as though these are 'natural' attributes associated with whiteness, and beyond being racially determined, has several effects. It heightens the invisibility of whiteness as a central definitional centre, obscuring the racialising effect of measuring distance from ideals established within whiteness. Whiteness, 'naturalised' as the norm (Gillborn, 2005), extends the potential of already powerful norms associated with gender, ethnicity, sexual identity and social class to 'fix' people within demarcated identity categories. The definitional power of whiteness orchestrates the 'process of "naturalization" such that white becomes the norm from which other "races" stand apart and in relation to which they are defined' (Gillborn, 2005: 488). Whiteness as the norm exacts a relational penalty on others who are contained within racial schemes, and racialised accordingly.

2.3.2. *Racialisation and the white gaze*

Although Critical Race Theory establishes that racialisation operates differently over time and in specific places, both whiteness operating as a discursive norm, and non-white racial categories continue to affect social relations in society. The '*lived* reality of race, the dynamic process of

racialization' is an embodied production of race perceived through a white racializing gaze (Yancy, 2017: xvii). There is no singular 'raced' subject, 'stabilised by Nature or some other essential guarantee' (Hall, 1992b: 257), where 'essentialism' is understood as an 'essence that transcends historical and cultural boundaries' (Brah, 1992: 126). But racialisation takes place as an effect of material and bodily differences understood within constructions of race and gender and positioning non-whiteness in relation to whiteness. Race acts as a marker where the fact of difference from whiteness, made visible through skin, differentiates as lesser and frightening the black body from the white (Fanon, 1952); and renders people other (Said, 1978) or outsider (Lorde, 1984) according to hierarchies established in whiteness. Despite the impossibility of a single story to account for the range of experience, through racialisation, a 'race' is grouped together because of ancestry and skin colour within a singular and essentialist reading (Adicie, 2015). Racialisation refuses 'the idiom of exception', occurring in the everyday or 'the domain of the mundane' (Weheliye, 2014: 11). Racialisation is therefore accorded theoretical priority within Critical Race Theory without reifying race as a biological reality on account of physical difference, and without losing sight of agency for those who are racialised.

Racialisation utilises static group identities to re-inscribe well-established 'common sense' readings of race (Hall, 1992a, 1997a). Language and stereotyping produce meaning and signifying practices, creating cultural and social spaces within which representation of difference or otherness operates as an exclusion from and symbolic disavowal of a norm (Hall, 1997b). Readings which provide cultural intelligibility within the realm of a racial groups' signification (Hall, 1997b) act as a powerful imaginary within understandings that persist from colonial times (Bhabha, 1994).

Race and processes of racialisation also need to be theorised at the level of the body. The body acts 'as a *basis for*, and not just an effect of, the construction of social differences' (Shilling, 1997: 101), continuing to play a role in the way individuals respond to one another. Through the repetition of norms attributed to and projected onto the surface of bodies, social worlds materialise and come to instil meaning onto the body (Butler, 1993a, 1993b). The 'matter' of race marks bodies that are identified as 'not white' (Ahmed, 2006: 112). Shilling (2008) establishes that habits and reflexivity, occurring alongside socialisation, social experiences and crisis events, develop notions of bodily identity in the context of community and social structures. Taken together, these conceptualisations suggest that becoming 'raced' through a process of racialisation can be understood as a repetitive and re-inscribed social process, an interaction between person, experience and society stemming from and in the context of visual bodily difference.

'Otherness' or 'Blackness' is a social construction that arises in the context of bodily identity informed by colonial legacies. Postcolonial theorisation highlights how the objectification of the othered body is situated in thinking that fixes and understands difference as natural and biological rather than in any way socially and culturally constructed. Despite 'changing historical and discursive conjunctures', ideological constructions of otherness use the stereotype as a 'major discursive strategy', offering an assurance of the 'already known' to secure a fixity in 'the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference' (Bhabha, 1994: 94-5). Despite a lack of any biological or physiological legitimacy, a racial hierarchy retains currency through the reiteration of stereotypes and assumptions attached to different group. Each citation of a stereotype cites its past iterations (Butler, 1997), bolstering it and entrenching its potential to cause harm. Wright (2015: 2) suggests that racialisation fixes what is a production, or a 'mirage', where a mirage of meaning attaches to a 'determinable' Blackness or otherness, and acts as an anchor for processes of racialisation.

Racialisation is a process of sedimentation (Ahmed, 2015), centred on attaching meaning and stereotypes related to embodied 'non-whiteness'. Entrenched ideas surrounding embodied racial difference 'overdetermine' how the body is read, imposing meaning from the outside (Fanon, 1952: 95). Alongside assertions of white superiority over others' inferiority, a 'stigmatic construction of blackness' (Hartman, 1997: 194) within 'an epidermal racial scheme' restricts the possibility of a 'genuine dialectic between [the] body and the world' (Fanon, 1952: 91-2). Difficulties overturning pre-existing ideas or registering difference within any given category mean that 'white discursive markings' precede the body (Yancy, 2017: 44). Fixity attached to the 'other' becomes a form of containment within a norm brought forward in time, rather than relegated to a colonial past, able to cope with 'ambivalence' or contradictory evidence (Bhabha, 1994: 95). Applied repeatedly, an ascribed group identity is powerful in the face of even explicit contradictory evidence.

Within the white gaze (Yancy, 2017), the misuse of information arising from bodily visible difference such as body and hair type, or skin colour leads to a perception that this is a wholly accurate source of information about people's identity. The gaze reinforces hierarchies and exclusions and serves as a tool with which to re-inscribe pre-determined meanings upon raced and gendered bodies. Contextual and historically specific ways of seeing serve to fix what can be seen, not because of nature or skin, but as a social way of looking and seeing:

> This is the *Other* that one can only know from the place from which one stands. This is the self as it is inscribed in the gaze of the *Other*' (Hall, 1997c: 202).

Through an othering gaze, meanings derived from norms become fixed to individual bodies on account of their visible racial difference. Individuals presumed to belong to an othered or outsider

group, have 'essentialist' identities fixed according to the group that they are visibly associated with. The gaze becomes a means of operationalising what difference from whiteness means in relation to both bodies and culturally conferred norms. The visual field is itself racialised and forceful in its effect. Operating within a domain that is governed through norms established through the medium of whiteness as an epistemological centre, a racial schema determines how Fanon (1952: 95) sees his situation:

> I am *fixed* […] the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality. I have been betrayed. I sense, I see in this white gaze that it's the arrival not of a new man, but of a […] a new species.

In the gaze, Fanon is dissected, fused into an idea of what his bodily form is supposed to mean. In conjuring up the meaning of his being, the white gaze distorts, and summons him as a 'new species'. Cultural intelligibility therefore continues to limit the possibilities for self-determination, subsumed within a 'negating' racial schema (Fanon, 1952: 90) one in which Fanon is 'betrayed', however he understands his own experience or humanity.

Racialisation as a process is underpinned by bodily difference which enacts a translation of a 'discursive' into a 'naturalised' understanding of material difference fixed through a white gaze. Visual difference becomes a marked racialised and racialising domain. Racialisation foreshadows what can be seen, legitimising understanding within the ontological tenets of a racial hierarchy as it comes into view through a white lens (Yancy, 2017). This is not a sensory 'seeing' but seeing as a means of imposing racialised meanings onto the other. 'Visual moments' are habitual ways of seeing. Racialised people are highly visible on account of their embodied difference from whiteness but simultaneously impossible to see as individuals, indistinct on account of otherness. This leads to a paradox of being simultaneously visible, even hyper-visible on account of being seen to be different and within which a projection of assumptions, stereotypes and norms occurs, whilst also invisible subsumed within the racially informed white gaze.

Although racialising epistemological origins might be obscured, seeing as obfuscation, the white gaze has genealogical antecedents which are unerringly implicated as a source and site of white power and hegemony. Enacted day-to day through a white gaze, whiteness as the transcendental norm projects fantasies and distortions onto Black bodies (Yancy, 2017). A racialising lens articulates and assembles others as 'not-quite-human' (Weheliye, 2014: 27). The visual field 'is itself a racial formation, an episteme, hegemonic and forceful' and leaves material bodies in the domain of the visually constructed (Butler, 1993b: 207). For Yancy (2017: 44) the body's meaning is 'defined by historically embedded racist practices, discourses, and institutional forces that often remain invisible.'

Affecting lived experience of subjectivity and one's own identity within historic and present-day social relations and racism (Brah, 1996), racialisation occurs at the intersection of the material external world and the embodied interior world. Ahmed (2006: 112) argues that constructs surrounding 'race' are 'an effect of racialisation' where the 'invention of race as if it were "in" bodies shapes what bodies "can do".' Racialisation acts as a focus for understanding that the racialised person cannot entirely discount the process of being racialised.

Spatialised racialisation

There is a need to discuss the processes of racialisation in particular places not because of essential differences on account of race, but because of the way that space has been occupied, or who has passed through (Puwar, 2004). Space cannot be understood ahistorically and bodies cannot be decontextualised. Bourdieu (1999: 128) argues that 'individuals who move into a new space must fulfil the conditions that space tacitly requires of its occupants'. Where spaces have a 'habit' of whiteness, 'bodies [who have] become white' can more easily fulfil what is expected of its occupants (Ahmed, 2006: 129). This leads to 'asymmetric positions in the distribution of the relevant capital' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 145).

Whiteness lends legitimacy to bodies who can take up and inhabit space as their own (Ahmed, 2006). Being white, or 'racially unmarked' translates into an entitlement to be in everyday and public spaces (Puwar, 2004: 11). In contrast 'space invaders' are 'seen in confined terms that lock the body with a set of ideas' (Puwar, 2004: 11; Fanon, 1952). Negotiating who can 'pass' and where, 'demonstrates that passing involves the reopening or restaging of a fractured history of identifications that constitutes the limits to a given subject's mobility' (Ahmed, 2000b: 127). Reified and fixed, perspectives on difference from whiteness, defined expansively to include assumptions hidden within conceptual whiteness, act to distinguish between 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis, 2009: 9). Simultaneously invisible and highly visible racialised space invaders become particularised as representatives of specific rather than universal interests, enduring both a burden of doubt and of representation, and as such subject to surveillance (Puwar, 2004). Possession of capital and ensuing power imbalances which operate in everyday spaces leads to terms of co-existence which favour those who are racially unmarked (Puwar, 2004).

The demographics of the suburbs and 'previously homogeneous white rural spaces' (Chapman and Bhopal, 2019) have changed. There is a disturbance of the status quo as women and racialised minorities now occupy certain places that they have not done in the past (Puwar, 2004). In a context determined by the social interaction and power dynamics including the dynamics around difference, attachment, and exclusion (Ahmed, 2006), visibly embodying difference establishes 'the risk of

feeling […] *out of place'* (Bourdieu, 1999: 128). In racially marked terrain there are effects of place and space which can determine who feels at 'home' and safe (Nayak, 2010; Back, 2005). 'Social spaces and social transactions in which racism permeates' establish boundaries on both the ability of individuals to belong and fit in (Yancy, 2017: xvii).

Although Hirsch (2018) is raised as 'British', Britain is unequivocally her home, English is her first language and her schooling took place in a prestigious London school near the predominantly white, affluent suburb where she lived, Hirsch is not seen as an insider. In the predominantly white space, it is not relevant whether Hirsch (2018) and her parents choose not to foreground race as a defining feature of her identity, they cannot stop processes of racialisation in the spaces in which she operates. She cannot escape impositions of gaze serving to construct meanings associated with perceptions of otherness. Hirsch (2018: 39) 'defined by skin, hair, [and] an unpronounceable name' embodies difference and is therefore assumed to have a 'murky background from a place that was synonymous with barbarity and wretchedness'. Bodily manifestations of difference feed historically devalued visible stigmata of blackness (Mercer, 1994) which Hirsch needs to negotiate and navigate and to establish the terms of 'co-existence' including how to perform girl:

> A permanent and constant consciousness of feeling at odds with my surroundings […] I was that awkward, highly noticeable outsider, and that is what I felt every day of my life, in my own street, my local shops, my school, my ballet and gymnastics classes, the birthday parties, everywhere.

Hirsch describes an interior emotional response to the deleterious impact of embodying otherness in the predominantly white suburb. Hirsch suggests that she is racialised 'everywhere'. In disturbing the status quo, even where there is no intent to exclude, it is difficult to feel at ease or be seen as fully fitting in.

Gendered racialisation

Processes of racialisation change according to the wider context and priorities that are decided upon within whiteness. This is termed 'differential racialisation' in Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017) and suggests that there is a need to extend an understanding of the process of racialisation to include gender (Tate, 2005). Despite being problematic to 'fix' or outline with certainty what the body means, normative judgements use material differences to differentiate between bodies in particular contexts (Butler, 1993a: xi) producing a particular type of idealised body which takes on the function of model or ideal (Grosz, 1994). Gender takes effect through the process of racialisation in conjunction with class. This necessitates an approach accounting for embodied intersectionality in order to see and understand the body as constructed and relational as well as material and encasing (Mirza, 2013).

Material differences between bodies are used to understand the constitution of gender (Butler, 1988, 1990, 1993a; McRobbie, 2009; Paechter, 2011) and race in relation to other bodies (Butler, 1993b; Ahmed, 2006; Yancy, 2017). The social and cultural processes of racialisation and gendering revolve around the body but are not solely constituted within it (Butler, 1993a, 1993b; Alexander and Knowles, 2005; Mirza, 2013). McRobbie (2009) argues that within diverse but every day cultural sources within consumer and popular culture, there are invidious forms of gender re-stabilisation which work through the creation of a 'global girl' figure. In the context of being delineated by 'ordinary meanings', racialised gender is a production of knowledge of and about 'the social', functioning within tacitly and explicitly upheld racial and gendered boundaries. Gender norms operating in conjunction with racialisation processes, go towards determining who can fit in within norms as these are fashioned around hierarchies established in whiteness (Bhopal and Preston, 2014; Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019; Ali, 2003; Ahmed, 2006, 2012; Shain, 2012; Mirza and Meetoo, 2018; Mirza, 1992; Fordham, 2016) and that come to fashion viability as a 'global girl' (McRobbie, 2009).

Within a luminous visibility, the 'global girl' has become associated with capacity, independence, self-reliance, success and attainment, enjoyment and entitlement, social mobility and participation (McRobbie, 2009). Feminism as 'common-sense' functions alongside re-secured boundaries of required femininity. This contains the threat of difference within gender including where 'dominant feminine-whiteness' has been 'an invisible means of rolling back on anti-racism' (McRobbie, 2009: 41). Instead of prompting deep-rooted change, legitimacy is re-established of meanings converging around the 'girl' as a figure who has benefited from feminism and choice (McRobbie, 2009; Paechter, 2018). This has led to patterns of racialised retrenchment within re-configured hegemonic scripts of producing and performing the feminine within an idealised, depoliticised figure of global girl.

There are harsh penalties 'for those who refuse or who are unable to [subject themselves] to those technologies of the self that are constitutive of the spectacularly feminine' (McRobbie, 2009: 60). Collins (2004: 199) argues that 'by definition' Black women cannot attain feminine idealisation 'because the fact of Blackness excludes them.' Whiteness takes effect implicitly through normative constructions of femininity producing exclusions on account of colour (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Beauty norms act to construct the other as inferior to the ideal where 'ideas about beauty and ugliness were and continue to be entangled with the invention and ongoing reinvention of race itself' (Camp, 2015: 690). Within racialised hierarchies, racialised constructions of beauty suggest lesser value and deficiencies to those who fail or cannot attend to norms associated with whiteness. Consequently, those excluded on account of constructions of racial and gendered

otherness, including as these arise in the context of beauty ideals, are prone to 'penalties' (McRobbie, 2009).

Those who fail to 'qualify' as 'white' (Ahmed, 2000b, 2006, 2012) cannot be understood to embody 'perfection' and 'femininity' in school (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019: 2565). Such girls are susceptible to becoming constructed as others, outside of acceptability as this is defined within whiteness and followed up within what constitutes an idealised version of femininity. The gaze utilises and reinforces the stereotypes of what girls are understood to embody, for example the 'strong Black woman' (Collins, 2004; Wyatt, 2008) or a Muslim threat (Shain, 2013; Mirza, 2013; Delgado and Stefancic, 2017). Otherness is underlined where racialised girls are thought to display traits such as strength (Fordham, 1996, 2016), or embody 'loud' Black girls (Fordham, 1993; Morris, 2007), or embodying girlhood in ways that are misconstrued as oppositional to school (Mirza, 1992; Fordham, 2016; Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Those understood this way are seen not to fit within the terms of required (McRobbie, 2009) or normative femininity (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Labelled this way is a form of containment within these constructions and makes it difficult to be seen positively as either individuals or appropriately feminine. Global girl status (McRobbie, 2009) also evades those read as being vulnerable – or 'helpless little [Asian] creatures' (Shain, 2003: 108), incapable, backward or having a cultural deficit on account of an association with their cultural heritage (Shain, 2003, 2010; Mirza and Meetoo, 2018).

School based perceptions of identities remain quite fixed with results for everyday school practices. Certain students become inscribed and re-inscribed as particular types of learners. Identities are not 'interrogated as shifting, non-necessary *constellations* of categorisations', but are seen to constitute 'types' of students and learners 'in the day-to-day practices of schools' (Youdell, 2006: 29-30). Closely linked to perceptions of orientation to school and education, underpinned by student 'biographical identities' and within discourses of ability and intelligence, dichotomous understandings of types of students emerge, creating 'good/bad', 'acceptable/unacceptable' and 'ideal/impossible learners' (Youdell, 2006: 30). Students are treated as 'types' rather than as individuals, and racialised according to reductive ideas associated with a stereotypical set of attributes.

Low expectations of Black girls are informed by a prejudice that they are 'unworthy of high-quality learning experiences' (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro and Id-Deen, 2019: 2548). Despite some localised practices in particular schools which challenge a 'narrow and instrumentalist view of schooling', there is a difficulty 'reversing hegemonic discourse around behaviour management'

(George and Clay, 2013: 2). Wun (2016) argues that there is a much greater propensity to understand Black girls as in need of behaviour management. Constructions of Black girls as 'loud', or 'aggressive' mean that they are contrasted unfavourably to more demure, 'ladylike' girls who express their femininity within constructions of whiteness and middle-class norms (Morris, 2007; Fordham, 1993; Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Gendered processes of objectification and racialisation result in constructions of Black girls as having 'dangerous bodies' (Evans-Winters, with Girls for Gender Equity, 2017: 420). Even when girls attempt to defend themselves against sexual harassment, they are blamed for this and punished. Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen (2019) also found teachers expressing views that suggested that Black girls were to blame for their experiences of racism, sexism and classism.

Although different qualities are imposed on those seen as Asian as opposed to those seen as Black or Mixed-race, through racialisation these students also remain overly determined or fixed to a set of ideas associated with being Asian (Shain, 2003, 2010) or a Muslim (Zine, 2006; Hamzeh, 2011; Shain, 2012) or a hardworking 'model minority' for Indian and Chinese students (Archer and Francis 2007; Sewell, et al., 2021). Stereotypes at play determine teachers' narratives of 'Asian girl' (Shain 2003). Options for Muslim girls are also limited (Shain, 2010). If they refuse stereotypical assumptions of Asian passivity by fighting back (Shain, 2003), they are also compromised through being disassociated from 'nice girl' femininity (Reay, 2001), pointing to an ongoing vulnerability that racialised girls face when they fail to perform according to gendered norms.

Where it is assumed that there is a low value accorded girls' education in Islam, coupled with a visual cue of a headscarf, this leads to assumptions and low teacher expectations and decisions about which teaching sets are appropriate for Muslim girls (Zine, 2006), comparable to the experiences of Black girls. Stereotypes also amplify a construction of Muslim students as dangerous through an association with terrorism, whilst also being over-controlled victims of oppressive cultures (Shain, 2012). Even accounting for ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994) or expansion of pre-existing stereotypes of being Asian due to Islamophobia, this complicated picture retains the containment of Asian girls within negative stereotypes but does not necessarily override the 'model minority' discourse of Asian girls which assumes that they are quiet and hard-working. Archer and Francis (2007) found that on account of their academic 'success', it is commonly assumed that 'model minorities' do not encounter any substantial inequalities. Although there are differences in the way that racism affects the school lives depending on their racial group, Archer and Francis (2007: 151) found that it remains a feature of the lived experience of those who are subject even to 'negative positive' stereotyping and racialised accordingly.

2.3.3. White privilege and structural racism

Instead of a sole focus on individual interpersonal manifestations, the impact of race, racialisation and racism also need to be analysed at a structural and institutional level. Structural racism is the collective effect of bias, or how 'racism is weaved into the fabric of our world' (Eddo-Lodge, 2017: 65). Within Critical Race Theory, there is an acknowledgement of power structures rooted in political and economic systems. Critical Race Theory points to a need to problematise the invisibility of features which buttress structural and institutional racism.

Inequalities continue to exist because of 'processes of racism, exclusion and marginalisation in which white identities are prioritised and privileged' (Bhopal, 2018: 1). Those in possession of most privilege or capital through closest proximity to elite or middle-class white normativity establish the terms of difference and acceptability (Gillborn, 2010). The majority find it easier to access favour and privilege, through being seen as 'normal' and closer to ideals (in terms of beauty, intelligence and behaviour) defined within whiteness (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). This perpetuates a cycle where 'normalcy' lends an ability to secure further privilege and favour in institutions which operate in the existing socio-economic order (Apple, 1995). Those who are most racially privileged, or those unmarked by racial difference, can deny the centrality of race. Within a world structured around whiteness, white privilege can remain obscured with those in possession of white privilege not needing to acknowledge it (Mills, 1997). White privilege offsets the ability to disentangle the complexity of consequences of a system which has emerged from a white European colour-based ideology and the global impact of colonialism (Taylor, 2016).

Intersectional analysis is important within Critical Race Theory. As the source of privilege there are distinctions within whiteness, or hierarchies within whiteness as this intersects with class privilege (Gillborn, 2010). There are also particular white identities such as those of gypsy and travellers who are seen to represent an 'unacceptable shade of whiteness' (Bhopal, 2018: 46). However, Leonardo (2004) argues that it is important that considerations of the limits of white privilege are not used to disguise systemic racial domination. There is the perpetuation of a system which has negative implications for some white people on account of cultural or ethnic background or class, but which those with greatest ability in terms of power and class privilege fail to adjust or overturn. Citing Mills (2003: 190), Gillborn (2008: 10) suggests that 'within the English education system', there is also evidence of:

> Pervasive patterns of not seeing and not knowing – structured white ignorance, motivated inattention, self-deception, historical amnesia, and moral rationalization.

Although there are distinctions in privilege accorded to different people, and intersectional analysis encourages a refusal of simplistic binaries, or reductionist categorisation, overarching definitional and hierarchical frames of reference and power remain concentrated within certain domains of whiteness. These manifestations of privilege are structured into the workings of educational institutions. Over time these have been sustained, allowing for continuity of systemic and structural biases to be replicated rather than challenged. Although these processes are masked, the actions that underpin the structural dimensions of power continue to maintain the racial biases underpinning the status quo. In the service of existing hierarchies of power, institutional racism can remain largely unacknowledged and deniable within an 'unmarked ideology' which underpins the contemporary racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2018: 53).

Within a widespread denial of the legacy of racism in determining continuing structural disadvantage, Bonilla-Silva (2018: 3) suggests that:

> contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through "new racism" practices that are subtle, institutional, and apparently non-racial.

It is difficult to counteract racial inequality despite its ongoing effect because the practices which continue to substantiate its effect are subtle, institutional and seem to have a universal scope rather than be targeted at racialised groups. Having introduced 'colour-blind' policies, institutions misrecognise the 'current racial regime', an institutional sightlessness which leads to 'racism without racists' but leaves institutions well placed to safeguard 'the racial order' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018: 205).

'Fairness' and 'rationality' are prominent pillars of the discursive construction within an organisational commitment to 'diversity' (Ahmed, 2012). Where reasonable-ness is accepted as a given, this frames racism as something that is estranged from the character of those accepted and behaving acceptably within the organisation:

> In this narrative, racism is projected onto strangers; racists are estranged from national character (if we are racist, then we are unlike ourselves). Racism also becomes understood as accident (as if every now and then, it just happens) as well as being anachronistic, a sign of a time that is no longer, as that which plays no part in contemporary British experience or even as that which was never British (Ahmed, 2012: 48).

Within the context of a white privilege, these explanatory parameters are important. They work to contradict a narrative which argues that there is a fundamental problem at the heart of the system. Treating racism as an 'anachronistic' aberration perpetuates a denial of institutional racism as characteristic of the organisation. This belies the potential impact of whiteness as determining the environment and the attendant benefits and value of white, middle-class cultural capital. Coupled with an overt and visible welcoming of diversity, the status of racism as uncharacteristic offsets the

need for organisations to recognise that they need to embed change towards equity and inclusion, or that structural racism persists.

A stated goal of Critical Race Theory in education is to examine issues of race, gender and class in order to overturn ahistorical and decontextualised approaches to understand racism in particular educational institutions (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). Schools are operated and organised without acknowledgement that racism is 'a fundamental defining characteristic of the education system' (Gillborn, 2006b: 335). This includes a denial of structural and institutional racism as endemic and evolving, and that intent (as opposed to a legacy of institutional racism) is critical to design racism into the system (Gillborn, 2006a, Bhopal, 2018). Despite the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992; Gillborn, 2018), and continued inequality, it remains institutionally possible to look away from the centrality of white privilege in determining institutional culture (Gillborn (2005, 2006b, 2010, 2018). This leads to institutional failure to challenge persistent power hierarchies, maintaining a culture which excludes and normalises hostile terms of engagement. Disparities in educational experiences based on race have been noted (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000), but there has been a failure to overhaul the systemic underpinning of inequity and injustice (Gillborn, 2018). This occurs alongside a continued impact on girls in school on account of enduring systemic processes as these serve prevailing power hierarchies and dynamics (Paechter, 2018).

Deeply embedded processes of racism and exclusion have not been sufficiently challenged and continue to operate in an education system which continues to privilege whiteness (Gillborn, 2008). Policies aimed at addressing inequality have been superseded, 'evacuated of all critical content', replaced with nominally neutral or de-politicised campaigns orientated towards managerialist priorities of school effectiveness and improvement (Gilborn, 2006a: 27). Gillborn (2015) suggests that there has been a political drive to position race equality as largely irrelevant, potentially damaging to racial harmony and even racist to a responsible and fair-minded white majority. Within a Critical Race Theory framework this turn away from race as a way of explaining disparity, and a denial of racism as structured institutionally can be further explored within the concepts of interest convergence, divergence and retrenchment (Gillborn, 2018).

Interest convergence, divergence and retrenchment
Within Critical Race Theory, Bell (1980) suggests that progress towards racial equality is only possible when drives to do so are aligned to white interests. Bell (1980) terms this 'interest convergence', a feature of systemic whiteness which acts to mask the permanence of racism since progress is not sustained over time (Bell, 1992). Interest convergence denies and exacerbates many forms of racism, overlooking manifestations of discrimination centred on racialised meanings arising in the context of

the application of historic but persistent racial hierarchies but also those centred on gender and class.

A failure to embed equality goals, acting in conjunction with a failure to acknowledge how racism morphs (Gillborn, 2018), means that there has not been constant and consistent structural change to overturn white privilege and systemic biases (Gillborn, 2005). Schools are operated and organised without acknowledgement that racism is 'a fundamental defining characteristic of the education system' (Gillborn, 2006b: 335). Instead, as set out in Critical Race Theory, there is a cycle of interest convergence, interest divergence and a reclamation of ground ceded to equality. This cycle is critical to understand the 'wider dynamics of racism in contemporary education policy and practice', retrenchment rather than unerring progress towards securing racial justice (Gillborn, 2018: 73).

For Gillborn (2010) the structuring of white middle class advantage leads to a need to theorise white victim discourse as a mode of interest convergence as defined within Critical Race Theory. A strategic mobilisation of white interests occurs in the context of class antagonism. White working-class children are simultaneously presented as the education system's 'race victims' alongside the discourse of white working-class degeneracy. Although this discourse perpetrates material and symbolic violence against white working-class people, they prosper from their whiteness through a realignment of policy and supporting finances to be redirected towards their 'underachievement'. Since changes implemented by the Coalition Government from 2010 onwards, race equality funding is no longer ring-fenced with many areas of England cutting or withdrawing funding completely (Gillborn, 2014, 2015). White working-class boys therefore present a buffer to the white middle-classes within a strategic mobilisation of white interests as resources are directed away from policy initiatives aimed at diminishing racial, gender and disability inequality. Within interest convergence around whiteness, moves towards instituting an emphasis on white people comes about at the expense of measures that had once been in place to advance race equality and anti-racism. In addition, white middle class 'normality' remains a source for celebration and benchmarking, the standard by which everyone else is to be judged.

Critical Race Theory identifies that interest divergence is a pivot point where concerns that mask white interests, coalesced around a shared goal, begin to diverge. This can be exemplified by the difference in judgement between those who identify the ongoing need to tackle the impact of institutional racism, and those who welcome a structural shift which decentres race as a source of concern broadly across society. The Macpherson Report (1999) into the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and the Metropolitan Police Force's subsequent failings tried to hold institutions to account by setting out a definition of institutional racism. The Report set out an institutional

responsibility to offset problematic cultures which gave rise to inadequate responses, impairing the ability of the institution to deliver fairness and equity, and which even encouraged individual acts of racism. Macpherson stressed the need to deliver improvements which were seen to be necessary to combat institutional racism, and this led to the introduction of institutional policies aimed at driving equality.

Despite the Macpherson Report (1999) being suggestive of interest convergence, the longer-term perspective suggests that it has been followed by interest divergence, occurring at an institutional level. Although many assumed that there have been sufficient gains made to racial justice following the Macpherson Report, Kapoor (2013: 1029) argues that since the report 'there has been a drastic escalation of the muting of race, which makes it near impossible to name, to identify and thus to redress racisms.' Moreover, the need and impetus to address structural racism remains absent within public and institutional discourse (Bhopal, 2018).

Interest divergence is critical to understand how long-term impediments to racial progress persist despite initiatives aimed at enhancing approaches to diversity, equality and fairness in schools. Building on a long-term failure to prioritise and focus on injustice, conventional forms of anti-racism have proven unable to keep pace with the development of increasingly racist and exclusionary education polices that operate beneath a veneer of professed tolerance and diversity (Gillborn, 2006a). Within a need to protect white identities in schools, Myers and Bhopal (2017: 141) argue that an 'unhealthy dominance' of white privilege has renewed a culture of complacency post Macpherson.

Over time institutions have entrenched the discursive construction of the 'racist' or of racism as an aberration (Ahmed, 2012). Instead of being understood as something with deeply rooted societal and institutional causes, racism is decontextualised, seen as a departure from the normal day to day workings of institutions, something which happens because of individuals who act outside of societal norms or institutional codes. Where racism occurs, it is seen as the consequence of individual acts of prejudice as opposed to being an outcome of structural biases (Ahmed, 2012). This diminishes the responsibility to address systemic failures and structures, allowing institutional discrimination to continue.

Within institutions there has been an occlusion of understanding race as a category that continues to structure experience. Through partial, individualised, and fractured accounts of racialised experience, institutions adopt a lexicon of 'difference', 'diversity', 'inclusion' and 'opportunity' to mask a complex racialised world in which discrimination and inequality continue to feature (Alexander and Knowles, 2005). Without much impetus to act to secure greater equality and social

justice, tokenistic responses, claims of meritocracy, and citing the measures in place to welcome diversity within organisations stand in for action (Ahmed, 2012). Organisations manage their external relations by managing their image. Organisations change their image to be seen as more expansive and welcoming. According to Ahmed (2012: 34):

> Diversity becomes about *changing perceptions of whiteness rather than changing the whiteness of organisations.* Changing perceptions of whiteness can be how an institution can reproduce whiteness, as that which exists but is no longer perceived.

An organisation seeks to realign its image. But not to bring about structural change. Instead the drive is to change the perception of what the organisation represents. Changing the dominant representational depiction, from one of overwhelming whiteness to representing a more mixed picture of those in the organisation becomes a means by which to change the appearance and outside perceptions of the organisation.

A discourse of 'whiteness' retains its centrality and its power to determine the terms of engagement in the organisation (Puwar, 2004). Institutions remain able to reproduce whiteness without being seen to be mono-culturally white (Ahmed, 2012). Despite policies and protocols suggestive that there is institutional commitment to inclusion and diversity, there is no actual shift in power dynamics in institutions. Power is retained by majority stakeholders who continue to operationalise relational dimensions within existing racialised, gendered, heteronormative and class hierarchies.

Within processes of interest divergence, institutions remain unaware of processes which structure exclusion. There is an institutional failure to re-evaluate problems rooted within institutional whiteness and hierarchies. The issue of what stops 'them from reaching us' is framed around the other as having a problem with their perception, an issue of 'certain communities' perceiving the institution to be excluding them (Ahmed, 2012: 35). Within cultural as opposed to biological renderings of difference, 'community' is a euphemism for race. This, Ahmed (2012) argues, relocates the problem away from organisational whiteness. The predominance of whiteness is not identified as an institutional issue but seen as a problem resting with the perception of those who are not included within whiteness.

Discursive legitimacy for 'not seeing race', or the difference or colour of individual students decontextualises what happens in and around the classroom and leads to teachers avoiding 'difficult' conversations (Chapman, 2013). Barriers to speaking of the reality of racism leads to schools treating incidents as though they are one-off (Kumashiro,2000). Within a context where harm is normalised, there is a lack of a facility for racialised students to get help, support, advocacy or resources, and instead they are re-inscribed as the problem (Kumashiro, 2000).

Where there is a propensity to deny the impact of racialisation and racism, institutional whiteness continues to be seen as benign and inclusive. In areas with low numbers of minority ethnic people, mainly white schools see themselves as having 'no problem here' (Gaine, 1987; 1995). Whiteness remains both privileged but also hard to discern in terms of impact and intent. Even when exposed, a 'dominant perception' is that people who are not white are the cause of racism, as in their absence, the 'problem' would not arise. This does not lead to a perception of a need to act to root out racism since:

> the causes of the contagion were at a safe distance. There may be unpalatable things *said*, but there was 'no problem' (Gaine, 2005: 1).

'Unpalatable' things include the 'n-word' and the 'p-word', but 'white' schools become places which blame the other for their experience of racism, whilst also maintaining that there is no underlying problem with racism.

It is difficult for those operating inside of privilege to perceive where the injury of speech or certain acts lies (Butler, 1997). Predetermined terms of engagement, including the right to use hostile language about different groups of people, or treatment resulting from negative assumptions and expectations, results in 'hidden injuries' (Osajima, 1993; Fordham, 1996, 2016).

Failing to offset marginalisation and inequality (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019) affects what is prioritised and delivered within individual institutions. Differentiated access to resources as well as discursive constructions of otherness, institutionalised in the curriculum and pastoral support structures, reinforces inequality but also structures a hostile environment in schools. Students operate within existing 'structural arrangements that impede equality and fairness' (Crozier, 2014: 33). Following delegitimisation of institutional racism as a concern, and a retreat from the Macpherson Report (Gillborn, 2008), education policy remains culpable in the continuation of active structuring of racial inequality (Gillborn, 2014) representing interest divergence and retrenchment as part of the cycle of interest convergence, divergence and retrenchment set out in Critical Race Theory.

There has also been an 'institutionalization of racism' made legitimate through the discourse associated with the 'War on Terror' (Kapoor, 2013; Bhopal, 2018) underpinned by the racism of anti-terrorist rhetoric and policy (Taylor, 2020; Brown, 2019; Qurashi, 2018; Rashid, 2016). This has resulted in increased numbers of expressions of 'gendered Islamophobia' where visibly Muslim women or those wearing a veil or headscarf are targeted (Awan and Zempi, 2015). Beyond a failure to champion social justice, the 'Prevent' and 'British values' agenda have served to amplify a role for

schools to pursue policies which marginalise students on account of any perceived association with Islam, and which equate Britishness with whiteness:

> The fragile gains made in the wake of the Macpherson Report and the Race Relations Amendment Act of 2000 imposing a duty on schools to promote race equality, have been eroded […through] refocusing on 'fundamental British values', a narrowing of the curriculum, and the inculcation of an exclusionary and utilitarian version of citizenship which has pushed issues of race equality and diversity to the margins (Alexander, Weekes-Bernard, Arday, 2015: 4).

Specific responsibilities placed on schools in England to report and monitor racist incidents have been removed, extending obstacles to those who would have liked to use the Race Relations Amendment Act's duties to 'press for action' (Trade Union Congress, 2013: 12, cited Bhopal, 2018: 108). This discourages schools from taking responsibility for unequal experiences and harmful expressions of white privilege (Bhopal, 2018). This has amounted to an amplification of 'hostile spaces', with an absence of adult support, the use of stereotypes, deficit frameworks and surveillance, and increases in the likelihood of anxiety and 'battle fatigue' for students in predominantly white schools (Chapman and Bhopal, 2019: 1117).

Within a reinvigorated discussion of British identity, schools have become part of wider contestations about belonging, identity and borders, within a heavily centralising agenda of citizenship and tackling extremism (Alexander and Weekes-Bernard, 2017). The National Curriculum has been overhauled to install an increased emphasis on 'traditional' subjects and teaching methods, overturning the drive towards more expansive aspects of the curriculum (Alexander and Weekes-Bernard, 2017; Atkinson et al., 2018). In the context of politicisation of citizenship education and school history, using a colonial and Eurocentric lens to understand 'our island story' (Gove, 2010) bolsters an ideological notion of Britishness which is closely associated with whiteness. Where 'racism in Britain has often denied black life here in any historical dimension [and limits] what can count as authentic British history' (Gilroy, 2011: 23), the exclusion of a wider story of Britishness continues to distance many English people from parts of their past that are considered problematic or difficult (Atkinson et al., 2018, Doharty, 2018). Centring whiteness in what counts as critical British history also excludes positive stories of racialised peoples' contributions to Britishness and British life (Gilroy, 2011).

Reductionist thinking about race, Islam and gender continue to shape how educational issues, problems, and solutions are understood. Institutional responsibility to tackle racism and sexism is deflected by the tendency to regard student 'types' as the source of a problem rather than consider the context or processes afoot in school (Shain, 2013). There remains a lack of understanding that as racialised and gendered girls, students confront social issues due to generational racism, sexism,

class oppression, and trauma, and that educational policy often overlooks individuals that need advocacy and protection (Evans-Winters, Hines, Moore, and Jones, 2018). Black girls are seen as in need of punishment for being their authentic selves intellectually, physically, creatively, and emotionally (Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews, 2020).

Mirza and Meetoo (2018) found a lack of synergy between the Muslim girls they studied and the girls' schools. Young Muslim women are subjected to embodied surveillance of their dress and a focus on their religious 'honour' by their schools who fail to see a need to focus on Muslim students' negative experiences in the cultural and social space of their school. Based on a lack of knowledge of the girls' actual concerns, Mirza and Meetoo found that this translated into inadequate efforts to tackle the girls' experience of school-based racist and sexist bullying. Moreover, a failure to identify the salient features of Muslim girls' lived experience of hostility in school occurs against a backdrop of a lack of training and a focus on other Governmental based initiatives including Prevent and safeguarding against the schools' perception of a threat to girls from their own community. In the context of a 'dominant racist Islamophobic policy frame', if Muslim girls are seen as vulnerable, this is with reference to their cultural background, not to the racism and sexism that is experienced in school (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018: 236; Shain, 2012). Consequently, although they might be understood as vulnerable, this is not associated with their proximity to a fragility associated with white femininity but is defined in cultural terms. Muslim girls are more likely to be seen as in need of 'fixing'.

Research evidence highlights that deficit frameworks also function to the detriment of Black girls in school. Black girls are not seen to warrant compassion and protection in comparison to their white counterparts (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Instead, they are more likely to be subject to punishment for disciplinary breaches as defined formally and informally by adults and their non-black peers (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015). Adversely affected by disciplinary practices in schools, Black girls are removed from the classroom within suspension or expulsion procedures (Evans-Winters, Hines, Moore, and Jones, 2018). Wun (2016: 738) found that black girls were 'vulnerable to racialized and gendered forms of discipline *and* punishment.' It is difficult to assert that the Black girls' experiential knowledge is legitimate in contrast to that of their white counterparts. Black girls are more readily excluded from frames of innocence, and instead there is a predispositions of guilt since 'black innocence is a structural impossibility' (Wun, 2016: 744). White teachers 'gloss over issues of race, racism, and white supremacy in ways that reinforce the status quo, even when they have a stated desire to do the opposite' (Haviland, 2008: 41).

Comparable to Mirza's (1992) research, Diamond, Lewis and Gordon (2007) found little evidence of 'oppositional culture' as a suitable explanation with which to explain discrepancies in achievement between white and non-white groups in school. But within a Critical Race theoretical framework of retrenchment, using this construct of an 'oppositional culture' undercuts the legitimacy of a counter narrative of systemic failings. Through blaming an oppositional culture to school, persistently deleterious rates of exclusion can be explained without a need to point to ingrained systemic racism, as well as racialised sexism and classism. There is little room for counteracting this narrative within established interpretative pathways because it refers back to long held 'common sense' readings of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Since disparities are not surprising to those who might look into them, as they fit within racialised thinking patterns, these are 'glossed over' instead of exploring why, for example, Black girls are disciplined in schools at rates higher than their white male and female peers. There is a 'hidden toll' of race that penalises, over-disciplines and pushes-out girls of colour (Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda, 2015), serving to protect white interests, including white people's comfort (DiAngelo, 2011, 2018) and safety (Butler, 1993b, 2009). Moreover, the denial of the role that race plays in underpinning teachers' responses is further indicative of the 'institutionalization of racism' (Chapman, 2013: 614) and retrenchment.

2.3.4. Resistance

The everyday circumstances in which people live affects their material social practices. These circumstances also provide information with which people can work out what opportunities are available to them to shape, reconfigure and reimagine themselves and their possibility within and beyond this context. Decisions are made by the 'space invader' about how to fit in, 'play the game' and manage responses to racism and sexism (Puwar, 2004). The position of the other on the periphery allows a 'perception advantage' (Rollock, 2012) which can provide the platform for different forms of resistance. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 209) suggest that:

> otherness stimulates a sort of permanent sociological vigilance. It helps you perceive things that others cannot see or feel.

Although embodying the other inside a space has challenges, Back (2005: 40-41) shows how Bengali girls combine 'available forms of social knowledge to project a map and find a way through' as a way of navigating the complexity of habitat and what they called a 'racist place'. Showing 'vigilance' in their context and driven by a desire to recuperate within and re-work aspects of containment, the girls make sense of the world.

Together with and arising in the context of Black and post colonialist feminist ways of knowing and valuing subjugated knowledge, Critical Race Theory is also a useful framework for conceptualising

resistance. Establishing a critique (Ahmed, 2014a) based on insights of inter-personal relationships and environmental features facilitates resistance based on practices oriented around safety, agency, 'navigation' and recuperation. Girls are not simply victims of racism, sexism or multiple intersections of power hierarchies (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015) but decision makers whose resistance sees them act on information that they glean to recuperate possibility for themselves.

Resistance acts as a central analytical concept with which to account for individual agency and prevailing power relations, and how these contribute diverse dimensions of racialised (and gendered and classed) experience within schools (Shain, 2003; Fordham 1996; 2016; Mirza, 1992, Zine, 2000). Understanding resistance as complex, relational, interactional and situated suggests that there will be variation in expressions of resistance in school, taking account of constraints and possibility. Viewed on a continuum, with room for fluidity and choice between overt and subtle realignments around accommodation and survival, this theorisation builds on considerations of resistance as particularly class-based and oppositional (Willis, 1977); as needing to consider explicitly gendered manifestations (McRobbie and Garber, 1993); and beyond reductive biological and culturalist conceptions of race (Gilroy, 1990; Shain, 2003). Reductive understandings of race deny a wider understanding of agency working to overcome heterogeneous and evolving forms of racism, and potentially shrink both symbolic and physical sites for resistance (Gilroy, 1990). Within theorising resistance, there is also a need to appreciate the emotional labour necessary 'to protect oneself from the consequences of being the sore point' (Ahmed, 2012: 157).

Since teachers and other school officials 'cling' to perceptions about how African American young people should respond to their school's attempts to transform young people's aspiration, motivation and achievement, Fordham (1996: 94-5) identifies a need to resist through avoiding the 'compulsory nature of assimilation'. Shain (2010) and Mirza and Meetoo (2018) found a similar imperative in the UK regarding Asian girls and Muslim girls respectively. In the context of a persistence of symbolic violence and colour-based prejudice in school, and a lack of perceived need for any institutional questioning of its own response or authority, it is easy for girls' resistance to be misread. Where girls are seen as behaving against the 'appropriate' norm of white, middle-class, feminised versions of 'girlhood' (McRobbie, 2009) they are regarded as oppositional and deviant in relation to the dominant school culture. The most acceptable way to perform girlhood is within the demarcated space of assimilation; for example, Shain (2003) shows how 'survivor' girls model 'global girl' imperatives (McRobbie, 2009). Any attempt to resist this imperative is seen as unacceptable oppositional resistance. Therefore, within dominant discourses in their schools, Shain (2003) found that Asian girls deploy different strategies of resistance, which encompass or run in parallel with 'coping' strategies for 'survival' or 'identity formation' in school in Britain (Shain, 2003: 53). These

strategies are not exhaustive or static but vary over time and are context specific. Whichever form of resistance the girls deploy, Shain (2003) found that these strategies remain necessary even where there are sizeable Asian populations in the school, in part because of relatively fixed and static pathologised conceptions of Asian culture. Whilst the girls critique their culture and families to varying degrees, many do not fully resist parental influence as a home culture is often seen as offering important support and as a positive source of identity formation in the face of institutional and individual hostility to the girls' culture, and assimilationist imperatives (Shain, 2003, 2010). Since self-recovery is necessary but can be misrepresented, Critical Race Theory's understanding of the value of counter-narratives and hearing different viewpoints is key. It facilitates theorising resistance in terms of potential and possibility as opposed to accepting reductive conceptualisations of resistance as oppositional.

Bolstering understandings of resistance beyond structural considerations and present-day contexts increases the potential for breaching fixity, producing new knowledge including renewing renditions of history, power, teleology, and evocations of what it is to be human (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha (1994: 126) suggests that manoeuvring through 'cultural, racial and historical difference' can challenge 'the narcissistic demand' of the white gaze. This offers opportunities to expand the discursive terrain into a relatively freer liminal 'Third Space', establishing the possibility to re-imagine how containment can be breached including a future orientation as an imaginary and emotional resource and site of resistance. Such intentional reworking engages a possibility of defiance and disruption, beyond that which might be understood as oppositional.

Working out what everyday experience means occurs through exploration of memory (Ali, 2012; Weiss, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Mirza, 2015). For Ali (2012) remembering is not a space of confinement but offers the opportunity for an individualised realignment and ordering of an unruly past. Memory 'work' also builds a type of knowledge which affords vulnerability. Humanising narratives that speak to an individual's vulnerability entail risk. But so too does remaining unintelligible. At the risk of being misunderstood Lorde (1977: 40) accepts:

> that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That speaking profits me, beyond any other effect.

Lorde speaks as a form of resistance. This offers her the prospect of resisting accepting an external imposition on who she is and can be. Although capable of being bruised or injured 'the body's vulnerability' is not 'reducible to its injurability' (Butler, 2009: 34). Therefore, a refusal to be reduced to a site of potential injury or hurt is a form of resistance.

Seeing a need for 'recovery', hooks (1989:31) argues that 'when we are dominated', and voices are silenced and suppressed, it is difficult to gather a collective voice about the value of the individual:

> Domination and colonization attempt to destroy our capacity to know the self, to know who we are. We oppose this violation, this dehumanization, when we seek self-recovery, when we work to reunite fragments of being, to recover our history. This process of self-recovery enables us to see ourselves as if for the first time, for our field of vision is no longer shaped and determined solely by the conditions of domination.

Instead of succumbing to 'the conditions of domination' experienced as a 'violation' which impairs knowledge, engaging in self-recovery is a form of resistance. This resistance engenders individual empowerment and freedom. Instead of a propensity for loss at the margins, resistance accommodates a self that is no longer bound by the dehumanisation of gendered and racialised alienation emanating from whiteness as a definitional centre.

Self-definition

People are not determined by the cultures and context in which they operate, nor are they completely divorced from the dominant ideologies surrounding whiteness that shape both culture and context. Without any disavowal of the realities of racism, Hall (1992b) sees a need to recuperate from limitations placed on the meaning of difference according to colour, culture and ethnicity as interpreted through systematised racialised hierarchies and stereotypes. Highlighting the 'transactional' dimension in deciphering who a person is, Spivak (1986: 38) argues that she is 'deeply suspicious of any determinist or positivist definition of identity' preferring to understand ways in which it is contingent, rather than 'fixed' by language or location:

> I don't think one can pretend to imitate adequately that to which one is bound…There's lots of cross-hatchings and interruptions. If one looks at what one has done, from the distance, then it seems to me that like everyone else I am absolutely plural.

Spivak stresses the impossibility of a singularly defined self. She spells out a necessity to consider context and the interactional including the limits and possibilities of language in which the self is formed, re-forms and can resist ways in which it is free or bound to perform. Through understanding identity as in continual and interrupted formulation and as multifarious and embodied, resisting can be understood as a means through which the individual establishes a sense of identity. The emerging self negotiates the impositions of outside constructions of their identity.

Butler (2001: 27) interrogates how an individual can reformulate themselves when she writes of the necessity of discursive agency in exploring subjectivity and personhood in relation to:

> a bodily referent here, a condition of me, that I can point to, but I cannot narrate precisely, even though there are no doubt stories about where my body went and what it did and did

not do…exposure, like the operation of the norm, constitutes the conditions of my own emergence and knowability…I am always recuperating, reconstructing, even as I produce myself differently in the very act of telling.

Performing oneself is not a singular bodily enactment but it is repetitious and experienced within a pre-existing linguistic order (Butler, 2001; Spivak, 1986) and within a psychic and affective domain (Butler, 1990; Ahmed, 2014a). There is still more that may not be known consciously at one point in time but may come to the fore through talk or telling. Identity is always in part a narrative, always in part 'a kind of representation' (Hall, 1997c: 202) and as such identity is neither sealed nor complete but an on-going project (Spivak, 1986; Butler, 2001; Ali, 2012). Narratives and stories help shape our sense of who we are (Appiah, 2018; Ali, 2012). As the site of lived experience, the self retells narratives, as Walkerdine (1990: xiv) suggests with reference to schoolgirls:

> Underneath stories of quiet little girls are murderous fantasies. These are not there because they are essential to the female body or psyche but because the stories of our subjugation do not tell the whole truth: our socialization does not work.

In the 'stories' are fantasies, and a possibility to refuse norms and recuperate the self. For Spillers (1987: 65) the stories we tell provide an opportunity to marvel at 'inventiveness', offering greater insights into embodied realities as far from fixed or predictable.

Although embodiment and lived experience limit the body's independence within gendered, racialised and classed hierarchies, bodies are not inert. As a consequence of interaction between domains of self and convention, the body operates inside the discursive, not as a passive recipient but as an agent of bodily constitution. Butler (1988: 484) argues that:

> the "I" that is its body is, of necessity, a mode of embodying, and the "what" that it embodies is possibilities.

The body cannot be reduced to matter but must be understood as becoming its 'self' in particular contexts. The body serves as a conduit between the self, society and culture. Theorising resistance therefore includes choices concerning the material and performative body. This enables an exploration of a reconfigured concept of 'agency' within particular contexts and constraints.

Despite both the structural and discursive context, bodies are not mechanistically inscribed by oppression to perform in particular ways. Both gender and race are difficult to script (Hartman, 1997; Butler, 1988, 2004). As Butler (1988: 488) argues with reference to gender:

> As a public action and performative act, gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects a merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual […]. The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly

pre-given cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies.

Within each multifarious domain, including race, gender and class, there are differences in presentation including through gesture, posture, and movement but also in the way that girls in school, negotiate, resist and act within the multiple discourses that impact on their identities and their lived experience (Youdell, 2006).

Self-determination

Within Black feminist tradition, how it is possible to re-establish autonomy over the interplay between self and 'oppression' can be seen as a communal project of resistance. In learning about how to navigate the past and present-day constraints, sharing individual experience enables the individual to derive some collective strength through a communal understanding of that experience and history. Mirza (2015: 7) characterises this as 'harvesting collective intelligence', a dynamic way of knowing which takes place in the spaces between whiteness and marginality in order 'to navigate the tricky terrain of racialisation and its bureaucratic technologies of concealment'. Individual resistance builds on the possibilities for an ethical and communal reckoning based on subjugated knowledge of oppression. It involves strategically negotiating the fictions perpetuated in a discourse of diversity whilst highlighting ongoing material realities which underpin understanding race and racialisation.

Resistance in this formulation is an attempt to enhance autonomy and galvanise the expansive potential for forging change based on a communal oppositional knowledge. This form of knowledge fosters 'group self-definition' and 'self-determination' (Collins, 1998: 279). Through becoming 'willful' (Ahmed, 2014b) modes of resistance centred on the imperatives for 'self-preservation and protection' can be developed including 'authenticity' within a wider context of whiteness and racism (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent and Ball, 2015: 25):

> The parameters of Black authenticity are constantly being remade as racism becomes more covert and complex and as Black people develop increasingly sophisticated tools and resources to navigate mainly White spaces.

Authenticity is a form of resistance acting from a sense of self not demarcated through negative perceptions and experiences but acknowledging the value of a cultural identity as defined for oneself and through a collective sense derived from a communal sense of one's identity. This version of authenticity is not imposed, nor is it an attempt to subsume individuality within a group identity. It enables an individual resistance from a position of collective strength, more than might otherwise be possible given the backdrop of racism. Talking back to an experience of being discriminated against, South African artist and activist Muholi (2013) suggests that not to resist constraints on their

existence would mean that they are 'short-changing' themselves. Muholi resists the constraints or boundaries that could stifle their authenticity, self-expression and creativity. Offering oneself authority to be oneself resists containment and asserts a right to live more expansively on self-determining terms.

Individual Asian girls actively 'produce' their identities reacting to a host of different cultural impulses and contexts (Shain, 2003) as do Black (Fordham, 2016) and mixed-race girls (Ali, 2003). In school, Black girls' own narratives bring resilience and agency into focus in contrast to more dominant negative accounts of their supposed cultural or social deficiency (Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010). This disrupts the presumed accuracy of single-story accounts of all black (Mirza, 1992), Asian (Shain, 2003; 2010), Muslim (Hamzeh, 2011; Mirza and Meetoo 2018; Zine 2006) or mixed-race (Ali, 2003) girls. In the Australian context, breaching of an imposition and opting for a more authentic expression of self is of consequence for Pacific Islander girls as their identities cannot be separated from their context and they are 'complexly constituted in the scene' (Youdell, 2012: 150). Alongside elements of erasure, the Pacific Islander girls are 'too visibly implicated in school resistance to be properly feminine' within normative terms. Nonetheless Youdell (2006: 173) appreciates that 'unacceptable' learners (or girls) are not simply constituted as fixed subject positions, they are also capable of resisting 'such constitutions and […] deploy discourse to constitute themselves *again differently.* That is, students have been shown to act with discursive agency and deploy performative politics.' Therefore, in taking up their 'discursive agency' or talking back to established modes of representation, the students who take part in an annual multicultural 'event', can 'benefit' from 'subject-hood itself' as Youdell (2012: 152) suggests:

> Their practices of self are practices of self-identification; the recognition and misrecognition, and even the disavowal that their practices invoke are constitutive, even if the subjects recognised and so constituted are not the subjects these students wish to be.

There may be limits on self-determination and the success of talking back to stereotypes and assumptions, which remain fixed in the here and now. But within existing constraints, this discursive agency and creating space to constitute oneself goes beyond survival as resistance within the confines of a present-day school system.

Connectivity through shared understandings and commonality serves as an important prompt to reflect on the self in context and develop strategies for self-love and building a community (Walker, 1983; Combahee River Collective; Lorde, 1984). Black feminist theorists understand that developing community is a critical site for the emergence of self. In so doing, the self comes to embody the communal, the 'us' (Nash, 2019), disrupting individualistic and narrow understandings of success (Emejulu and Sobande, 2019) through a variety of creative practices centred on talking back (hooks,

1989) through 'embodied artistic expression' (Uzor, 2019: 259) and storytelling (Graham, 2019; Boom, 2019). This is a framing of resistance as based on a practical application of Black feminist knowledge and suggests that deploying different and additional resources acts as a mode of survival, sustenance, empowerment and self-transformation. It suggests that resistance can be considered as everyday practice that sustains a sense of hope and possibility, and a need to centre on different forms of self-care (hooks, 2003).

Knowing 'the self' within a group identity has implications for styling the body. Through a knowing refusal to simply attempt to conform or fit in with majority culture, beauty and clothing choices occur within knowledges that arise from communal connections and negotiating self-determination practices. This takes different forms, for example, deciding to wear a scarf or hijab involves interpreting what that means as an individual within a visible affiliation to a group identity (Zine, 2001; Rasmussen, 2013) as does choosing to straighten hair or choosing natural hair over other more institutionally acceptable styles (Dabiri, 2019; Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly, 2018; Ali, 2003). Choices over styling the body act as a form of resistance to a passive acceptance of the body as unable to conform to majority culture. This results in a form of individual empowerment or freedom insofar as it encourages a self no longer so tightly bound by constraints of gendered and racialised otherness. Instead of being passive victims of oppressed cultures, this is resistance as a process of self-determination.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed relevant and near relevant literature which establishes the rationale for this research. Examining the literature, I have found gaps in the empirical research necessary to substantiate understandings of feminist critical race theory with reference to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in English schools. In particular, there is a gap in identifying the centrality of racialisation as a process which affects racialised girls in England. In surveying the secondary literature, mostly from the UK, US, Canada and Australia, I have also found that school-based research tends to concentrate on the lived experience of people from one particular group, such as African Caribbean, Asian or Muslim young people, as opposed to centring on racialisation as a process which affects people who are visible as racial minorities.

Analysing existing research, I also found a gap in the literature examining the processes of racialised gendering of girls and the consequent effects on their lived experience. However, as Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda (2015) illustrate, it is important to research the specific experience of racialised girls as their experience is distinct from that of racialised boys and white girls. Where this has been done -

for example, by Shain (2003) looking at Asian girls, or Mirza and Meetoo (2018) studying Muslim girls in the UK, or Hines-Datiri, and Carter Andrews (2020) or Evans-Winter, Hines, Moore and Jones (2018) or Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen (2019), or Evans-Winters and Esposito, (2010) with reference to Black girls in the US or Zine's (2006) work with Muslim girls in Canada - the focus is again on girls belonging to one racial or religious group.

Identifying these gaps establishes the context in which the research on racialisation as a process underpinning this thesis has been undertaken. This context also explains the theoretical priority that I accord intersectionality with which to explain the racialising processes and racism that have an impact on Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' lives in English predominantly white secondary schools. Considering theoretical intersections alongside existing empirical school-based studies, such as Mirza's (1992) study of black girls, or Shain's (2003) work with Asian girls, offers insights concerning the value of considering specific issues that arise on account of racialised identities, ethnicity and gender in school. For example, consciously or not, being an Asian girl underpins decision making over how to devise several strategies to orientate a passage through the trials of being an Asian girl in school (Shain, 2003). Or, as another example, research centred on Black girls' own narratives highlights their resilience and agency in contrast to more dominant negative accounts of their supposed cultural or social deficiency (Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010).

I have also set out the theoretical insights of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality as a precursor to being able to oppose racism and sexism in education (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015; Bhopal and Shain, 2014; Shain, 2016; Mirza, 2010; Bhopal and Maylor, 2014; Taylor, 2016). Within Critical Race Theory it is possible to understand that, however inadvertent both the complicity and reproduction may be, there is a potential for harm on account of perceptions of racial identity and well-established racial hierarchies and the continuing invisibility of whiteness naturalised as the norm. Using Critical Race Theory is necessary in order to discuss racialising processes which underpin assumptions that shape current approaches in schools. Racialising practices have the potential to affect interactions in the predominantly white school in the context of seeing 'raced' bodily difference, and ascribing meaning and value to that difference. Although there are implications of visible difference on account of race and gender to frame what happens to individuals on a case-by-case or individual basis, there is also a need to consider systemic, structural and institutional dimensions as a critical context in which school experience occurs. This necessitates research centred on race as a key feature which determines structural and interpersonal 'oppression' as this continues to shape experiences of schooling (Preston and Bhopal, 2012: 216).

Despite a recognition of the value of formal conceptions of equality and fairness, it has proved difficult to fundamentally alter English classrooms and improve the experiences of students of colour (Alexander and Shankley, 2020; Bhopal and Maylor, 2014; Rhamie, 2014; Shain, 2003, 2010; Ali, 2003; Lander, 2015). Biases in understanding intelligence remain deeply problematic (Gillborn, 2018). Constructions of Black learners are informed by stereotypes which have changed little over the past four decades:

> There is now ample research evidence to suggest that stereotyping, low teacher expectations and labelling have become embedded within teacher discourse despite teachers' inability to recognise or perceive it (Rhamie, 2014: 57).

Despite race underpinning understandings of many 'types' of learners, there remains a danger of occluding race as a frame of reference for affecting interactions between people, and personal and structural manifestations of racism. Therefore, Critical Race Theory is important in extending the ability to problematise 'business as usual' racist practices and stereotyping, marginality and exclusion of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in school.

Toni Morrison (1992: 90) argues that it is necessary 'to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and the imaginers; the serving to the served.' Where racial identity has led to a fixity, a racialised impression that is difficult to breach, rewriting pre-established and fixed racial scripts centres people's humanity and diminishes the ability of the gaze to cause harm. It affords a realignment of subjectivity, more centred on a possibility of girls' as agentic within an orientation centred on aspiration and hope.

Taken together, Critical Race Theory, Black feminist and postcolonial approaches in the frameworks developed above afford a possibility to theorise race as it affects what happens to individual girls in school. In this conceptualisation, understanding the impact of visual difference, the manifestation of a hostile environment and resistance expands discursive possibilities for analysing racialisation and gendered racism in the context of structural inequalities.

Within an inductive and iterative research process based on information sought from Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, the next chapter presents a survey of the design of the research, setting out how enmeshing theoretically compatible methods centres race as a critical social relation in the context of the predominantly white secondary school.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to expand the field of research related to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' schooling experiences inside the predominantly white secondary school. Within Critical Race Theory, narratives centred on perceptions pertaining to experience are understood to offer key insights into the racial order and status quo. Listening to the girls' narratives affords an opportunity to centre on their narrative accounts of their experience. Having collected a wealth of qualitative information with which to engage, this methodology chapter sets out how I engaged with the girls' accounts using inductive reasoning to think and theorise. This was not a mechanical or technical process but a dynamic and staged approach to collecting the information and then hand coding a long list of categories of interest, prior to establishing themes for analysis. Based in Critical Race Theory practice, my methodology endeavoured to centre the girls' accounts, and overturn a risk of epistemological and ontological marginalisation or exclusion within a frame of racial ignorance (Mills, 2015). 'Epistemological ignorance' manifests itself in both the assertion of a racial hierarchy and sociohistorical ignorance about the ongoing material racial realities impacting wealth, power and life chances (Turner, 2015). Given that this ignorance has the potential to impact those for whom it is difficult to be heard even when they speak of their own experience (Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1988), Critical Race Theory's theoretical and methodology priority to counter-narratives is key.

It is not straightforward to represent another's lived reality (Butler, 2005). Girls' identities are constructed and performed in particular and fluid ways within their experience of the world. Consequently, there is a need to use 'theorising methods' (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002: 23) to challenge the tenacious exclusivity of knowledge which emerges as an 'effect of specific, historically constituted configurations of discursive and material conditions' (Kamberelis, Dimitriadis, Welker, 2018: 706).

Offering a 'mash-up' - as opposed to a 'theoretical toolkit' (Preston and Bhopal, 2012) – and so borrowing, refashioning, and meshing theoretically compatible methods affords the opportunity to consider race as a critical social relation in the particular context of the predominantly white secondary school. Theoretically informed but inductive and iterative research, based on receiving information from each girl, rather than a dogmatic application of theory enhances the understanding of conceptual tools and highlights the relevance of Critical Race Theory in school.

What follows in this chapter are explanations of design decisions, and the methodology deployed in the research. In the early stages of research design, it was critical that the methodology provided an

opportunity to engage and hear from Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in order to learn from what they say of their experience. Using thematic analysis of what the girls have said in focus group and interview discussions, and the photographs each girl took around her school, facilitates an understanding of the girls' perspective of their experience in their social context.

3.1. Theoretical approaches to the methodology

Modes of questioning the status quo through a post-colonial perspective (Mohanty, 1984; Spivak, 1993) and a Black feminist lens (hooks, 1989; Collins, 1998, 2000; Bhopal, 2010) recognise the value of 'subjugated knowledge' and its distinctive themes and ways of knowing (Collins, 2000: 269, 1998). Black feminist writers' work offsets the ongoing power of the rhetorical silence of whiteness (Crenshaw, 1997). These ontological and epistemological traditions and discursive based methods enable critical counter-narratives which acknowledge a rich diversity of experiences from a 'particular black feminist standpoint – a way of conducting research with Asian women' (Bhopal, 2010: 32), building on the 'ingenuity' and legitimacy of the production of knowledge by Black women (Collins, 2000; Mirza, 1997) and those typecast as 'mahogany princesses' (Bhattacharyya, 1997: 244) or 'exotic' fantasies (Walkerdine, 1990: 209). This research also builds on extensive empirical research in aspects of being in school and a black girl (Chapman, 2013; Chapman and Bhopal, 2019; Fordham, 1996; 2016; Mirza, 1992, 1997), or Asian (Shain, 2003, 2010; Meetoo, 2021), or Muslim (Meetoo, 2021; Mirza and Meetoo, 2018; Eidoo, 2018; Zine, 2000, 2001, 2006), or mixed-race (Ali, 2003; Dewan, 2012; Ifekwunigwe, 1997; Ahmed, 1997).

Without disruption, categories (such as race and gender) inadequately represent a complex environment as though it is orderly. Developing empirical work which gives attention to discursive and material practices to 'further the project of deconstructing gender binaries' is critical to disrupt decontextualised and reductionist approaches (Francis and Paechter, 2015: 782). By using lived experience as grounds for theorizing propositional knowing of the discursively and materially situated self (Butler, 2005; Britzman, 1995; Pillow, 2003), research can be better placed to account for nuance and contradiction, expanding conventions and representations through which subject positions are made, re-made and omitted.

Responding to Critical Race Theory and Black feminist and postcolonial methodologies, requires centring the narratives that would underpin the research on the ability of the participants to know and speak for themselves (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Spivak, 1988; Simmonds, 1997; Ali, 2003; Alcoff, 1995). This response also allows for the research to go beyond tokenistic 'voice' initiatives in schools (Lundy, 2007), even if in their communication head teachers alluded to 'voice' as a key

motivator for the schools' involvement with recruiting participants for this study. Evoking the experiences of those usually not given the opportunity to voice for themselves or represent their experience (Bourdieu, 1993) deepens an understanding of cultural phenomena which have an impact in schools. In the girls' narratives, they discussed their context, and their agency versus fixed (or 'discursively embedded' or entrapping) social identities (Youdell, 2003: 19). Reflecting on aspects of framing an individual's identity allows for potentially unexpected turns in the transmission of a narrative (Ali, 2012) where people can be understood as having agency operating within societal constraints, or 'agency/structure duality' (Rattansi and Phoenix, 2005: 98).

Designing the research tools necessitates questions with which to facilitate finding out about experience of, and the potential for, troubling discursive and representational practice, considering the effects of space, materiality, affect, and performance. Such tools enable a reading of the findings through thinking with theory (Jackson and Mazzei, 2018) but also go beyond deconstruction, and towards reconstructing what can be known in the world using 'the spirit of pragmatism' to inform data transformation strategies (Kamberelis, Dimitriadis and Welker, 2018: 713) and to consider who each person is. Awareness of the danger of a single compelling narrative (Adichie, 2014), or a singular authentic or representative account (Butler, 2004) expands an understanding of ethical dilemmas in the face of a need for representation (Spivak, 1988). Using destabilised universal understandings of the category 'woman' (hooks, 1982; Butler, 1990, 2004; Spivak, 1988; Brah and Phoenix, 2004) and an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Collins, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 2006a) offers more possibilities to theorise difference with reference to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. Black and post-colonial feminist approaches help see a need to account for the girls' difference from one another, as well as from others of their peer groups in school, dynamic and evolving.

3.1.1. *Voice: discursive and photographic*

Critical Race Theory's methodological approaches prioritise giving voice to those who can reveal new insights that talk back to institutionally acceptable normative discourse to establish a counter narrative (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Dixson and Rousseau Anderson, 2018). Where there is a need to 'situate the meanings attached to ideas about race within particular social relations' (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004: 9), voice has been acknowledged as an important source with which to overcome being silenced (Bell, 1992). It corrects an absence of narratives from marginalised groups (Rollock, 2012; Crenshaw, Ocen, and Nanda, 2015). Without relying on grand narratives and a lack of specificity about exclusions therein (Spivak, 1988), Critical Race Theory in unison with Black feminist and post-colonial methodologies affords a distinct lens which foreground different dimensions to the 'normal' account (Mirza, 2010) and tell stories which 'deserve to be heard' since they 'reveal things about the world that we ought to know' (Delago, 1990: 95; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano

and Yosso, 2002). Joining photo-elicitation with discursive narrative-based representations of the girls' school life, helps disrupt taken-for-granted knowledge about what might be understood about the girls' school experience. Expanding access to the space of experience, and re-imagining a possible future (Williams, 1997), these methods facilitate situated and contingent counter-narratives with which to disrupt and erode dominant social imaginaries, and normative thinking.

3.2. The research process

The girls' discursive constructions of meaning of their experience arise in a context which could be characterised as a shifting social reality. This reality encompasses global, national and local social factors, institutional processes, cultural practices, constructions and performances of their identities. These factors, processes, practices and identities do not operate separately from the girls but frame their possibility for becoming (rather than simply being). Becoming operates in a context wherein understandings are both negotiable and productive in understanding the girls' reality. Through their explorations and interpretations of their context, they name and critique their knowledge of societal discourses and their experiences of their schools.

Britzman (1995: 232) notes that capturing what experience means is partial, prefiguring representation and investments in identity as lived and arranged in language, rather than demonstrative of a coherent 'actuality'. In light of the limitations on knowing, but also the potential for considering and reconsidering what experience represents (Ali, 2012), a three-phased process – focus group discussions, photographs in school taken by the girls, and one-to-one interviews centred on the photographs – aimed to offer a variety of stages and opportunities to enrich and complicate the girls' contributions and as a means of answering the research questions. Each phase facilitated the opportunity to draw out different aspects of reflection on each girl's school experience, with the last phase of one-to-one interviews building on, qualifying and often embellishing the narratives that had emerged during their collective focus group discussion.

Whilst this research set out to inquire what it was that could be particular to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' experiences of a predominantly white school in the East Midlands, my initial research focus did not translate into an obvious framing of the questions posed to the girls on race, gender or class (See Appendix 2 and 3). My aim was to discover what aspects of their everyday experience of predominantly white secondary schools the girls foreground.

Eighteen Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls took part in the research. The fieldwork for the research took place in the Autumn Term of 2018 and the Spring Term of 2019. The girls were all students at predominantly white schools in the East Midlands. Although the girls chose their own pseudonyms, I

chose the pseudonyms for each school - Ash, Hawthorn and Oak. Except for two participants in Year 13 who were recruited by word-of-mouth, the girls were recruited through the Head Teacher of their schools. There were six participants in Hawthorn Academy, an East Midlands' inner city school: Hope, Year 8; Kahmia and Sarah, from Year 9 and Kimora, Naomi and Olivia in Year 10; ten participants in Ash Academy, an East Midlands' suburban school: Barbra, Ophelia, and Zoe in Year 8, Gail and Bob in Year 9, Cookie and Yasmine in Year 10, and Mo, Queen, and Sheila in Year 11; and two Year 13 participants, Fiona and Robin in Oak Academy situated in a relatively more privileged East Midlands town.

3.2.1. *Setting up the research*

Schools with small minority ethnic student populations were selected opportunistically from counties in the East Midlands (using Cline et al.'s (2002) criteria of 'small' as 4-6% minority ethnic students). After an initial written email letter contact with six schools, a follow up approach was made by email or phone. A Briefing Sheet that was attached to the email letter to each Head Teacher (see Appendix 6).

Where there was interest, the letters were followed with a face-to-face meeting with the Head Teacher. These gatekeeper meetings allowed appropriate measures to be discussed regarding recruitment to be agreed upon as fitting for the school's ethos and procedures for research conducted on the school site. The details about the research practicalities were discussed and agreed, including how best to recruit the target group of girls using each school's existing data set on their student population. This data stems from information based on self-definition criteria detailing students' racial identity and ethnicity.

Data Protection protocols and participants' privacy and well-being were also discussed with Head Teachers at this meeting. Developing a sense of my trustworthiness was important to do as I was a researcher from outside of school, and I was interested in Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. These protocols also informed considerations of where and when focus group and interviews should be run and how the discussion would be recorded and stored.

My laptop is password protected. Therefore, data stored electronically is password protected. Also, since the University uses a European (not US) electronic storage/back up facility, data storage is regulated by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) European data privacy legislation (2018). Through discussing these security arrangements for data management, Head Teachers were better placed to assure parents and guardians of my data management protocols had this been necessary.

Knowing that I had a duty of care to students in school, I was also able to discuss what I would do in the event of participants having shared information which pointed to a safeguarding concern. I communicated that I would have followed the safeguarding procedures set out within the school's safeguarding policies as these operate within the Local Authority and Department for Education's procedural guidance. I was also able to assure Head Teachers that participants would be informed that only information of a safeguarding nature, including any evidence of criminal acts, would be shared with appropriate authorities. I made a clear distinction between sharing – necessary where it concerned safeguarding – and not sharing other information the girls divulged in focus groups and interviews.

I explained that neither participants nor individual schools would be identified either explicitly or implicitly at any stage in the research dissemination process. The participants' data would be anonymised and a pseudonym of each girl's choosing used. Each school would also be anonymised and a pseudonym used. Identifying features of individual participants, school and precise location would be omitted from the final thesis, and from any publications arising from the research.

3.2.2. Recruitment of participants

Parental permission

Once permission had been granted by Head Teachers to conduct the research in each school, letters were sent from the Head Teacher to the target group of parents and guardians of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in Years 8-10 and Years 8-11, informed by the school census database. Year 13 students were not recruited in this way. They did not need parental consent since they were over the age of 16.

The purpose of the research, the nature of their participation or their child's participation was explained in the participant information sheet and parent and guardian letter (see appendix 1 and 5). There was a date by which consent needed to have been granted in order to allow for participants to be scheduled into a timetable for focus groups. There was no compunction to return the consent forms if prospective participants or prospective participant parent and guardian did not choose to do so. It was made clear that participation in the research was entirely voluntary. It was also made clear to parents and guardians that there would not have been any negative ramifications for choosing not to have their child take part, or their child choosing not to take part.

If they agreed to their young person's participation, parents or guardians voluntarily returned their signed consent form (see Appendix 5). Both the school and I kept a copy of the parent consent forms in locked cabinets. Once the parents or guardians had consented to their child taking part, dates and times were set up for me to come into each school and conduct the research.

Participant permission

The participant information sheet and participant consent form were given to the girls by the researcher in person (see Appendix 1). The girls in Year 8-11 had already been informed of the study through communication between the school and their parents or guardians. However, gaining the girls' consent to participate prior to the focus group was important to confirm the individual girl's voluntary and informed consent to take part in the research. The two girls in Year 13 were approached directly, but the information that they received was the same as for their lower school (Year 8-11) counterparts, and consent forms were also completed before any research activities occurred.

3.2.3. *Focus group discussions, one-to-one interviews and photograph elicitation*

Focus groups and interviews with the girls in Year 8 – 11 were organised by the school in school time and took place in a room booked specifically for the purpose of talking to the girls. The discussions with the Sixth Form girls also took place at a room specifically booked for the purpose and to ensure each girl's privacy, but this part of the fieldwork was arranged at a time that the girls themselves specified.

The timings of each part of the research fieldwork aimed to minimize the disruption to the girls' studies. Where there were clashes around particular lessons, changes were made to the schedule in terms of which focus group or interview slot the girls attended. Some of the girls needed to change times that they could participate to accommodate aspects of their timetables, for example examinations or practical lessons.

The focus group schedule used was semi-structured (see Appendix 2), affording some scope for the central research questions to be further explored depending on, and in response to the discussion between and with participants in the focus group. Each focus group lasted between one and two hours, with up to six participants in each. In each focus group, permission was sought and given for a password protected audio recording to be made. Consequently, I had a facility to help fully and accurately transcribe what was said.

At the end of the focus group, the photographic task, the second of the three-phased research process was explained (see Appendix 2). The aim of the photo elicitation was to provide a visual source material with which to prompt discussion of the girls' school life in the one-to-one interview which followed between one and two weeks after the focus group. Each girl was invited to take approximately five photographs to represent aspects of their lived experience. As objects, the photographs also materially substantiated the girls' continuing consent to carry on with the research

over time, and the positive relationship and trust that existed between the researcher and the research participants.

The follow-up individual interviews also followed a semi-structured question format (See Appendix 3). These interviews were one-to-one between one participant and me, the researcher. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes and two hours. The length of time available in each school varied, but in some cases, the interviews were much longer because of the time girls chose to spend discussing their experiences.

Although I planned for the girls to carry a permission slip from the Headteacher to allow them to use their phones in school time in order to take photographs, the girls were barred from using their phones in one school. In this instance, the school's own equipment was used, and the photographs were printed and sent by a staff member to my university email account. The Head Teacher of this school also decided that the photographs were not to include any people.

Ultimately only the photographs from one school included other young people. In this school, the girls asked for those included in the image to sign a written permission slip. I collected these forms in during the interviews and stored them in the same way as the girls' personal information. It was important to protect those who were not the primary subjects of the research. Although not exclusively, there was a need to protect the identities of looked-after young people. Therefore, responding to this concern, that young people in the schools should not be identified in the research, I decided at this point not to include any photographs of people, or any which could identify the schools involved, in the thesis or any publication arising from the research. In the end, despite adding a richness to the data set, this concern for the girls' privacy, the desire to respond to issues of anonymity and confidentiality, and the chance that the girls' photographs could lead to the girls' schools being recognised, led to my decision not to reproduce any of the photographs in the thesis.

The girls did not receive any further training on photo-elicitation as a research method beyond the briefing at the end of the focus group. As it likely that they would all have experience of taking photographs using their mobile phones (Pink and Hjorth, 2012), this briefing offered very little direction except concerning what photographs not to take for the purposes of the research. This briefing steered the girls away from taking selfies, and ultimately photographs which included any people. It was suggested that these photographs might be of places, objects and events that were important to them in their school lives.

Photographs have been seen as valuable source material to understand social relations and identity within specific representative domains (Rose, 2016). The photographs cannot be seen as offering total autonomy for the girls. Nonetheless, they did offer a different insight into the girls' environment using their personal lens and centring the girls' accounts, and not those of the adults in their lives. Instead of being silenced or subjugated (Harding 1987), the variety of activity encouraged the girls' individual voices and experience to come to the fore. Although there were adult-imposed constraints on what the girls could photograph and with what equipment, the girls still had choices over what and how they contributed to the research. This positioned them as the 'experts' who best understood their experiences as these arose in the context of their predominantly white secondary schools. The girls own priorities determined their commentary.

In every interview discussion, I asked each girl to explain what she understood each of her photographs to represent. Using the lens of their photograph was helpful to facilitate different conversations during interviews, allowing further detail and colour to emerge about the girls' school lives. Some of the girls also chose to substantiate views in the one-to-one interview that they did not fully expand upon in the focus group, offering them more time to further discuss their individual perceptions. Talking about their photographs also offered the girls who had been quieter in the focus group a different opportunity to share their perspectives one-to-one. Also, where I was not sure that I had adequately understood, the interview also enabled me to clarify things. For example, I returned to a statement that Hope had made about her experience in the focus group to clarify what she meant by 'not worrying about history lessons'.

Although the research never substantially varied from the approved processes, there were examples where the girls went beyond the planned schedule and the interactions I had initially anticipated. One girl came back in her lunch hour to show me a photograph of her artwork. We had discussed her work in the interview although it had not been an image she had captured beforehand. Another girl had used a print shop to get copies of her photographs printed the weekend before her interview. She wanted me to have a material record of her contribution to the research.

A Participant Debrief (see Appendix 4) was given to participants at the end of their one-to-one interview. Had any of the girls wanted to leave the focus group – or withdraw from the study at any point – they were free to return to their normal timetabled activity. Had any of the girls withdrawn from participating in the research, they would still have got the debrief sheet. This meant that all the information, including the list of organizations which could offer them advice, support and help, would still have been available as if they had continued to the end of all phased fieldwork.

3.3. Ethical considerations

The inquiry was planned and undertaken with due consideration given to a recognised professional body's set of standards (British Education Research Association (BERA), 2018). In June 2018, before starting the research, or making any approach to the schools, my approach and tools were approved by the Nottingham Trent University College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. I had already renewed my Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in March 2018, to cover my role researching in schools.

University Ethical Approval included approval for all the research tools which were attached to the University Ethics Form as Appendices; protocols pertaining to storage of data and informed consent; plans that I had made in the case of any distress caused by participation in the research; and that participants were to be given the name and contact of my university supervisor in case they felt that they needed make a complaint about how the research had been carried out.

I also obtained approval from the University Ethics Committee for arrangements that I had made for the storage and use of personal data. These arrangements complied with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018). Hard copies of paperwork were to be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home. Personal information was to be kept separately from other data to prevent transcriptions being tied to personal data. Also, any confidential data stored either way – as hard copies or electronically – for the duration of the research and analysis period is to be destroyed according to the NTU guidance on timeframes and confidential waste procedures.

Although in considering ethical practice I recognised a responsibility to consider the most appropriate ways of informing participants about the outcomes of the research, the Covid-19 lockdowns had a profound impact. During the Spring and Summer Terms of 2020, I completed my first draft of each of my findings chapters but was not able to inform participants about the research. I was unable to collaborate or to elicit feedback on the findings or review the trajectory of my analysis. Although offered, this also meant that no follow-up debriefing meetings were conducted in the schools.

3.3.1.   Informed consent

It was important to explain what was involved in the research inquiry to all potential participants. This took place in a preliminary session prior to the focus group. I informed the girls why they had been invited to take part – that they were best placed to explain what life was like for them in school – and what their participation would mean in terms of output and privacy. I explained that, although they could share information in the focus group and then the one-to-one interview, the girls, as

participants, were under no obligation to share information about their experiences. The girls were also informed that the storage and use of personal data complied with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018).

In this preliminary session, in order to ensure consent was meaningful, I repeated information the girls and their parents or guardians had been given at the outset of the research participant recruitment process. This was important to do in order to make sure that the girls were fully aware of what their consent meant (see Appendix 1). The key messages were restated at the start of each individual interview.

Before signing their participants' consent form, I checked that each participant understood what they were being asked to consent to. The research could be described as sensitive (Paechter, 2012: 79; Barbour and Schostak, 2011). Every participant understood that they did not have to take part in the study. I also explained that they did not need to explain or give any reason for wanting to withdraw. It was also made clear that there would not be any negative consequence should participants decide to withdraw from participating in the research. I made clear that this was important to me as the researcher as I did not to wish to prejudice their well-being or privacy in school. Although the girls were free to withdraw both themselves and information contributed during the interview up to one month after the research in school, I explained that because of the nature of the discussions, they could not withdraw their contributions to the focus group.

At the beginning of the focus groups and prior to any recording, I explained the distinction between confidentiality, anonymity and privacy to the girls. I explained that all participants would hear one another's contribution to the discussion in the focus group. This made clear, before starting the focus group, their rights and responsibilities to themselves and each other. I presented this as information, almost as though I was their teacher or a concerned parent. At the end of this talk, I requested that each girl consider choosing not to disclose things that were too personal and that they could regret sharing in the focus group. This communication stemmed from my concern for the well-being of the girls. Furthermore, although I could not police what happened after the focus group, I explained that they should not share what other people had contributed to the discussion. I emphasised that this was a very serious responsibility that they had to one another. It was important because sharing what was discussed could prejudice their own privacy and the privacy of other participants. Finally, and to serve as a means of protecting each girl's privacy, I asked the girls to decide on their pseudonym and to specify this on their signed consent form. Their choice of pseudonym was the name that I then used to anonymise their contributions to the findings.

I also explained the very specific caveats to the girls concerning the information that they shared in the research process. I had a duty of care. Therefore, I explained that if any girl shared information which pointed to a safeguarding concern, I would have to respond by disclosing what they said that was of concern within the school's safeguarding policies.

Asking the girls about their school lives meant asking them to share memories, some of which could have been (and were found to be) difficult things to discuss. At times, this meant that the research would involve revisiting memories that could still feel very emotionally raw, even if some time had passed. Some of what the girls shared had happened years earlier, but the research activities still exposed them to reflect on feelings about their experiences. I did not assume that revisiting their experiences would always be easy for the girls to do. The participant debrief (Appendix 4) included details of organizations which may be able to provide further support, advice or help if girls wanted to follow up any of our discussions. Contact numbers and email addresses and a brief biography of different sources of advice and support organisations were supplied, including those for Bullying UK, Beatbullying, Childline, a local Women's Centre, and Youth2youth. The organisations were listed because of their expertise and their perceived capacity to help. I suggested that in the case of any distress arising because of their participation in the research, that the girls could contact any of these organisations, or others that they knew, or myself, via my contact details. In view of the specialist expertise of the groups above, in-school counselling services, CAMHS and GP services, and services more focussed on providing services to adults, as opposed to young people and girls, were not signposted. In addition, and as another route for the girls should they have sought support or wanted to make a complaint about my research practice, the information sheet also detailed my lead supervisor's name, telephone number and email address.

Ability and readiness to respond to any risk of harm

Through participating in the research, the girls could be prompted to recall experiences that could have been distressing. I therefore felt an ethical responsibility to consider how to respond to any distress that participation in the research could cause. In addition to underlining that they did not need to share any information, prior to their signing their consent form before both the focus group and interview discussions, I gauged the emotional pitch of each discussion, actively seeking consent as appropriate in any given moment. Had this not sufficed and had discussions which were improperly distressing continued, I had mapped school appropriate procedures that had been approved by the University Ethics Committee, including stopping the discussion. In addition to the Committee's approval that my planned responses would be appropriate and sufficiently careful and compassionate, I was confident that I could both gauge and respond appropriately. This was partly because of my experience dealing with sensitive subjects as a teacher with pastoral responsibilities

as a form tutor, and partly as a consequence of parenting three young people similar in age to the girls participating in this study.

As well as thinking through processes that could have been necessary to protect the girls in the case of distress, I had also weighed up the risks of harm to the girls involved in the research activities. I anticipated that my use of a semi-structured question schedule for focus groups and interviews allowed sufficient flexibility in dealing with the threat of any potential distress or risk of harm. During the research, many of the girls had re-remembered some difficult experiences. Nonetheless, several expressed surprise that I wanted them to have information on the sources of advice and support. Although said in jest, one Head Teacher also spoke of my value being in school each Friday. The Head Teacher felt my presence had positively impacted on the girls' attendance at the end of the previous week.

Dealing with the unexpected

On two separate occasions in two of the schools, and arising because of demands for space, it was necessary to move rooms during a one-to-one interview. I needed to respond with appropriate care as this threatened to compromise each girl's anonymity and privacy. However, as an outside researcher with relatively little power to determine what happens in school, my ability to resolve this issue compelled me to respond pragmatically, but still considering what constituted an ethical response. In one instance, this involved accepting help from the interviewee. She approached one of her teachers and asked if we could use some space in this teacher's department for the remaining half hour of our interview. This was not a planned or prepared response to an eventuality I had foreseen. But my response was underpinned by an understanding of ethical research practice. In this instance, accepting the participant's help and continuing the interview seemed to be the best way to allow a valued contribution to the research to continue without any breach to her privacy.

3.4. Thematic Analysis procedures

3.4.1. Transcription

With the agreement of the participants, focus group and interview material was recorded on password protected audio recording equipment. Full transcriptions from the audio recordings of the focus groups and interviews were completed in the summer 2019. As a mechanism for retrieval of the discussion in the focus groups and interviews, the audio recordings provided a rich resource which went towards recovering testimony of the girls' experience. Attending to the technical aspects of transcription initiated the analysis process even before a more detailed thematic analysis was undertaken (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The use of 'voice' was intended to make the social and relational dimensions of the girls' experience audible. Dialogue, intonation, humour, pauses, silences, energy and presence added to the exchange. I was mindful that the act of creating an accurate written record from the recording became part an act of containment, and part translation work. Karpf (2014) suggests it is easy to lose the texture of experience even while attending carefully to the spoken word. The creation of a written record of specifically situated and embodied voices, located within wider sociocultural contexts, added to by my researcher's gaze and ways of listening, risked information being 'lost in transcription' (Karpf, 2014: 52). Being alert to these risks, and through repeated listening, I attended to the textures of the girls' voices to build a picture which located individual stories in their wider context. This enabled me to see and hear connections between individual and a more communal experience.

Listening to the recordings, after having completed the transcriptions, I made a note of my thoughts and feelings alongside initial thoughts of emerging themes using an inductive approach. This gave me the opportunity to synthesize thoughts as they became clearer from my reading of the literature, theory, and from preliminary understandings that I was reaching from repeated immersion in the audio and the transcripts. This and an initial hand coding process enabled connections that could turn preliminary findings into more secure underpinnings for analysis. Given the implausibility of operating in 'an epistemological vacuum' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84), I could not be free of my 'theoretical and epistemological commitments'. Nonetheless, I saw this as an opportunity to begin to respond to the criticism made of some empirical analyses of gender and education that they sidestep theoretical readings (Francis and Paechter, 2015: 778). Through my growing sense of what seemed to be recurring motifs, I was increasingly able to see how I might be able to frame the girls' experience considering my sense of my findings and an on- going review of theoretical and empirical literature.

3.4.2. Analytic Processes

The next stage of the research process demanded deliberation that built on the decisions that had been made at the outset concerning epistemology, ontology and methods (Braun and Clarke, 2019). In building on the conceptual basis for knowledge generation and practices, I was able to begin to deliberate about what the findings of the research seemed to mean to me, based on what the girls had said their experiences seemed to mean to them. I attempted to situate my researcher subjectivity as a resource (Gough and Madill, 2012) where reflections and deliberations informed a more transparent analysis of the data.

In responding to these theoretical and methodological lenses, I was able to think and reflect on what was beginning to emerge, where 'the final analysis is the product of deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something that is active and generative' (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 591). I coded the information with sensitivity to the data, in order to respond to nuance, ambiguity and contradiction. The development of themes came about as a result of revisiting the transcriptions, reoccurring thoughts, and openness to reviewing the information before me.

Recursive coding

Prior to establishing a detailed thematic analytic framework, I re-listened to my recordings with my transcriptions in front of me. This process aimed to get beyond surface meanings to enable a fuller sense of pattern or repetition and begin to note some preliminary codes. This was critical to give a sense of what was evoked while listening, not as a means of retrieving what was already in the data but in order to begin to generate inductive frames of analysis. During this initial, reflective coding process, I produced a long list of codes. Once I had hand coded this long list, I used a spider diagram (Basit, 2003) to make further sense of the links that I could see and in order to consolidate some of the codes and forge some preliminary focal points. I organised frames or themes – patterns of meaning or central organising concepts (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Braun, Clarke, and Rance, 2014). This was particularly important given the imperative to create a narrative with some coherence, but which resisted simplification, or a single narrative that explained all the girls experience as though they were always alike.

I needed to account for both the diverse aspects of experience of the entire focus group and interview information set, including the photographs. In this way, I was able to establish initial patterns and themes in order to organise the phenomena and subjects that seemed to be prevalent for several participants. Sifting through the codes manually led to three major domains based on the initial broad themes of friendship, visible difference, and agency.

After further consideration of the transcriptions, I began to hone my thinking based on the girls' individual accounts, to identify clusters of themes. My process included dividing the transcriptions into segments which helped determine what seemed most pertinent in terms of analytical clusters. This led to further refinement of the domains based on the re-considered data set files. These new data sets supported the overall thesis theme of the functioning and impact of racialisation as a gendered and gendering process operating in predominantly white schools.

Even where the girls' responses were quite differently framed, this segmentation of the transcriptions proved valuable in developing the analysis and responding to the interpretive work

that the girls were already performing within their discursive narratives. Nonetheless, the search for conceptual clarity was not immediately forthcoming. Rather than finding something obvious, it involved analytic work produced at the intersection of data, analytical process and my researcher subjectivity. Themes are creative and interpretative 'stories' about the data, 'produced at the intersection of the researchers' theoretical assumptions, their analytical resources and skill' as well as the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019: 594). In an iterative process, the aim of developing themes was not to flatten the data outside of theoretical understandings or researcher positionality but was intended to enable an account with greater richness and nuance.

From listening to their discursive frames of reference, I identified patterns of meaning associated with the girls' 'shifting and mediated subject position' (Raby and Pomerantz, 2016: 68). After completing the preliminary analysis, I decided on the stories based on the prominence of the data that I found around three clusters of major themes which later became the focus of the three findings chapters: visibility, hostility, and resistance, as well as several sub-themes within each of these clusters.

3.5. Researcher reflections

There is 'no "authentic" position from which to speak and to represent oneself' in part because of differentiation in the space between ambiguity, hybridity, fluidity' (Henry, 2003: 233). There are also contested claims to the category woman (hooks, 1982; Spivak, 1986; Spillers, 1987; Visweswaran, 1994; Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Haraway, 1992; Ahmed, 1997), a need to further destabilise intelligibility (hooks, 1989; Collins, 1998) and understand complex power relations (Grosz, 1994; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Collins, 2000; Henry, 2003; Bhopal, 2018; Paechter, 2018; Chapman and Bhopal, 2019). Therefore, I needed to respond to what the girls had said, differentiating between the girls on account of their differences one from another. The girls' narratives are not authentic representations of truth but provide empirical evidence with which to underpin an intersectional framework to understand the girls' school lives. Pointing to contradictory and inconsistent, partial understandings of lived reality (Francis, 2010; Francis and Paechter, 2015), their accounts emphasise contingency and avoid imposing boundaries through representation of each girl as though she were fixed in time and space.

The complexity of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' narratives and the way that each girl visually represented their experience counteracted any legitimacy being attached to a reductionist or singular portrayal of Black, Asian and Mixed-race experience. The research facilitated talking back (hooks, 1989) to limited understandings of racialisation and racism, together with racialised sexism,

and classism on account of actual class background or assumptions that racial minorities are invariably working-class. Had I used 'tools' developed in the 'master's house' (Lorde, 1979) unreflexively, I would risk producing a reading which fixed the girls as particular 'humanist subjects' (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 316). Instead, each girl's narrative helped resist stereotyping perceptions, disrupted hegemonic gendered productions within existing power hierarchies.

Designing a three-phased research process meant that I could respond to what the girls said. Open-ended question schedules, and control over their photographic as well as discursive representations gave the girls opportunities to consider their contribution. The girls' articulation of their own experience avoided re-inscribing the marginality of their account. The girls controlled the flow of information through both their photographic representations and their narrative contributions in both focus groups and interviews. Through the focus group discussion, photo elicitation, and one-to-one interviews, they were able to make explicit how they made meaning of what they saw happening within their school lives. It also afforded them different reflexive opportunities of their perceptions of events and meaning-making processes.

The variety of approaches taken in the research highlighted the girls' difference from one another but also their ability to collaborate both in the focus group but also when taking their photographs in school, with each other and other friends. Having time between the focus group and interview, including taking the photographs offered further opportunities to reflect. They had time to consider their individual contribution to the focus group before returning to the one-to-one interview. However, I also considered the disadvantages involved in using focus groups as a means of discussing each girl's experience.

The disadvantages of focus groups are particularly acute where discussion might involve sensitive or personal information (Barbour and Schostak, 2011). The girls did not always know all the other girls present. In all the focus groups, there were some girls who knew one another, and others who did not know anyone else present. This might have meant that it was more difficult for some of the focus group to feel that they could trust everyone as much as those who had friends present. Some of the girls were also quieter and did not volunteer their views as freely as others. But each girl was encouraged to consider her privacy in the focus group, and to reciprocate respect for the privacy of others in the focus group. This discussion included not speaking on behalf of each other, or what they knew of each other's experience, and they refrained from doing so. This meant each girl had autonomy over what information to volunteer or share as no individual girl was pressed to give information or answer any question. There are also advantages of using focus groups, most prominently that as a forum for discussion. Focus groups help realign imbalances of power (Barbour

and Schostak, 2011; Jackson and Mazzei, 2018). As well as interacting with me, as the researcher, the participants were able to interact with each other, including questioning one another and deciding what they thought in collaboration with each other.

At the design phase it had been important to recognise, rather than ignore, the dilemmas and opportunities involved in focus group research. Ultimately the research processes were designed following deliberation and a reflexive approach to research ethics and researcher integrity. This resulted in a three-phased approach to the research and the varied means of facilitating the girls' contribution including but not solely reliant on focus groups.

I understood that there was a lack of time in their day-to-day school day to explore personal and pertinent issues. Beyond offering an opportunity to confuse normative narratives about who each girl is understood to be, some of the girls' suggested that this research process also served as a resource to them. Fiona, Sheila, Bob, Zoe, and Ophelia expressed positive emotions about participating in the research. Bob spoke of the research as her reason to come to school on the day of her interview even though she was feeling unwell. Fiona suggested that our interview had been 'like counselling' as normally she was on her own 'do[ing] it in my head by myself' in school or with her mother after school.

Many of the photographs were of everyday sites. Photographs further the potential to make the 'familiar strange' (Sikes, 2003; Mannay, 2010). In their interviews the girls expanded upon the meaning of their photographs as concrete representations, for example, of a corridor, as a place where they would wait before a lesson, or the Hall, as a site for Assembly. This would often lead to a discussion of more abstract dimensions of the meaning the girls attached to certain school spaces. As a route with which to understand the detail of complex patterns of activity and emotional lives to the context in which they occur (Pink, 2013), their photographs helped the girls to make sense of physical dimensions of the school site. For example, photographs of the school hall acted as a conduit to discuss why they did not like Assembly, or they did not like the displays for Black History Month. The photographs had value in exploring how the girls made sense of their experience, through their understandings of signifying signs (Hall, 1980), and space (Puwar, 2004; Ahmed 2006).

Their photographs gave a sense of the individual girls, and the values and meaning that they attached to what they saw. Often the photographs were taken with friends who shared in this activity (as was the case for Sarah, Olivia and Robin). Their photographs encouraged the girls to express views and perceptions that might otherwise have proven difficult to speak of or capture in a question and response dialogue. More often 'visual evidence' of their friendships than solitary contemplation of racial and gender formations, or mobile patterns of inequality that determined

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their wider social contexts, the girls' photographs offered insights into their spaces for friendship or conversely places where they had experienced hostility. Here feelings of inclusion or exclusion, safety or lack of, could be 'seen' through the girls' photographic representations. Since the interview questions sought to clarify any aspects of the girls' photographs' particular and personal resonance, this allowed a sensitivity to what the girls said and a more compassionate and nuanced understanding of their complex feelings about social phenomenon. Each photograph, through providing a visual manifestation, was well placed to access the affective realm, capable of capturing 'emotion, reverie, and imagination' (Pink, Hogan and Bird, 2011: 15). The photographs offered another route into perceptions and feelings (Campf, 2017) explored in the one-to-one interviews, facilitating the expression of views on elusive and taboo subjects (Allan and Tinkler, 2015).

The girls' photographs registered both extraordinary 'events' in the girls' school lives and distilled the everyday, mundane, or seeming ordinary. Yasmine, in Year 10 took a photograph of the 'mundane' everyday space of the school dining hall. Photographs provided a way of listening (Campf, 2017: 3) to different 'modalities of perception, encounter and engagement'. Through the photo-elicitation, Yasmine re-visited her younger self's feelings, sharing information about a hostile encounter that she had whilst in Year 7 when she was younger and new to the school. Although painful to narrate, she spoke of her feelings, including those of guilt and shame as Yasmine did not report the incident to anyone at the time. From her Year 10 vantage point, Yasmine used her photograph of somewhere seemingly innocuous as a source of discussion in the interview. This allowed her the opportunity to access and expand upon her varied and contradictory emotions and the insights that this afforded to her experience and the lack of support that she was able to access within school.

Using photo-elicitation afforded the girls the opportunity to pre-emptively contribute to the inductive interpretative aspects of the work, amplifying each girl's ability to be heard, and drawing on Critical Race Theory's insights. Taking and discussing the photographs offered a bulwark 'against "spirit murder" … and as intellectual and emotional support … for those young women navigating white middle class educational spaces' (Evans-Winters and Esposito, 2010: 21). Through deciding what photographs to take, Cookie had a chance to realign her encounter with difficult experiences that had occurred since starting the school three and a half years earlier. Taking a photograph of a stairwell enabled Cookie to share its significance with me. Without the prompt of the photograph in our one-to-one interview, it is difficult to see how perceptions of the meaning of this space held could have been so fully explored. Cookie's analysis of the significance of the material space of the stairwell provided valuable research insights but also an opportunity to showcase Cookie's powers of perception, endurance and reflection. The photograph of the stairwell accessed a symbolic site

bearing pain, but also represented possibility for Cookie. Having responded to her feelings of anger and rage, the stairwell also served as a symbolic site for agency, change and resistance.

3.1. Researcher positionality

I intended my methodological choices to open a possibility of disrupting monolithic accounts of different groups' identity within grand narratives as singular, fixed or authentic. I aimed to do this by thinking through theory in order to organise a trustworthy representation of multiple narratives, illuminating clear themes, whilst also affording sufficient openness and responsiveness to stories which were continuously unfolding. Therefore, it was imperative that as a researcher I was reflexive and did not remain with what I thought or understood too quickly. In attending to what was said, or not said (Joseph, 2010) I accepted the need to deconstruct the researcher as a universal spokesperson who has privileged access to meaning (Lather, 1992: 96) even as I understood that the researcher orientates the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019). This was an iterative process where 'the complexity and the "becomingness" of social life belies the possibility of a single, exhaustive or definitive account' (Ball, 1990: 167). Consequently, the research was not 'totally planned' in advance. I maintained my researcher's 'openness to the other, and to the ethical demands that arise in the encounter with the other, where the researcher will become someone-she-was-not-already' (Davies and Gannon, 2011: 315).

I recognise the impossibility of adopting an objective approach in my research, where I was able to capture the 'true' selves of the participants involved in the study (Frankenberg, 2004). In deciding on my research methodology, I needed to achieve a reflective, constructive and open-ended practice which developed between myself as the 'researcher' and the girls as 'participants'. I chose to work with specifically Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls on account of some shared aspects of our identities and experience. There was some proximity, but also distance from the girls, characterised by some overlapping characteristics. As a non-white woman I shared this feature of my identity with the girls, but my racial identity is difficult to read within identification practices that are intrinsically insecure. I identify with the sentiment expressed by Ahmed (1997: 165) when she refers to 'unstable and shifting' entities elide 'my specific positioning'. Furthermore, I did not presume a justification to conduct this research based on a singular aspect of my identity. I am also distinct from all the girls on account of age and many aspects of my experience. I have professional experience working as a teacher. I am also a parent of school-age children. Further, when I was a student in school, I did not study in a predominantly white school, although all my teaching experience had been in such settings.

As a consequence of varied aspects of my experience, school is a familiar setting. There was therefore a danger that I would not be able to forget elements of my own experience and that this would lead to preconceptions or understandings that would be taken-for-granted as opposed to being tested. This necessitated a strong effort to re-appraise partial accounts, my prior assumptions and to see things afresh through the girls' distinct lens.

Where the girls had experience of being foreclosed on account of their visible difference, operationalised through being 'fixed' in a white gaze (Yancy, 2017) as outsiders (Ahmed, 2000a; Bhopal and Myers, 2008), the girls' stories sometimes resonated with my experience. Relating to the girls' experience was at times a danger as I knew that their identities were not fixed on account of their racial or gender identity. But through my experience of the impositions that arise in the white gaze, I had to stifle an impulse to assume what the effects might mean to them. I had to exhibit an aspect of researcher discipline, and check, rather than take for granted what I could have assumed I already knew from my experience. For example, like many of the girls, I was, and am, often asked, 'where do you come from?' Therefore, whilst my experience helped me to avoid simplifying their account or homogenising the girls collectively on account of a singular feature of their identities, there were also some disadvantages. I needed to see where it was necessary to renounce some of the meaning I lent to my personal experience.

There are also impacts for me and for the girls involved in dealing with the effects of unhealed physical and psychological injuries (Fredriksson, 2009). There were times when the noise emanating from my emotional response to the girls' portrayal of their experience impeded my ability to listen to what they were saying. Queen spoke about some experiences that she had of monkey chanting directed at her when she was at primary school in Year 6. Queen was pushed onto the road. These memories were obviously difficult to speak of, and to listen to. I needed to manage my own emotional response to her experience. I found it difficult not to communicate that I had understood what Queen was saying so that she did not need to continue to revisit the memory. At times, my feelings compromised my effort to pursue lines of questioning that might have lent further meaning to her experience. Instead, at times like these, I was often tempted to signal that the girl did not need to continue with a story that I was afraid could cause her distress. Rather than respond clinically to their 'answer', at these points, I wanted to offer reassurance and comfort, and that I understood how horrible such events must have been.

These research episodes were difficult. They foreground a need to factor researcher reflexivity into every part of the research. I was alert to the need to manage the hidden structures of power between the role of researcher and the girls. But I also responded to the necessity of questioning

assumptions of paternalistic approaches to vulnerability (Wyatt, Gale, Gannon and Davies (JSKB), 2018). Since the research involved acts of self-disclosure, vulnerability needed to be considered for all involved, rather than as a unidirectional concern. Some of the legacy of conducting this research, could be characterised as the art of surviving 'poisonous knowledge' (Das, 2000) through my researcher responsibility both to the participants and to myself.

3.2. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed the methodological processes and decisions that I have used to answer the research questions which informed the study underpinning the thesis. In the next three findings chapters, I set out my findings based on the analysis of three overarching themes, visual difference and the gaze; and hostility; and resistance in the predominantly white secondary school.

4. Visual Difference, racialisation, the white gaze, and otherness in the predominantly white secondary school

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I address the first of my research questions, on visible difference and its effect on the lived experience of racialised girls. As I have established through a review of the theoretical and empirical literature above, perceptions of difference are established in relation to whiteness. This affects what can be seen in the white gaze (Yancy, 2017). Intersections of power and difference (Brah and Phoenix, 2004), and the impact of operating within racialised hierarchies, centred on an unacknowledged whiteness which determines both norms and ideals, underpins a process of racialisation. Further, the process of racialisation occurs within readings of femininity, childhood as well as social class, and within hierarchies constructed within whiteness and which have an impact in schools (Carter-Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). How this determines legitimacy for norms and ideals established in relation to whiteness, constraining those seen to be different on account of their visual difference from their white peers is a central focus of this chapter. In it, I explore empirically based understandings derived from the analysis of racialised girls' narratives to examine whether there is an effect that occurs because of being visually identifiable as a Black, Asian or Mixed-race girl in the predominantly white secondary school.

Bodies are understood to be different from one another but there is a need to attend to how bodies are lived through being differentiated from others (Shilling, 1997, 2008; Ahmed, 2000a; Brah, 1992). Within intersectional and Black feminist theorisation, there is seen to be a need to account for the body as part of what constitutes experience (Lorde, 1984; Mirza, 2013). Demarcated and boundaried through a visible racial identity, the othered body is summoned not as an equal but as lesser, 'locked in' (Fanon, 1952: 200) and conjured into being as a potent imaginary (Said, 1978; Hall, 1997b; Bhabha, 1994), a socially constructed 'fiction' (Walkerdine, 1990) within constructions of whiteness and otherness.

Although whiteness is experienced as an absent centre, norms which are orientated towards whiteness determine the institutional body and codes (Ahmed, 2012). Where institutions have generated ideas of appropriate conduct without making the 'whiteness' underpinning this explicit, Ahmed (2012: 42) argues that people:

> become hypervisible when they do not pass, which means that they 'stand out' and 'stand apart.' You learn to fade in the background, but sometimes you can't or you don't.

On account of visible difference, and even accounting for efforts to offset being hypervisible, some cannot or do not 'fade'. The body that 'attracts' attention needs to be understood in the context of school. Since education is seen as a process centred on the mind, Paechter (2011: 311) argues that the visible body is intrinsically considered problematic:

> Bodies that become visible outside of particular spaces and times in the school setting (playtime and PE lessons) are almost by definition problematic: they have intruded into the disembodied space of the being-educated mind.

Given a propensity to cast the body in school as 'inherently pathological' (Paechter, 2011: 311), embodying difference from whiteness may aggravate a pre-existing tendency towards pathologising the body in school.

The process of being racialised works through being a body in a particular space, within what can be termed spatial racialisation. Within an understanding of habitus, there are 'site effects' (Bourdieu, 1999). Those who do not conform to norms may experience a spatialised contraction through not being able to occupy space as their own (Ahmed, 2006). This chapter examines the site effects of the predominantly white school in terms of the racialisation and othering of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, including the ready availability of stereotypes and racial tropes.

Understanding who can or may 'pass' leads to a necessity to consider the impact of the white gaze and visible embodied difference in the predominantly white school. This chapter explores Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' ability to 'perform' girlhood within normative boundaries of femininity. In the predominantly white school, there will be those who more obviously fit in with expectations associated with white middle-class feminine norms, including global girl imperatives (McRobbie, 2009). Within normative constructions of femininity, understandings of beauty are often associated implicitly and explicitly with whiteness (Weekes, 1997) including in schools (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent and Ball, 2015). There are also implications for how intelligence is understood within whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2018; Youdell, 2006; Rhamie, 2014) with exclusions which affect racialised girls in school (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Therefore, this chapter explores whether there are everyday exclusions based on stereotypes and tropes applied to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in terms of beauty, intelligence and behaviour.

By the end of the chapter, it will be possible to understand how being seen to be different in the white gaze is impactful in the predominantly white school, and whether on account of race, culture or religion the processes of racialisation and stereotyping reinforces established and unchallenged perceptions of girls as less than their white counterparts on account of what is seen as their impaired ability to conform to ideals understood as residing within whiteness.

4.2. Difference, the white gaze and becoming the other in school

Processes of racialisation occur in a context which prioritises white interests and which establishes and maintains racial hierarchies and idealisations established in relation to whiteness (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017; Bhopal, 2018, 2020). Perceptions of embodied racial identity are established in relation to the continuing power and invisibility of whiteness naturalised as the norm (Gillborn, 2005). Although its power and influence often remain concealed, with their perception advantage (Rollock, 2012) Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls discuss the whiteness of their environment. The girls' local city in the East Midlands is demographically diverse, but Queen notes that her school is in a 'very white' area. In the predominantly white school, Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are aware that they are seen to be different to those around them. When they joined their school in Year 7, the experience of being a visible minority in school had been new for Cookie, Yasmine, Zoe and Ophelia. As Yasmine suggests in a focus group, this is a change from their more mixed primary schools:

> Coming up to this school was a big change because it was predominantly white so from primary, it's gone from having, that mixed base, religions and ethnicities things like that. So coming to this school it's like big change because there is a lot of white people and a small minority group.

Yasmine repeats that having a different ethnicity to the white majority is of consequence, twice referring to a 'big change'. From her Year 10 vantage point, and in the same focus group as Yasmine, Cookie remembers herself arriving in Year 7:

> I just looked around me and there were so many white people.

As Black girl in a predominantly white secondary school, in what Ahmed (2007: 150) terms a 'sea of whiteness', Cookie looks around for other Black people, but she does not see any. The lack of Black people in a 'sea of whiteness' also has implications for Bob. Suggesting that there is a need for intersectional analysis, Bob sees class as complicating perceptions of colour in her school:

> There's not like too many Black people in this school. Yeah and this school is posh. It's a posh school.

In Bob's estimation, the scarcity of Black people may not be the cause of her school being 'posh'. But there is no discursive distance between the two pieces of information, the number of Black people and her judgement that this is a 'posh' school. Bob also uses 'and' which further suggests she links the two. This suggests that as Bob comprehends it, she attends a 'posh' school which is associated with its 'whiteness'. Bob has a critical insight of the intersection between colour, culture and class even if the whiteness of it has 'faded' into the background and been subsumed within the category of posh. Associated with colour, class accentuates the way in which norms have an effect and enable

some more than others to 'pass' through whiteness. Perspectives on difference from whiteness are expanded to include assumptions about class hidden within conceptual whiteness (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ahmed, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006a; Gillborn, 2010; Bhopal, 2018).

Fiona reflects on her experience in her predominantly white primary and secondary schools, recognising that she looks different to most people in school:

> No one was in my year that looked like me.

Where skin colour acts as a 'frontier' of racialised identity (Tate, 2005), Fiona sees that her skin colour is critical, affecting how she sees and is seen. Moreover, since Fanon (1952) and Said (1978), the white gaze has been understood as an instrument which can fix otherness, demarcating the borderlines of same and other within an epidermal-historical-racial schema. Through the reification of boundaries, borders and bodies around racial lines, the surveillance of otherness is practised through 'the imposition of race on the body' (Browne, 2015: 7). Racialisation has a legacy that foreshadows what can be seen (Yancy, 2017). Within a 'white world', inhabiting a 'non-white body' (Ahmed 2007: 150), Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are noticed, as Fiona suggests:

> When I came to the secondary school, and when I was in my primary school, I was the only Mixed-race or Black child, so I was 'the Black one'.

Fiona is aware that her skin colour affects how she is seen by others around her. In the context of their embodied intersectionality (Mirza, 2013) in their predominantly white secondary schools, Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are noticeable, not just as bodies but on account of their bodily differences and distance from whiteness. Fiona is seen as racially and culturally different from whiteness. It is her Blackness (and inferred otherness) that is visible. Fiona is seen through a white lens as her skin colour, as 'the Black one'. Although the whiteness of her context may not be perceptible to many inside the institution, where 'whiteness recedes into the background' (Ahmed, 2012: 38), she is seen as different, becoming the other (Said, 1978) or outsider (Lorde, 1984).

Derived within parameters of unacknowledged whiteness, perceptions of difference occur in the context of established norms that seem natural and ordinary (Weheliye, 2014). This makes it difficult for the girls to avoid being scrutinised in the gaze in the predominantly white school, as Cookie suggests:

> the minute we walk into a room, people are, 'ooowh. There goes that Black person. Something is about to go on here.'

In the predominantly white school, the girls are simply too noticeable to fade into the background. On account of their difference from whiteness, they embody an announcement of an event or 'spectacle' (Hall, 1997b), just by entering 'a room' they become embroiled in racialisation.

Social readings of the body are meshed relationally in specific ways in specific contexts (Yuval-Davis, 2006a). Bodily distinctions act as the basis for social divisions, with implications for social interactions. The girls come to embody difference, becoming subject to scrutiny of their body shape, hair and skin colour and on account of their culture in the predominantly white school. Explorations of the boundaries of difference act as an 'orientation' in which whiteness is distinguished from what it is not (Ahmed, 2006: 115). Their peers attempt to pinpoint the domain of difference, with reference to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' skin colour and physical shape, and particularly to Black and Mixed-race girls' hair. Cookie notes her physical difference is a source of open curiosity when she is asked: 'why is your nose so flat?', or 'do I have a bone here? Her nose acts as a 'site' of bodily distinctiveness from whiteness.

Naomi notes that there remains a 'fascination' with Blackness as the spectacle of otherness. In another school and a year older, Queen also describes evidence of a fascination where the gaze translates into a right to look and scrutinise her:

> people will look at me and do a little tilt and stuff. I think I've gotten used to it now, but it's not something you should get used to […] yeah, that is just how my body is, I could be walking somewhere and they are always looking. It's kinda like, it's disrespectful.

Queen notes the constancy of her bodily visibility and how her body is sexualised. Where 'they are always looking', Queen has had to get used to her experience of a constant gaze, a head 'tilt'. Although Queen acknowledges that she knows she looks 'good' and that she has got used to it, she moves from hesitancy in expressing that 'kinda like' to stating her awareness of the violent intrusion of the gaze, 'it's disrespectful' and 'not something you should get used to'. Queen is subjected to a racialising process which works through exclusionary perceptions of childhood. This is akin to the 'adultification' process that Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen (2019: 2535) cite, and which denies Black girls' access to constructions of innocence.

Being seen to be different through cultural markers such as a scarf or hijab means that both Sheila's colour and her 'culturally marked' body are also invested with complex meanings that are continually assessed through looking. These meanings are different to those attached to Queen, but like Queen, Sheila notes the need to get used to the gaze:

> say if I'm the only Asian person, the only person wearing this [head scarf]... in a class then I'm just used to looks and stuff.

Sheila has got 'used to looks' in the predominantly white school. The gaze is not passive but something which seeks her out, intruding into Sheila's day-to-day school life. This affects how Sheila feels about her hijab:

> Yeah because like it felt so much different and I just didn't feel like wearing it in year 7. Then I got used to it in year 8, an' year 9 and then I'm like fine with it because like, how long have I been wearing it for like […] like seven years. So like its kind, I'm used to it now.

Although she did not like being obviously different when she was younger, Sheila suggests that moving up the year groups, she has got 'used' to how it feels to be visibly different on account of wearing her scarf in the predominantly white secondary school.

Both bodily difference and decisions associated with styling the body, lead to internally and externally imposed readings of differentials in value within a complex and interactive system (Grosz, 1994). Where knowledge about black textured hair occurs in the context of 'dominant definitions of beauty', greater value is associated with the white as opposed to the black body (Weekes, 1997: 114, Mercer, 1994). With race, class and gender as key categories of analysis (Bhopal and Maylor, 2014), there is a dynamic between those who are closer to the ideals established within white beauty norms, and those who have acceptability confiscated (Yancy, 2017) within readily re-inscribed constructions of stigma (Mercer, 1994). What is seen as 'normal' or 'nice' is context specific. In her primary school, Cookie's hair is considered 'normal':

> back then I was only eleven years old, […] at that age I wasn't very insecure about my hair because I was like this is normal to me, no one has ever said anything to me about my hair because everyone knows about the texture of your hair.

Cookie is used to wearing her hair naturally, without treatments or extensions. Where her hair is the norm, the texture of Cookie's hair is not something to be insecure about but something 'everyone knows'.

Bodily surfaces can morph and are accentuated as they are styled and performed (Mercer, 1994). Beauty is not just about the prescription of appearances, 'it is always actually prescribing behaviour' within a value system (Wolf, 1992: 14). Many Black women feel a need to hide their natural hair (Fashola, 2020). Although not necessarily overt or intentional in the predominantly white school, there is an 'orientation' centred on whiteness which establishes norms. The Black and Mixed-race girls' textured hair is evidence of their visible distance from ideals based on white beauty norms and idealised silky-smooth versions of hair within a racialised beauty hierarchy (Collins, 2000; Weekes, 1997; Tate, 2009). Queen feels that her peers approve of some hair styling choices which bring her hair closer to white beauty norms:

> If we get braids and stuff they go 'aww, why don't you have your braids in again? That looks nice', I think it's 'cause they like straight hair.

Queen's peers re-inscribe the value that is attached to the ideal of straight hair through affirmation of her braids as 'nice'. Even where positive comments are expressed by their peers, framed within a performance of friendliness and niceness (Hey, 1997) and within a desire for social approval (McRobbie 2009), the girls' hair remains a site for judgement (Dabiri, 2019).

Having textured hair is still not 'normalised' (Dabiri, 2019). Cookie's predominantly white secondary school contrasts with her primary school as there textured hair was not stigmatised:

> No one needs to mock you because if they are mocking you then they are mocking their own hair.

Cookie understands that being seen to be different makes her susceptible to being the subject of ridicule. In the white institution, textured and natural black hair is associated with a deficit (Weekes, 1997), and with unruliness (Nash, 2019), despite institutional codes for appearance seeming to be non-racial and neutral (Joseph- Salisbury and Connelly, 2018). Even if the impact of norms associated with whiteness, including around beauty and hair, are not perceptible to many around Cookie, she is alert to the potential for being mocked by her peers.

Within a racialised value system, Ophelia also feels the impact of being accorded a lower status and is prepared to be late for school if her hair is not right as she 'can't have it not done for school'. She is explicit about her motivation to change how she styles her hair:

> When I come to school, my mum always asks me why I don't have my hair in two cane rows anymore because basically these people were making fun of me for having two plaits because my hair is really short.

Ophelia wants to avoid people making 'fun' of her hair. She is already highly visible, and this is accentuated by having 'really short' hair. Through her experience she knows that difference is not equally valued or respected in her predominantly white secondary school:

> Most people in school don't really like it. I mean, I don't really like it 'cause it is really short and stubby and I just don't really like the way it looks. That's why sometimes I'll have extensions in…

Ophelia talks about her hair which can only approximate long 'sometimes' with 'extensions'. She finds 'most people don't like it'. These narratives and ideals become personal to Ophelia, 'I mean, I don't really like it…' As a girl with 'short and stubby' textured black hair, Ophelia feels the breach of white beauty norms. Within markers of difference which maintain boundaries between whiteness and otherness within assertions of 'superiority' (Collins, 2000: 79), her hair comes to signify 'ugly'

(hooks, 2003). The girls find it difficult to become less visible, and assuredly assess what level of difference will be tolerated. There are 'penalties' and 'punishments' meted out to those who are found to 'transgress' boundaries of what is acceptable within hegemonic standards of femininity, which leads many choose to 'discipline' their bodies to meet certain standards (Bordo, 1993). Since norms carry power, there are cultural imperatives towards conformity and girls find it difficult to resist the negative impact of judgements made on account of visible difference.

Re-inscribing the terms of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' otherness, judgements based on how the girls look occur alongside processes in school that demean the girls' bodies. There are additional penalties to the social aspects associated with a failure to conform to hair and beauty norms. The borders or parameters of Cookie's difference are tested beyond the gaze to include touch in school:

> Like you know when people just want to touch on your hair, it's like it's my hair, don't touch it. It's like people sneak behind you, or something start touching your hair now and I'm like, 'why are you touching my head?'

As well as the visual intrusion of the white gaze, Cookie's peers are so assured of their rights to invade her space that they touch her head or hair. This intrusion confirms that difference (from whiteness) is noted. It also adds a perceptible physical threat to her bodily autonomy.

Although measures to counteract visible signs of difference take work, time and expense and may result in actual bodily damage, Tate (2009: 43-44) argues, 'black hair stylization technologies' have expanded and serve either to 'remove the frizz or hide it'. Using 'relaxers' akin to the application of hot metal combs and curling irons, uncoil and stretch the hair, but also burn and damage it. Nonetheless in her effort to be more acceptable within prevailing beauty norms, Fiona describes her attempts to 'fix' or morph her body. Given the desirability of straight hair, Fiona describes using harmful chemicals.:

> My hair started falling out I'd put so many chemicals on it [...] I was dressing how I thought I should dress, not … how best suited me.

Fiona describes the costly impact of her attempts to change aspects of herself. Her motive is to counteract a sense that she might fail to be seen as acceptable. Those 'who fail' to perform within a set of norms are susceptible to being marginalised (Butler, 1988: 489). This is a critical context for all girls, but Gail suggests that in addition to hair styling, there remains a need to wear a 'mask'. Even though the mask cannot fully offset the detrimental effects on self-esteem within global politics of beauty and an aesthetic and hierarchy based on racism and colourism (hooks, 2003: 52), for Gail, a make-up 'mask' becomes a means to give her more confidence:

> Because I can't really, I hate going outside. I can go outside without a full face of make-up on, I just prefer not to […] I feel confident wearing it.

With make-up, Gail's confidence is enhanced. She can maintain an appearance of a confident, capable, fun and carefree girl without having to disclose all that is going on in her life to people around her. However, despite her mask, she is still subject to judgements about how she looks. According to her peers, Gail cannot get her make-up right. If Gail wears no make-up, then she is perceived to be 'really tired'. But Gail also feels criticised for wearing 'heavy make-up' however unfair and inaccurate that judgement seems.

Within schoolgirl constructions of femininity (Paechter, 2108; Renold, 2005), Fiona would also like to be part of social practices. Bonding through conversation about beauty routines is important to be intelligible within constructions of schoolgirl friendships (Renold, 2005). Even though the products are ill suited for her skin, Fiona uses make-up to signal her commitment to the group:

> But certainly when I was in Years 7 and 8 I couldn't find any make-up for me. It wasn't a huge thing but it was when everyone is talking about how they put stuff on or what they do, I couldn't really relate. I had this orange powder, that I would stick on my face occasionally and then my skin got bad and so it was even worse.

It is difficult for Fiona to 'relate' to her white friends on the beauty issues that 'everyone is talking about' since she cannot get the right products for her skin. Fiona points to the psychological and physiological costs of attempting to perform within the confines of white beauty norms without easy access to appropriate products. There are also implications for Fiona's friendship. Not being able to 'relate' accentuates distance and a lack of shared interests between her and her white peers.

Even though they wish to relate to their peers, making many attempts to do so, the girls' colour, bodies and their cultural identifiers boundary how each girl is identified. They cannot escape their visual difference having an effect.

4.2.1.   *Invisibility within difference: indistinct as an individual*

Seeing through a white lens makes ways of looking productive in delineating the boundaries of difference (Yancy, 2017) between whiteness and the other. However, it also accounts for a lack of differentiation between those who embody the other (Mohanty, 1984). This makes being seen as an individual difficult. The girls are highly visible as different, but also invisible within a perception of their difference from whiteness. Therefore, hypervisibility on account of visible difference of the non-white body is accompanied by a simultaneous invisibility of the visibly different individual as an individual.

The ways in which the white gaze functions through a narrow and restrictive lens has a bearing on how categories adhere firmly to the girls individually. Simmonds (1997: 228) suggests, 'for some of us it is impossible to escape the body and its constructions'. The surface of bodies, body shape, size, skin and hair establish what distinguishes one person from another and one group from another. But seen through a racialising lens, race is foregrounded over individuality or an accurate appraisal of individual difference. Markers of difference are seen through a white lens. For example, Mo describes how being Mixed-race is often not distinguished from being Black in school:

> when you see a Mixed-race person, you don't think Mixed-race, you think Black.

In another school, but similarly for Olivia:

> I feel like personally because I'm a darker skin tone to a white person, I'm automatically stereotyped as Black whereas I'm not just Black, I'm white as well […] I feel like probably from Year 7 to Year 8 if someone said, 'oh you're Black', in my head I'd be like, 'no I'm not, I'm Mixed-race.' Whereas now I'll, because I've heard it so many times, I've just given up on it, 'yeah I'm Black.' Like I don't bother any more.

Olivia has accepted that in the eyes of the white majority there is little point arguing that she is Mixed-race. Mixed-race girls in the white space are seen by others around them simply as Black. Olivia's specific background is subsumed within her difference from the category of white. It is therefore easier to accept the construction of her racial identity within a group identity or broader category of 'Black'. Although she is visibly different and hyper-visible in the context of a predominantly white school, Olivia has stopped challenging being invisible as an individual within a category.

In the white gaze, neither bodily nor cultural visual cues are sufficient to gain an accurate picture of Yasmine's background. Particularly in Year 7 and 8, even her friends were not confidently able to differentiate her from other brown Asians:

> I just say, 'oh no. I'm Pakistani. Sometimes they get it mixed up with Indian, like, there is a difference! Between Indians and Pakistanis.

Yasmine's friends must repeatedly question her to attain an accurate picture of her background. The difference between white and other is problematic for those in the majority to discern. This is despite important different cultural distinctions which may be critical to the identity of Indian or Pakistani girls for example. Yasmine does not mention a lack of cultural sensitivity rooted in historical knowledge of Partition or other major aspects of twentieth century history. But nonetheless, Yasmine expresses frustration at the level of ignorance about difference which is possible in groups that are seen as looking the same to those outside of that group.

Queen is clear that the terms of seeing do not relate to her personally but are a generalised and racialised way of seeing difference:

> And it is like, people always get me and Mo confused with each other. And I'm thinking, please. You know. She's tiny. I'm not. You know. It's like we have got very different personalities. We're very different. We do bond the same but like. We are two very different people. They are, Queen, like, 'sorry, sorry, you just look the same.' And I just look at her and I'm thinking, no, no we don't. It's like stupid.

Queen and Mo are very good friends, but Queen is incredulous that she and Mo could be mistaken for one another. Although they are highly visible as Black girls, neither individual girl nor individuality can be seen in the white gaze. Rather than see two 'very different' girls, those who apologise to Queen for their mistake cannot see the people before them, only that Mo and her are Black girls. Looking 'the same' obscures Queen and Mo's differences from one another. Mo is 'tiny'. They have different personalities. However, despite the trust placed in sight as a sense, the white gaze impairs an ability to see what is before the onlooker, leading Queen to characterise racialisation in the white gaze as flawed, or 'stupid'.

Within racialisation and fixed in the gaze, Fiona's individuality is also lost within a 'Black girl' category. A diminished ability to express 'nomadic subjectivities' (Fordham, 2016: 253) is proved by the looks that she receives, 'so you are that Black girl then are you?' This places boundaries on Fiona's ability to perform herself as she feels is appropriate:

> I really didn't want to be that sassy, confident, typical person I just wanted to be me and seen as me, so I didn't want that box.

Norms operate in the school environment. This amplifies a risk of misrecognition of the girls based on assumptions applied to each girl as though they are accurate. Many of the Black and Mixed-race girls describe themselves as being fixed as 'scary', despite each girl not recognising themselves in this way. As Year 9 Bob suggests:

> They do say I'm scary but I'm not scary.

Or Ophelia:

> I'm not a scary person, I don't get it. I'm such a nice person like when you get to know me, I'm really nice.

Or Queen:

> People think I'm a bad, wild person because of the colour of my skin.

Without any need to question what is seen in a racialising gaze, as Ophelia suggests, a set of exclusions to categories such as 'nice' is perpetuated. Moreover, in the white gaze the girls are seen to embody negative framings such as 'scary', 'bad', or 'wild'. Despite their individual differences, it is possible for categorisation to continue unabated in the gaze. The category remains untroubled (Ahmed, 2015). Whatever they do, each girl has difficulty dislodging being categorised through the gaze rather than being seen for who they are. The gaze acts as a starting point for a projection of who each girl is seen to be. Black girls are seen within narrow constructions of what their skin colour and specifically Blackness means. As a consequence of her race, Cookie's facial expression becomes a site to confirm people's assumptions about Black people:

> like when I first joined the school, people say 'I walk around, I look angry all the time', and people were like, 'oh, I'm scared.' You know, 'she looks like she is about to hit me' […] I'm not going to hit you. It's just that I have a resting bitch face.

Cookie's colour and her 'resting bitch face' is attached to meanings that come together when seen through a white lens. For Cookie, unlike her white counterparts, her 'face' feeds a construction of her, within a stereotype of Black women as 'scary' and aggressive:

> so many people have it, most people in this school say that they do have it but because of my race that is a problem 'cause I'm supposed to be this aggressive umm, I have got that side to me but, umm, not everyone is like that like my mum, my biological mum, she's not like that, if you know what I mean? She's got the same facial features as me but she is not an aggressive person, she is more like Queen, very passive, very like ,'oh' likes to talk things out, calm about things. It's always like that when people try and umm just assume things if you know what I mean.

Though they might look the same, Cookie and her mother do not have the same temperament. Nevertheless, on account of their colour, stereotypes and assumptions retain a powerful hold over people's thinking. Cookie is 'supposed' to be 'aggressive' which means that this is a lens that clouds perceptions of who she is. Cookie's awareness of profound distinctions between her mum, Queen and herself is not commonly shared. They become one when seen through a white lens, a single version of the Black-other, whatever distinctions there are between each of them.

In the predominantly white school, the gaze imposes generic racial tropes and assumptions onto the girls on account of their visible distance from the normative and invisible centre constructed around whiteness. This leaves the girls with less room for manoeuvre in school. As Cookie suggests, there is tacit acceptance of gendered racial tropes views recycled in society about the character of Black women and girls. People 'just sort of think, "oh yeah that's right!" …'

4.2.2. Over-determined learner identities

Within a white gaze, stereotypes and assumptions are easy to confirm, and very difficult for individual girls to overturn. Cultural differences are interpolated as natural, rather than a consequence of specific historical, institutional and contextual constructions which are made meaningful and renewed over time (Butler, 1993b; Rattansi and Phoenix, 1997; Yancy, 2017). This leads to exclusions surrounding intelligence and assumptions of non-white students as being less well behaved. Constructions of whiteness and class leads to white middle-class boys being more likely to be understood as intrinsically intelligent (Walkerdine, 1990; 1998), a perception which operates in conjunction with the disassociation of Black and Mixed-race people with intelligence (Gillborn, 2018). As Year 8 Ophelia suggests in a focus group, she is regularly taunted by a boy in her year:

> I'll say something, and he'll just interrupt me and say 'ha, ha, you're Black you're stupid.' […] he does it to me all the time.

Ophelia is told that she is 'stupid'. This is not a one-off but happens 'all the time'. The visual impression of her as a Black girl precedes Ophelia the girl, fixing her to racialising tropes and assumptions. A white lens establishes meaning around what is seen. Once established, what is assumed to be an accurate representation leaves an impression which is very difficult for Ophelia to overturn. She is fixed, and her response is ring-fenced.

In the context of intersections between their race and class identities, some brown Asian girls are also considered 'inadequate' learners (Shain, 2003; Youdell, 2006). However, many continue to be stereotyped and understood as model minorities. Though seemingly positive, this misrepresents their experience in school, and particularly the ability to understand that such children are affected by racism (Archer and Francis, 2007). Such stereotypes also confine understandings of the girls as individuals. Even though these stereotypes are nominally positive about model minorities' qualities or aspirations, they still racialise those that are seen through a stereotyping lens. Where intelligibility is associated with conforming to type rather than calling its validity into question, through their interrogation (Bhabha, 1994), both Sarah and Kahmia question how it would be possible for all Chinese or Indian children to be 'clever' or 'hard-working'. The girls understand that there is an inability for each girl to be seen as an individual. Instead, there is a misreading of the individual as representative of a particular racialised category who will therefore, almost automatically, be seen to embody certain fixed characteristics. Difference is seen through the lens of either performing to type or being the 'exception'. Either way, there remains a difficulty avoiding the imposition of the label.

Labels, stereotypes and assumptions retain legitimacy in school and because of this the girls are often seen as more likely to need discipline or punishment (Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews, 2020). Many of the girls express the sense that they need to behave to higher standards because if they behave similarly to their white counterparts, they will suffer worse consequences. According to Ophelia, Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls need to be on their 'best behaviour at all times'. In particular, the younger Year 8 and 9 girls together in one focus group suggest that although they are scrutinised for their behaviour, other people behave in similar or more obviously unacceptable ways. Ophelia suggests that, particularly from supply teachers, there are also assumptions that Ophelia will be unruly, 'then they think you are going to be really badly behaved.' Ophelia feels the containment of being labelled and implied exclusions on account of hidden gendered and racialised terms of reference:

> They want to make you the most perfect pupil, and it's really annoying because you are not perfect. I just want to be like normal really. I don't want to have a label on me to be honest I just want to be a normal person.

Ophelia baulks at an expectation of something as unattainable as 'perfect'. She feels labelled rather than supported in her aspiration to be 'normal'. Gail also finds it difficult to escape being labelled or seen to be at the centre of disruption. In a focus group, she recounts what happens during and after an unruly maths lesson when she is the only person her teacher chooses to speak to:

> so he'll be trying to teach and umm, people will be talking over him, or like laughing and stuff like that, and umm … like everyone was doing it and I will admit I was doing it as well, […] at the end of the lesson he told me to stay behind and he was like Gail, […] 'when I'm trying to teach the class you are talking and stuff like that.' And I said, 'yeah, but the whole class is doing it as well, so why are you just singling me out?', and he said, and he was like 'I'm not trying to single you out', but like, it was just me that was there so, that he made stay behind, so he was clearly singling me out.

Striking her as unfair, it is only Gail who is asked to stay behind. Despite her observations, the teacher is not conscious that he is operating a double standard, protesting that he is 'not trying to single' Gail out. For Year 8 Barbra and Bob, discussing this in the same focus group, there is a context which helps explain the teacher's way of seeing. Moreover, this is something which the girls' peers can operationalise to their advantage:

> Barbra: I think that white kids get away with more things. So you'll be sat in lessons and this white kid will come up and annoy you and […] you're telling them to shut up and stuff and they will go and snitch on you. And then
> Others [including Bob and Zoe]: [agreement]
> Barbra: they will get away with it, but then you'll get in trouble.
> Barbra: Yeah. Someone was distracting me, and I turned around and said, 'be quiet, so that I can work properly', but then the teacher will pull me up for talking and not them.

In the gaze, it is difficult to counteract an operationalised assumption that they are 'in the wrong' and misbehaving. As she is trying to do her work, Barbra faces distraction from others, but only Barbra is rebuked. The girls see that they are held to a higher standard of behaviour. Although their peer groups' behaviour may impact negatively on the girls, it is the girls' behaviour that is scrutinised, highlighting a 'double bind'. This highlights the difficulty the girls have in attempting to realign pre-existing assumptions about who they are, based on immoveable learner identities (Youdell, 2006). Bob understands that labels, assumptions about behaviour and stereotypes are central to why this manifestation of classroom management occurs:

> Because you shout innit. You've got like Anger. 'Cause you've said 'shut-up'.

Behaving like their peers – including chatting, talking when the teacher is talking, shouting and being angry about things that happen to them – position Ophelia and Barbra, and Zoe (whose heritage is Black Caribbean, and Asian respectively), Bob (who has Black African parents) and Gail (who identifies as Mixed-race) as behaving in unacceptable ways. Ophelia, Barbra and Bob point to labelling and assumptions that underpin their teachers' decision making. Although the girls are aware of the bad behaviour around them, they are the only ones to be told off, and so it seems to these girls as though, in Barbra's words, 'white kids get away with more things'. The girls see that when expected behavioural norms are breached by their white peers, they are not punished. But when racialised girls behave similarly or are affected by their peers' bad behaviour, it is racialised girls who seem to be more prone to punishment.

Within a 'dynamic set of social relations', there are effects of 'the forcible action of the norm' (Butler, 2009: 162, 163). This circumscribes choices for those produced discursively as 'strangers', which establishes 'not only bodily matter, but also which bodies come to matter' (Ahmed, 2000: 88; Butler, 2009). In each of their experience, the girls suggest that there are bodies that matter more than theirs. In addition to being cast as someone who feels that she is seen as disruptive, or a nuisance, Zoe explains that even when she makes an appeal to her teacher for help in the face of disruption from a boy in her class, it is Zoe who is asked to leave the classroom:

> In year 7 I used to sit behind him and he used to turn around and take my stuff. And then I put my hand up and say, 'he's took my stuff', and [the teacher] just ignores me. And then … urm … I just get up and try and get it and then I get told off and I get a [punishment] and have to go and stand outside the classroom […] sometimes he chucks my stuff back at me and sometimes it hurts me.

Although Zoe makes an appeal to her teacher for help, he 'just ignores me'. The teachers overlooks harmful behaviour, and only Zoe is punished. In the eyes of the majority, her white peer group and teachers, Zoe does not warrant protection from bullying and abuse. Moreover, some of the

classroom behaviour causes Zoe physical as well as psychological pain. Even though she is hurt by what happens, it seems as though Zoe is not able to access the protection of her class teacher.

Racial tropes, attached as though they are accurate on account of how each girl looks, encourage problematic constructions of many racialised girls. The girls perceive the ramifications of being fixed to racialised learner identities, more than their teachers appear to. As a consequence of gendered racialisation, it seems that they are more prone to labelling and less able to access teacher support or protection. Their attempts to challenge the unjust discrepancies in their treatment fail. Although as a brown Muslim girl, Zoe is regarded differently to her Black and Mixed-race peers, she is also seen as the source of the problem, rather than a young girl who needs protection from bullying, name-calling, sexism and racism. This cycle of stereotyping the girls as a disruption has consequences. It means that it is more difficult for the girls to access a safe and supportive learning environment.

4.3. Boundaries on self-determination and autonomy: Containment and compression

Affixed to identity categories, the body become solidified within a regime of representation of difference (Hall 1997, hooks, 2003; Ali, 2003). This determines that Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are seen according to ideas of what their colour represents, rather than who they consider themselves to be. As Year 11 Queen says:

It's just sad when they judge people for the colour of their skin.

Modes of seeing leads to judgement of people on account of their skin colour. Although covertly deployed, the terms of white privilege used in conjunction with information derived from the girls' visible difference determines what is seen and understood of the girls. It imposes an implicit acceptance of a racialised hierarchy that has an impact of the day to day lives of the girls in school. Rather than be seen as 'normal' or ordinary, they are seen in terms of their difference and what it is assumed that difference means.

For all girls, the compulsion to perform white girl femininity can be oppressive. As the stress increases, the space available to exercise autonomy shrinks, associated with a feeling of 'unconditional restraint', or 'compression' (Fordham, 2016: 135). However, since the girls are already hypervisible as different in the predominantly white school, they carry an additional burden. Being over-determined from the outside (Grosz, 1994), effects a border between a historically marked other and an illusory superior white subject. 'Thinking as usual' (Delgado and Stefancic,

2017; Yancy, 2017) means that there is little interrogation of what seems to be in view. In the white gaze (Yancy, 2017), long established views about reality are confirmed. Within stereotypes and assumptions that are imposed upon the girls, and assertions of the superiority for whiteness, the girls are seen to breach pre-existent scripts of how they perform femininity. Queen describes her younger self's response to the compression that she felt, suggesting that:

> like, not really things I shouldn't have done but I done it because I wanted to fit in like the white people in my school, like arghh it's so annoying and err I don't know it's just weird, like, I tried to straighten my hair, I had dutch braids in my hair, fish tail braids, mainly, or mostly to do with my hair. Umm. I used to wear what a lot of white people wore, like just plain black clothing or, you know whatever trends they were doing, I'd like follow their trend.

Although she is now annoyed, and her efforts did not involve her doing things she 'shouldn't have done', with hindsight, Queen suggests 'it's just weird' that she attempted to fix her hair and wear similar clothing to her white peers. But she also knows that it was an effort to fit in at school. Where being white seems to act as a qualification for inclusion, Queen's difference seems to preclude her. To be seen as acceptable and fit in, Cookie also attempts to navigate her way through conflicting information on how she should perform girl in her school. However, Cookie's efforts have also culminated in an awareness that she cannot 'win':

> It's not a win-win situation, it's like, you do what they are telling you to do, it's a problem like, 'yeah, you are trying to be white then. You're straightening your hair to look like this, like, 'you are trying to look like us.' But then, 'didn't you tell me to go straighten my hair, so that I could look nice, so that I can fit in...'

Instead of her efforts securing greater acceptance in the predominantly white school, Cookie is aware of her precarious status on account of her visible difference. Although Cookie has foregone some of her autonomy in trying to 'do' as she is told, she is judged as too eager to imitate white girls. Rather than resolve the issue of her difference, and what it means in the predominantly white secondary school, Cookie's attempts to pursue a promise of inclusion – 'so that I can fit in' – only results in a failed 'mimicry' (Bhabha, 1994). A ring-fenced acceptability and a disavowal of difference within it, results in a renewal of the threat associated with being seen as different. Their raced gender and gendered race extend the impact of 'compression' for the girls.

Although Black girls' autonomy to express their identity is constrained by different assumptions to those operating on Asian girls, it is their visible difference to the white majority that means that the girls are categorised by those around them, or 'stuck *to* a category' (Ahmed, 2012: 4; Puwar, 2004). What that category is taken to mean is then inflicted on the girls. Within a binary discourse of who girls are supposed to be (Paechter, 2018), and girls' equality (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018), Sheila 'get[s]

so many questions' even from people that she has known for a long time. The questions become a means of demarcating Sheila's difference from other girls. Sheila cannot be seen as an individual because even when she answers questions posed to her, there remains fixed ideas of what being a Muslim girl entails:

> Like, 'why aren't you allowed to drink?' Or 'why do you have to wear a headscarf?' I get so many questions. I still get them now from friends I have been for ages like […] they already know but, or like, 'why are you not allowed out whenever you want?' and stuff. But I do think my mum does give me freedoms and stuff because she still lets me out.

Questions posed to her serve to mark boundaries between her and her peers. Sheila is questioned in ways which suggest that she is seen as a victim of her culture and a Muslim other. As a Muslim, it is assumed that Sheila will not be allowed out or to take part in 'drink-ups'. Based on what is assumed of her social and sex life, dress code, and lack of freedom, Sheila's friends' interest is performative as, 'they already know'. The gaze, rather than Sheila's own answers, determines how she is understood by her friends. Sheila disputes their assumptions but still needs to re-assure herself that her narrative is accurate, emphasised by her use of 'do think' and 'does give me freedoms' in her account.

Despite her overt difference from stereotypes of Asian and Muslim femininities, Sheila is lost inside of static assumptions applied to her in school on account of her being seen as a Muslim girl. She is contained within understandings of Islam. Deeming her in need of being rescued from archaic and misogynist cultural impositions from within her own culture (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018), overly coerced by parents concerned with controlling their interest in 'maybe boys' (Hamzeh, 2011), Sheila is re-inscribed as an outsider. As such, Sheila is indistinct from other Muslim girls, and not recognisable as herself. But Sheila is aware that she is dissimilar to other Muslim girls in her school. However, rather than enable her space or agency to express this self-knowledge, the gaze fixes Sheila as a cultural artefact and information repository.

Sheila's ability to conform to normative femininity is impaired in the gaze. Sheila is seen as less able than her white counterparts to perform what is seen in school as constituting valid forms of femininity. Through negative comparisons to other 'it' girls (McRobbie, 2009), Sheila is judged to be 'not fun!'. Being subsumed in a fixed racialised Muslim group identity, Sheila becomes contained, less free to express herself. She has less space in school to perform her religious, racialised and gendered identity as she chooses. This view does not change over time but translates into a superiority centred on whiteness and its distinction from otherness:

> And they are making a point, 'oh why can't you do that, we can do that.' They are just comparing their life to mine. They think their life is like, so much better.

Due to fixed stereotypes attached to Muslim girls, Sheila's performance of girl differentiates her from her peer group, and bars her from accessing the relatively higher stakes associated with being a 'global girl' as McRobbie (2009) defines it. Sheila recognises that there is a judgement that arises about the value of her life that understands it to be not just different, and not equal but 'so much' worse. Sheila is judged to be 'less than' within constructions that deem white feminine norms and 'western' freedoms superior.

Being visibly different or distant from whiteness has ramifications. The visible and hyper-visible othered body in school cannot operate freely as a wholly autonomous being. Socially constructed 'fictions' (Walkerdine, 1990), where Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' identities are understood as fixed by racial categories, subsume the girls' autonomy and freedom to express their bodily, social and cultural differences as they choose. It is difficult for the girls to be seen as themselves as opposed to an affiliate to an identity category. Rather than receive fresh insights into people's reality, there is a sedimentation of what can be seen in the gaze which secures the 'meaning' of visible difference.

The girls' racialised gender and gendered race act together such that norms associated with being white and a girl in a predominantly white school position Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls with a predisposition to violate norms associated with hegemonic gendered and classed 'scripts'. Violations lead to a hypervisibility, which, paradoxically, coexists with each girl's invisibility where her individuality is subsumed within the category of other, whether it be Black, Asian, or mixed-race. However, rather than be boxed in, Fiona would like to be seen as herself, including how to look and sound as opposed to performing according to an 'outside' imposition:

> brown skin is something that I would see […] it is not something that I wanted to be defined by, my skin colour and that stereotype. I just wanted to be me.

The girls are not a homogenous group, nor do they identify themselves solely based on their race, gender or other individual characteristic. But 'congealed' (Ahmed, 2015) identity categories, including race, gender and class, rather than intersectionality and individuality, contribute to the 'containment' of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. They experience an exaggerated 'compression'. Assumptions and impositions persist, and limits are placed on the girls on account of the way that Blackness and otherness is seen and assumed to be in a white and 'fixing' lens.

4.3.1. Parameters of authenticity

Each girl is subject to assumptions about who they are and how they are supposed to perform. Categories (as seen through a white lens) are foregrounded, rather than each girl's individuality.

Consequently, when Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls fail to perform to type, there is an additional threat to their autonomy. Despite the complexity of identity and allegiance (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991; Brah, 1992; Ali, 2003), there is a problematic imposition of an idea of authenticity (Bhabha, 1994; Tate, 2005). When the girls are already subject to negative judgements in the white gaze, being understood to be inadequately authentic threatens to be another constraint on the girls.

The girls describe how their features, or ways of being – such as their colour, skin tone, their accent, their way of dressing – are called into question within their peer group's perceptions of what is authentic. Yasmine is quizzed about her embodiment of otherness. Yasmine's colour and its potential for her to perpetrate a deception within a white gaze warrant an explanation. Both her parents and one of her siblings have a 'darker skin tone'. She and one of her siblings are what Yasmine calls, 'the white ones of the family':

> being a white Pakistani- I can look white or something like that. Sometimes, I don't really know how to explain myself [when asked] 'how come you are so white?' and stuff like that! I don't know! How am I meant to answer the question?

Yasmine is asked to account for her deviance from what is assumed to be a physiological norm. When there is a fixity of what otherness looks like, this makes any breach of accepted physical norms something which others feel that they have a right to query. Yasmine feels this line of questioning as an intrusion, knowing that she can never give an answer that will satisfy.

Other features are also called into question by the girls' peers. Queen explains that she is quizzed about her freckles, a feature her peers associate with white people. As a 'lived materiality' (Browne, 2015), her features are narrated by others to foreground both her distance from whiteness, and simultaneously a proximity which is used discursively to cast shade on her authenticity. As a Black, Mixed-race girl, Queen may have 'black skin', but the authenticity of her Blackness is questioned by her peers, as in addition to her braids and freckles, she acts 'white'. This questioning feels personal to Queen as she is being quizzed over her legitimacy to identity as Black:

> And the worst thing about it, umm, sometimes my freckles, 'cause it's very rare to see a Mixed-race or a Black person with freckles. And a lot of people go, 'so you are more white than Black because you have freckles'?, […]They always think because I've got freckles I'm way more white than I should be I don't know, it's just kinda like something that it annoys me, but at the same time that they try and make it an insecurity. For me. Do you know what I mean? They want to make me ashamed of having this facial feature which I'm actually in love with. That's what I feel makes me unique. Like, you see me, you see my freckles. That's just me.

Queen becomes aware of an externally imposed ambition 'to make me ashamed of having this facial feature'. She feels a need to contend with the violence of the imposition of the gaze as a source of judgement on her bodily performance of difference. The boundary of this category is decided upon not by Queen herself but by others around her.

Although as a Mixed-race Black girl, she is simply seen as a Black girl, Fiona is seen to breach performative norms associated with being Black in the predominantly white school. Seen through a white lens, Fiona does not look (or sound) right – in terms of how her peer group assume being Black should look and sound:

> for instance, someone would say, 'you're Black, why aren't you cool?' […] Like, 'why aren't you like you should be?' […] It was in the food tech room that we talked about this first and it was that I have a posh accent and everyone was just repeating 'you've got such a posh accent' but what was really strange to me was that other people definitely have my accent or a similar one, and it wasn't like I was the poshest person there, […] Like, 'you don't act the way we expect you to from the way that you look', and it is like that sort of, 'why aren't you cool?' like that boy who said that, or like, 'why can't you talk about Black culture?'

Fiona suggests that there is an implication that she should be 'cool', not sound 'posh' and that she should be able to talk about Black culture knowledgeably. Therefore, when she does not perform adequately according to this fixed view of who she is meant to be on account of a group identity, then like Queen, she is seen to be insufficiently 'authentic'. Rather than see the category being too restrictive to accommodate real life difference, Fiona is seen to be at fault for not performing Blackness correctly as judged by those around her. Fiona's version of Black is not seen as 'cool', is too 'posh' and inadequately culturally informed.

This makes the girls distance from whiteness doubly problematic, as not only are they seen to be non-white in a white space, but also as they do not perform being Black correctly as determined by markers of authenticity applied to them in the white gaze. Although this is done so through discursive means, boundaries on authenticity are imposed on each girl. These impositions add to their experience of compression, further reducing their feelings of being at ease in white space whilst being themselves. It is perhaps of most consequence to Mixed-race girls where judgements about authenticity seem to be weaponised by their peers.

4.4. Space invaders: Uneasiness in 'white world'

Where space has become associated with whiteness – as the somatic and idealised norm – this is consequential to those who either do not or cannot identify as white (Ahmed, 2006). The terms of engagement between the girls and their peers, and their teachers and school authorities, are

boundaried by stereotypes and fixed views of who they are and what they represent. Due to their visible difference, Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls may not be seen to fully belong or fit in.

There is some frustration and hurt at the way in which assumptions are used to stigmatise racialised girls who are just being themselves, or in Ophelia and separately Queen's words, are 'just normal'. In the context of the predominantly white school, the girls are not necessarily afforded the space to be 'just normal'. Experiencing a 'double consciousness' (DuBois, 1903, Hall, 1997c), and aware of their context as minorities in a predominantly white school, the girls cannot ignore the dynamic of being visibly different in their school. Wanting to fit in is a 'usual' teenage imperative, but as Fiona suggests the visibility of her racial difference is impossible to side-step:

> Oh yeah I think it's quite hard to unmesh what's just a teenage experience from the background of being seen as one culture, being brought up in a different one, Umm, so there's that isolation-ary bit where I didn't feel that I fit with anyone, but that could have been the case for someone else. That might not have been because of what I looked like but could have been just what I felt inside. Like I could have projected that, I'm not sure. Umm, but there were certain times when I felt that my race was very much a point of like discussion...

Although Fiona is aware that her perspective is critical in formulating her lived experience, she cannot discount that how she looks distinguishes her teenage experience from those of others around her. Without being able to simply take for granted that she will be accepted and acceptable, Fiona spends time contextualising the responses of other people to her. Fiona wishes that there could simply be a greater acceptance of being and looking different from everyone else:

> just accept that I'm here. Like just accept me.

Instead of being able to assume that she will be accepted, Fiona does not always feel at ease. Within school, it is easy to feel out of place. Fiona suggests that visible difference plays a role in lending her a sense of foreboding:

> And this is more about the majority versus the minority […] I thought, 'oh no' because I am looking out.

Fiona's reaction and disquiet, 'oh no' is 'especially' felt by her younger Year 7 self. Fiona's sense of an underlying tension is suggested by her use of the term versus, 'the majority versus the minority'. As a 'space invader' the terms of engagement for 'co-existence', (Puwar, 2004) are predicated on Fiona not being a cause of disruption. Fiona expresses her sense that she does not have an undisputed right to occupy space:

> Like blocking other people's view as well. That's a tiny thing as well. I always used to sit in class and think like no one can see, like behind me.

Expressed as concern that she might be 'blocking' people's view in class, Fiona feels discomfort occupying her space in the classroom as her own. Fiona attempts to downplay the risk of her bodily visibility, commenting that it is 'a tiny thing' but she is 'always' aware that she might be a source of disruption. Her fear that she is 'blocking other people's view' is not grounded in physiological truth – her hair realistically would not block anyone's view. However, black hair operationalises the association of the Black girl with unruly and disruptive traits (Dabiri, 2019). In a white, middle-class gaze, hair can be deemed 'too distracting to the other pupils' (Elan, 2020, citing the case of Ruby Williams, sent home from her London school). Fiona's anxiety represents a feeling that her presence could inconvenience others. It is a manifestation of her feeling that she cannot unquestionably occupy space as her own in the predominately white school.

Uncertainty, a sense of foreboding and disquiet in the predominantly white school, because of embodied difference, is a complex and emotional terrain to negotiate. Fiona's thoughts and feelings are fashioned within her autonomous and individual sense of her own identity. But Fiona's sense of herself does not operate independently of her context or her experience. Racial thinking is not an 'artefact' embedded into an independently functioning individual subjectivity, but 'rather represents, at a deep level, one dimension of our subjectivity' (Jones, 1993: 76). Fiona's 'double consciousness' cannot completely discount an outside imposition on her own sense of self.

In the context of a majority-minority dynamic, the girls' experience can be isolating and difficult. It is easy for the girls to begin to feel ill at ease in a space where a laugh might catch them off balance. Fiona is the only one in her peer group who looks like her. Given some of her experiences, Fiona feels a need to be vigilant:

> I'd hear a laugh and think that it was about me because I looked different that day, they were probably just joking behind me and it probably wasn't necessarily about me at all. It's that you revert back to thinking something has changed in me so maybe they are laughing about that [but then I have had] more not nice stuff than nice stuff [being said] because of how I looked.

Fiona is unsettled by a laugh and wonders if it is something to do with how she looks 'different that day'. Self-consciously Fiona considers that she might be superimposing a narrative on what has happened, one that she has fabricated, 'it probably wasn't necessarily about me at all.' But there is a menace in the white gaze that she understands from her experience of overt and unkind references to her embodied difference. Therefore, Fiona cannot be confident that her peer group might not be laughing 'about' her.

Also undercutting their sense that they can feel truly at ease, there are also direct questions posed to the girls, as Cookie and Hope explore through the translation of the question, 'where do you come from', into a desire for them to 'return' somewhere. An assumption of an association with places 'over there' as opposed to 'over here' (Hall, 1992a; Hirsch, 2018) means that embodying stranger (Ahmed, 2000a, 2000b) renders others highly visible, 'guests' in 'someone else's home' (Ahmed, 2012: 43). Even though Cookie was not born in England, she still is hurt by the assumption, on account of her colour, that as a Black girl she is not seen to belong in England:

> but the thing that has stuck with me, is 'to go back to your own country' and obviously then that was true, like I wasn't from here. I was foreign but it really hurt me because I was like…, 'why would you say that?' I haven't done anything. I haven't insulted you, you've never met me before, you've never seen me before. This is the first time you've met me, and the first thing you say is, 'go back to my country' like how do you know, I knew I was not from here but how does he know? Some Black people are born here. They're British, like they're from here but [...] he's stood there assuming that because of my skin, like my … just because I'm Black I'm not from here, maybe from Africa, maybe from, mainly people think I'm from Africa, mainly from, or somewhere that isn't here.

Cookie objects to and is hurt by the assumption that 'just because I'm Black' it must mean that she is from 'somewhere that isn't here'. She understands that this questioning is different in impulse to an expression of curiosity, asking 'why would you say that?' Cookie has not done anything to warrant this hostility, except be visible as Black in a predominantly white context. The need to process this thinking highlights the impact of prevailing power hierarchies, prompting further questioning of what it is that makes her a spectacle subject to such hostility, rather than an 'ordinary' body:

> I remember one time I was sat here and I was thinking, 'what's wrong with me?' like I'm a human being like I was just saying the only thing that makes me different to any, any girl, [...] is that I'm Black. Like there's nothing else. Like we've got the same blood pumping through our veins, we got the, we've both have eyes. It was just like I was comparing things and thinking this is just not right.

In her predominantly white school, the common ground based on an understanding of a shared humanity is not immediately apparent to Cookie. Rather than assume that she is 'right', Cookie questions 'what's wrong' with her. This question arises in a context where difference is interpreted as wrong. However, ultimately having interrogated her context, Cookie identifies that having compared 'things', it was 'not right', rejecting the perception that there is anything 'wrong' with her.

4.4.1. Code switching: Endeavouring to disrupt impositions of the white gaze and discomfort

Being seen to be different inside of school means that there is a need to perform the self in strategic ways. Within a racialising effect of the white gaze, cultural capital and middle-class advantage

cannot be operationalised to fully protect Black middle-class children from uninvited scrutiny, leading Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent and Ball (2015) to suggest that code switching is a critical defensive mechanism. Code-switching to 'public identities' emphasises similarities with white counterparts and facilitates becoming 'racially palatable' (Rollock, Gillborn, Vincent and Ball, 2015: 153).

Without being acknowledged as racialised constructions, norms of quietness and restraint are naturalised as an appropriate behaviour within femininity. Black girls are more likely to be understood as 'loud' rather than 'demure' and 'ladylike' (Morris, 2007), and whilst Asian girls are often stereotyped as quiet and submissive (Shain, 2003, 2010), when Muslim girls are understood as modest, this is framed as overly controlled by their families (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018). Therefore, for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls code switching represents an attempt to counteract stereotyping and the unthinking application of racial tropes in the white gaze.

The girls' decisions are shaped by norms that map how to look and behave in the school. They do not have the power to determine or choose these norms or perceptions of each girl within these norms. But, as someone who could be perceived negatively on account of how she looks, Queen describes her and her friend's impulse to diminish their visibility as Black Mixed-race girls:

> And it's got to that point where earlier, earlier during school it was like, 'ah they're looking at us, let's just be quiet' and stuff.

When they were younger in school, Queen had a deliberate strategy to keep quiet to deflect attention. Although this strategy has been discarded, Queen and her friends had attempted to hide in plain sight in the hope that it might efface their visibility. Fiona also suggests that her code-switching centres on disguise. To distract from her visible difference, Fiona attempts to foreground a 'nerd' identity, speaking of conscious endeavour that she makes to be seen as thoughtful, quiet, and hardworking rather than a loud, disruptive, argumentative Black girl:

> quite umm, restrained, a restrained version of who I have now become. Still content, quite happy, easy to talk to other people so I suppose, extrovert in a certain sense, but umm there were always certain thoughts in the back of my head […] about how I'm perceived by others.

There is power in the gaze in the predominantly white school. The gaze leads Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls to consider the impression that they make. At times, they decide to attempt to modify the perception. Both Queen and Fiona describe being 'restrained' so as not to confirm negative judgements that others in their predominantly white schools may have of them.

External impositions, alienating or distorted views, pre-defined and singular (Lorde, 1978) also presents difficulties which Kahmia and Sarah are keen to avoid. Being seen as 'model minority' girls, Kahmia and Sarah are not understood as loud, but they do not openly challenge any fixity of impression associated with their visibility. Playing the game (Puwar, 2004) is a mode of code switching in white space, and Kahmia and Sarah also use being quiet to avoid scrutiny.

Under prevailing constructs of white, middle-class behavioural norms, discussing race or a racialised narrative is a potential source of discomfort and unease (Ahmed, 2007; 2012). As such, some of the girls see that is best avoided. Nonetheless, by virtue of her presence and her visible difference, Fiona threatens a lapse in protocol:

> I remember particularly how people would come in and be, 'look how black I am', with their fake tan and then notice I was in the conversation and sort of freeze and umm, still like umm, my way to deal with the awkwardness that came upon there, because I felt like it was my turn to speak after they go, 'oh she's here' sort of thing, I be like, 'not as black as me', and I'd self-deprecate to make them feel better about sort of not thinking before they spoke. And still to this day, this happens…

As the only Black Mixed-race girl present, Fiona's colour is noticed. Fiona is conscious that without her there, the construction of a white girl fake tan as 'black' would not be problematic in the eyes of the white girls who say it. Knowing that she too can speak without due consideration at times, Fiona acknowledges that she should not judge people for everything that they say. She consciously does not assume ill-intent on the part of those who speak and make her feel like she is not 'part of the conversation'. But her presence changes the dynamic about being 'black' from banter to a potential materialising of her as the source of discomfort. Centred on re-establishing her white peers' 'comfort' (Mignolo, 2011; DiAngelo, 2011, 2018) or at least offsetting the risk that she could become the sore point (Ahmed, 2012), Fiona 'self-deprecates' to offset any 'awkwardness'.

A racialised predisposition in the predominantly white school more readily situates niceness within whiteness. Fiona feels that she needs to dispel the discomfort about her racial difference and extend her performance of nice. Without it, her visible difference could lead to her being seen as an outsider on account of her colour and her lack of attentiveness to the well-being of others in the group. Therefore, Fiona continues in her attempts to smooth over any discomfort brought about by her presence:

> So my way of dealing with that was to make a joke about, usually be about myself or something to do with the colour of my skin so that they would feel better but afterwards I would have like a bitter taste. Like, 'I wish I didn't have to do that and like, be part of those conversations.' Even now, argh, I'll be like 'I have to make a joke now'.

Despite her frustration with her own behaviour, Fiona foregrounds her skin colour, not to call attention to herself, but because her visibility at this point is so acute. Through this exchange, she attempts to approximate being 'one of us' through endeavouring to dispel some of the anxiety on account of her presence as a Black girl. Nonetheless, despite being conscious of her intent, Fiona's actions leave a 'bitter taste'. Although Fiona's experience of 'compression' is eased by 'making the joke', her need to facilitate her white peer group's comfort is not simply a one-off event:

> Yes that's it because you never know what to say, so I make the joke, I make the joke. But I could have said like, I still don't know what to say about the bad thing. Maybe making the joke was the only way I could see to, I don't know.

Fiona's assessment is that this kind of exchange is a moment of risk which needs to be offset through her feminine performance of care and generous jocularity in friendship. Even afterwards, and though problematic to her sense of self, joking about it is the only response that she considers possible.

Sheila has also attempted to manage the effect of her visible difference in the predominantly white school to ring-fence negative ramifications of being seen to be different. Until recently, she had amplified her performance of 'cool' in a 'bad girl' friendship group. This code-switching had enabled Sheila to breach a boundary, increasing her ability to respond to one mode of 'assimilating' (Shain, 2003, 2010; Fordham, 1996) and almost, despite her religion, to cross a culture-line. 'Passing' (Ahmed, 2000b) in this way has previously given her 'symbolic capital' which 'has been acquired by a successful act of legitimisation which veils the social processes and structures' (Skeggs, 2004: 169). However, Sheila is newly excluded from this friendship group. This presents a moment of risk to her. Without the protection of a friendship circle, girls are noticeable by their absence in spaces they previously occupied (Paechter, 2018). The cost to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls who experience the loss of a friendship threatens an even greater visibility in the white space of school. Even without losing her friends, Sheila is noticeable due to her skin colour and her hijab.

As well as the social costs of this loss, this renews a risk of 'misrecognition'. Instead of being recognisable as a friend within a 'bad girl' friendship group, Sheila's visibility increases. She is aware of this suggesting that, had she gone to a different school where there was a Muslim majority, 'then this wouldn't have happened because I'd fit in'. However, instead of being able to count on of the group to protect her from glare of her visibility, Sheila now needs to protect herself from the friends she used to count on:

> Yeah, it's just really awkward because it looks like I've been upset or something. I can hear them say stuff and it makes me really awkward, like when I have to hear them say stuff.

Without a group, Shelia needs to diminish her newly extended visibility as an outsider. This makes school even more 'awkward' for her and so she changes her approach centred on a need to make herself less visible in order to prevent her peers from knowing that she has been crying. Therefore, in order not to be seen to be alone, vulnerable and upset, every break, Sheila goes to see 'Miss Student Support' in her office. Here, she can occupy this school space without as much scrutiny from her peers. Although it is not as successful a means of code-switching as she has performed in the past, for Sheila at this time, it is a pragmatic response aimed at offsetting any extension of the gaze.

Without difference being seen as legitimate, it is difficult for each girl to secure an automatic right to fit in and feel a sense of belonging. Their visible difference acts as a barrier to inclusion and prompts efforts to code-switch, however constraining and unsuccessful these turn out to be including for their well-being.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the first research question concerning racialised girls' visible difference and how it affects lived experience in predominantly white secondary schools. Following the analysis of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' narratives I have shown that an intersectional approach within Critical Race Theory is necessary to explain the impact of the girls' visible difference in this particular setting. Without reifying race as a biological reality, Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' embodiment of difference is made to matter through racialising processes. Perceived racial differences play a part in determining relations between people, and so race counts. In the white gaze the body is linked to assumptions which, joined with stereotypes and racial tropes, are deployed to construct racial meaning around tangible bodily manifestations of racial difference, asserting distance from an idealised whiteness in terms of beauty norms, behaviour and intelligence.

Distinct racialising stereotypes are accorded racial groups, but however 'group' specific, these processes act as a form of containment of all the girls in school. Stereotypes, including nominally positive ones, continue to have an impact. They may be assumed to be model minorities, like Sarah and Kahmia, or be able to pass as 'pretty' as Zoe reports, or as Queen highlights, commended for braiding their hair. But they continue to need to operate within constrictive frameworks, subject to compression. They remain vulnerable to being understood as performing girl in ways which deviate from ideals generated within whiteness as a normative centre.

Assumed meanings of race, gender and class are inscribed and re-inscribed onto Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in the predominantly white school. This leads to the potential for understandings of

particularly Black girls as loud, unruly and disruptive in a white space. Their purported 'scariness', 'wildness' and 'badness', 'aggression' and 'anger' helps construct the Black and Mixed-race girls in terms of deficiency and deviancy, and 'less-than' their white counterparts. Within the white gaze, there seems to be a difficulty in differentiating between the girls, or seeing each as an individual as opposed to a type or member of a particular racial group. Racialised girls come to embody difference from whiteness without easily being differentiated from one another.

Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls make conscious efforts aimed at responding to the 'terms of engagement' that are determined within whiteness in order to 'fit in'. They are agentic, rather than passive in their acceptance of the racial and racialising status quo, as evidenced by their interrogation of labels and their attempts to code switch. However, the girls remain seen through a lens of racial difference. This determines the parameters of their interactions and exchanges in school, affording each girl less autonomy to be themselves in their predominantly white school. Manifesting difference from whiteness in the white gaze, each girl is not intelligible as 'normal' or simply an ordinary schoolgirl, or an insider who fully belongs in white space.

The impact of visible difference fashions responses to each individual girl. This instigates and perpetuates processes of racialisation which make them susceptible to racism. However, conceptual frames which have been established within Critical Race Theory, Black feminism and postcolonial theorisation suggest that accounts of racism also need to explain institutional racism. Building on this chapter's exploration of the persistence of norms and ideals affecting relations for individual girls in their school environment, the next chapter explores the 'institutionalization of whiteness' (Ahmed, 2006:134). This involves exploring how white privilege and its denial is structured into the workings of the predominantly white institution. This is followed by a discussion of processes of interest convergence and divergence, and how this opens the way for retrenchment from any meaningful engagement in the white institution with equality and inclusion goals, with a propensity to convert the predominantly white secondary school into a hostile environment for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

5. Understanding the predominantly white secondary school as a hostile environment: white privilege, tokenism, barriers to inclusion, marginalisation, interest divergence and retrenchment

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I set out evidence pertaining to three of the research questions: on support and barriers that racialised girls experience in the predominantly white school; experiences of racism, sexism or religious discrimination; and what changes might improve racialised girls' lives. Having analysed racialised girls' narratives pertaining to the support that they receive, barriers and marginalisation, and considering experiences of racism, sexism and religious discrimination, I establish the extent to which it is useful to conceptualise the predominantly white secondary school as a hostile environment, one which is underpinned by interest divergence and retrenchment from stated goals of inclusion and equality. This leads into a greater understanding of changes that could improve racialised girls' lives in their predominantly white secondary schools.

Within an environment in which whiteness is privileged, distance from whiteness is seen as a punishable transgression in the gaze. Girls' visibility for example, perceptions of their 'loudness' or a reluctance to hide or mask their confidence is taken as a marker of their lack of motivation to succeed or meet the educational expectations in school (Fordham, 2016: 37). Individual girls' actions are seen to justify why they experience marginalisation (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, and Id-Deen, 2019). Following the thematic analysis of what racialised girls say and using concepts from Critical Race Theory, Black feminism and postcolonial thinking, to analyse evidence from the girls' narratives, I explore how systemic whiteness and white privilege alongside structural racism could have an impact on the lives of racialised girls through the way that the predominantly white school operates.

Having explored institutional manifestations of white privilege and interest convergence, this chapter continues with an exploration of the degree to which the girls' testimony can be analysed conceptually in terms of interest divergence and then retrenchment. By the end of this chapter, I will have assessed the extent to which an institutional habit of failing to address marginalisation of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, alongside racism and sexism, heightens the likelihood of the school being a hostile and isolating environment for racialised girls, one where there might be a denial of any problem with racism but where racism can and does continue. I conclude that, however unintended by the school authorities, and despite some manifestations of a desire to improve representation of

a few girls, which might be understood in terms of interest convergence, interest divergence in a cycle with retrenchment facilitates the emergence of a hostile environment for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

5.2. Institutionalising privilege and prevailing power relations

Whiteness holds 'through habits which orientate and shape institutional spaces' (Ahmed, 2007: 156). Institutions become structured around norms based in 'whiteness', as a system of privilege and power and re-used through custom and practice over time (Yancy, 2017). Where space is marked by, and reproduces normative whiteness, and in the context of the myth of a post-racial society (Bhopal, 2018) where white privilege is not acknowledged, this is of consequence in establishing legitimacy and boundaries in school spaces.

On account of race, gender and social class, all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege. As Collins (2000: 266) describes, 'within any matrix of domination characterized by intersecting oppressions, any specific social location where such systems meet or intersect generates distinctive group histories'. There is a need to negotiate complex dynamics in terms of class, gender and racial background (Collins, 2000; Brah, 1992; Bhopal, 2018). As Cookie surmises:

> It's like one of the main struggles for Black people for either Black and female, that's hard for you heh. Either Black and gay which is even harder, there's a lot of things where, if you are Black and something else it's hard, it's worse for you.

Cookie expresses an understanding that there are material realities that make it 'hard' for those who operate within the terms of the matrix of domination. There is a historical or social backdrop which leads to specific entanglements and consequences. Even though there is variety and distinctions in terms of privilege that different groups can muster at different times during their studies in the predominantly white school, Cookie's evidence suggests that this environment does not establish consistently equitable terms for the distribution of either penalty or privilege for all who study there. The girls' racialised experience has parallels with boys who are Black, Asian, or Mixed-race, but there are also distinctions in Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' experience in school because of their gender.

In addition to gendered racialisation, and through racialised gendering, there are also differences between white and other girls' experience in school. Being visibly different in a predominantly white school leads to a need to engage with whiteness and white privilege, as Sheila highlights:

> I said to my mum, "oh you shouldn't have sent me to like a white school!"

In attending her 'white' secondary school, Sheila identifies that her experience is shaped by being a racialised other in this specific context. Within the gendered terms of engagement within whiteness (Puwar, 2004) Sheila sees that her cultural difference becomes critical. There are consequences of a spatialised racialisation where those already marked as outsider cannot be seen as fully legitimate in their claim to occupy the space as their own. Where 'whiteness and white identities operate as a form of privilege in society' (Bhopal, 2018: 9), Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls must engage with a school environment in which that privilege is operationalised and becomes a feature of the historically created institution.

5.2.1. Representation of diversity

Rhetorical silence surrounds whiteness as a source of privilege, intersects with gender and class (Bell, 2003; Mills, 2015; Crenshaw, 1997), and impacts the English school system (Gillborn, 2008, 2018), forming the context in which the Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls go to school. Utilising the girls' visible difference to signal a commitment to welcome all their students, positions the school as inclusive and connotes that all groups are respected. Being 'asked to embody a commitment to diversity', and 'to smile' in organisational materials (Ahmed, 2012: 163) would seem to structure acceptability (Yancy, 2017) for the girls in their predominantly white schools. It might also suggest to some other students in school that there are racial 'privileges' accorded Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls as they are sought out or chosen on account of their visual difference and as girls.

Within a need to market the predominantly white school, efforts are made to signal a value accorded diversity to the communities that the schools serve. As a girl in a masculine space (Paechter, 1998), Robin, alongside 'pretty much every' visibly different person, becomes an exploitable asset in marketing the predominantly white school. Interest convergence around 'diversity' operates within terms established by institutional whiteness. Material manifestations of diversity are valuable to the institution as they suggest distance between respectable and 'hateful' or 'extreme' forms of whiteness (Gillborn, 2010). Further, they serve to discredit the legitimacy of white privilege as a source of concern, as the vista of overarching whiteness and boys' dominance of the space is disrupted. Robin's image, like others of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in school, serves as an asset, a means of signalling the schools 'equality credentials':

Like they came into my IT lesson, to get a picture of me I don't know, clicking or something.

Robin's school visually communicates inclusivity attempting to realign any impression that 'Information Technology' lessons are dominated by boys. Her image is in service to the institution's drive to counteract a view of it as a domain of white exclusivity and bias. Being part of a communication strategy, visually standing-in for any necessary activity to dislodge the

'institutionalization of whiteness' (Ahmed, 2012: 39), is an attempt to overrule an impression that being white, middle-class or a boy are the only means to access a good education in Robin's school. This depiction of diversity enables middle-class whiteness to be positioned as symbolically inclusive.

As a Black, Mixed-race girl Fiona is excited to be included in the school publicity, but her reaction is tempered by her friends:

> And when I said that I was excited about it and got permissions, they said, 'oh the diversity thing right?!'

Fiona and her friends understand that this is tokenism as the school fails to corroborate this publicity focussed activity through substantiating diversity or equality goals. Fiona continues:

> I was like, 'oh yeah. That probably was why I was chosen!' And for a bit I was a bit negative about it. Like … because I wasn't chosen because they actually wanted me but for that portrayal of the school as being diverse.

Without any overt effort to offset white privilege or to work to substantively alter power relations, these visual cues enable the schools to side-step any perception that they are institutionally racist or sexist, or any association with overtly racist or sexist activities. Rather than embed Fiona's 'acceptability', the girls are included in the schools' publicity and prospectuses as they can usefully perform a visual service to their schools through their ability to represent diversity in the school community. Fiona is valued as a visual representative of diversity, not on account of who she is:

> And I felt almost a bit objectified for that reason […] 'at what point are they picking me because they like what I do?' Where are they separating my achievements from my race?

Since there is no indication that her talents make her school keen to include Fiona in their publicity, she feels 'objectified'.

The contradiction between image and reality becomes a critical domain of the hostile environment that the girls face. Given prevailing power arrangements, this does not improve the girls' situation as the school remains ignorant of the dissonance. Instead of returning the girls' 'acceptability' to each girl, the brochures and media campaigns accord them a specific visual value for a particular purpose. It embeds an institutional discursive framework based on the centrality of inclusion, of welcoming and respecting diversity but which represents a tokenistic inclusion. The institution's 'publicity' materials are hollow and no substitute for substantial action.

5.3. Structuring marginality: the context for interest divergence

'Epistemological ignorance' (Turner, 2015) based on racial and gendered thinking is systematically structured into forms of domination (Pateman and Mills, 2007; Mills, 2015; Wynter, 2003)

establishing a discursive impasse based on the continuation of a racial 'ignorance' (Mills, 2015) and white privilege (Bhopal, 2018). In common with schools elsewhere (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015), the girls' schools lack understanding of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' experience. Policymaking has failed to address 'the problems and issues faced by black and minority ethnic groups', with recent changes in government priorities amplifying 'the lack of importance attached to race in an inclusive policy agenda' (Bhopal, 2018: 157). This has implications in terms of institutional responses that the girls' schools fashion in response to their experiences. It is critical as the girls are schooled within institutions which do not recognise the effort entailed in navigating and negotiating their environment and what happens in everyday classroom exchanges.

The relationships that Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls have in school do not arise in isolation from the context in which they operate. Institutions function within persistent and ongoing structural and discursive systems, which serve the interests of those with greater privilege, on account of their race, economic class, gender, sexuality, and nationality (Collins, 2000, 1998). Under the guise of neutrality, racialised and gendered norms affect the operation of power in school. These norms become substantiated in policies and practices that become very difficult to argue against (Collins, 2000). Presumptions of white superiority affect what happens to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in school. There is a need to live with the process of racialisation within what Yancy (2017: xvii) terms 'deep *embodied* social spaces and social transactions in which racism permeates'. If whiteness can be understood 'as a bad habit', it allows 'some bodies to take up space by restricting the mobility of others' through 'a series of actions that are repeated, forgotten' (Ahmed, 2006: 129). Fashioned within 'ignorance' (Bain, 2018), discursive legitimacy for a racialised and gendered hierarchy acts as a boundary on the girls' responses to interactions which take place in school.

A white boy interrupts Naomi and Olivia to communicate his grievance that he is not included as a research participant for this PhD research. Naomi makes two references to their efforts trying 'to explain' that 'it's got nothing to do with you' as he questions the terms of his exclusion within his more normal white (although in the predominantly white working-class school, not class) privilege. Normally control of the conversation about race is retained within a white majority. Being forced to the margins in a way is not characteristic of the prevailing disposition of penalty, privilege and power in the predominantly white school. This leads to him seeing himself as a 'race victim' (Preston, 2007; Rollock, 2007; Gillborn, 2010) and as Naomi describes, he refuses to listen:

> There is a lot of like ignorance at school. Like yesterday, me and Olivia were talking about the photos, and then someone decided that they wanted to come into our conversation […] he was just being ignorant and saying like 'that is racist towards me because I'm white and I'm not in your group'.

Although he sees his exclusion as 'racist', Naomi's analysis centres ignorance, firstly the boy's and secondly, a wider domain of 'ignorance' in school. Naomi and Olivia are required to explain themselves and their involvement in research centred on their school experience. Only they can know about their racialised and gendered experience. But as Morrison (1975: xi) suggests, racism boundaries the racialised individual, demanding explanations of circumstance to legitimise 'your reason for being'. These explanations fail to satisfy whilst sidestepping other purposeful activity. The girls operate in a context which McRobbie (2009: 70) suggests has an opaque sense of having secured feminism and anti-racism but which has resurrected and solidified 'gendered racial divisions', and re-secured 'the terms of submission' to gendered intelligibility. The racialised and gendered terms of engagement in school remain non-negotiable however justified the girls' challenge. Despite this boy's intrusion into their world, Naomi and Olivia engage in the conversation that he forces upon them.

Within racial hierarchies and understandings of white privilege, there is a need to explore 'non-acceptable' forms of whiteness (Bhopal, 2018). These forms stand in contrast to 'more privileged' forms of acceptable whiteness, understood through an intersectional lens of class and distinguished through hierarchies based on dress, language, 'taste' and education (Bhopal, 2018: 29-30). In addition to white privilege, middle-class privilege has a bearing on the understanding of how power takes effect in schools (Gillborn, 2010). Fiona suggests that her ability to access middle-class and academic privilege confuses habitual power imbalances in her predominantly white school, complicating her relationship with a white boy:

> It's also interesting that the person I've spoken about a lot is a white under-performing boy and it is interesting how they feed into each other and intermingle together because my experience is very much affected by his experience.

Fiona suggests that she and the 'under-performing boy' are mutually constituting and relational. Fiona is aware that there is a dynamic operation of power in play which tangles her relationships in the predominantly white school. Various characteristics including her skin colour, class and academic ability serve as an oppositional dimension of subjectivity for both her and the 'underperforming' boy.

To reduce Fiona or the boy's identities to either a racial or a gender binary is too simplistic. In 'the choreography of life', whiteness operates as 'mode of regulating action, thought and understanding' (Back, 2010: 446). As Paechter (2018: 127) suggests, 'cool' girls have strong impulses to resist being positioned according to hegemonic masculinity and can position themselves as strong and independent in school settings. As this pertains to a hierarchy about intelligence (Gillborn, 2018),

Fiona's individual attributes as a high achieving girl disrupts the assumed educational racial order. Fiona is unwilling to accept inaccurate assumptions about her intelligence and aspirations:

> And maybe [...] he could take out his frustrations […] which was to be … that way he was […] I was that nerdy Black or Mixed-race [girl] trying to over-achieve its … an … interesting relationship there […]what I mean is that the behaviour wasn't the best but then the frustration with the achievement and stuff is all a bit of an inter-tangled.

Fiona must co-exist with a boy whose 'behaviour wasn't the best'. Fiona establishes how she is different from the boy on non-racial terms, asserting her capability and what she has in common with some high achieving boys. There remains an effect of power. Even where this is understood as mobile, overhauling a 'still patriarchal and binary gender order' (Paechter, 2018: 127) is not possible for Fiona. Due to her racialised gender, Fiona must still deal with his 'behaviour'.

5.3.1. *Language, privilege and power*

Language and stereotypes continue to contribute to cultural and social spaces within which representation of difference or otherness operates as an exclusion from prevailing norms (Hall, 1997b). Although casually used around school, the way that derogatory language is used with reference to various minority groups produces meaning and signification practices which underpins differentials in different groups' power, privilege and decision making about usage. For example, Bhopal and Myers (2008: 7) argue that what makes 'Gypsy' contentious is that it is frequently loaded with highly pejorative meanings in many contexts:

> Within the school playground the use of the word 'Gypsy' will often carry overtones of a derogatory nature, the word becoming interchangeable with overtly racist terms such as 'gyppo' or 'pikey'.

There is a slippage between terms that might be used to define oneself and pejorative terms used on the 'school playground'. Where words become interchangeable and a lack of consideration of the power dynamic involved in the decision about which 'racist' words are used and by who, this becomes problematic to many Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. After his first album, Akala (2018) interrogated the connotations and incongruities involved in using the 'n-word', deciding not to use such a historically loaded term of reference even within the terms of 'reclaiming it' or as a 'term of endearment.' Instead of a sensitivity to a power imbalance that Smith (2018) depicts as leading rap artists to use charged and racialising language to challenge the status quo, the girls suggest that their white peers use the n-word as they choose, and as though it is straightforwardly acceptable for them to do so because it features in certain music. Within school, this public use of 'overtly racist terms' gives license to others to use terms that are objectionable as Queen argues in a focus group:

> Black artists have made rap songs and stuff with 'n****' in it. [Queen's peers] say, 'oh, it's just a song' it's not just a song, that word represents a lot to us do you know what I mean?

Queen considers the historically charged impact of using the n-word because of what it represents. The girls' white peers are not concerned to try to realign power imbalances. Instead, they display a lack of sensitivity to existing power dynamics in operation saying to Queen, 'it's just a song'. For Queen, it is difficult not to recoil from the use of this word as it 'represents a lot to us'.

For Queen, using this term in school cannot be separated from racial insult and historical power imbalances. She situates its usage alongside other hostile words and phrases, citing Boris Johnson's 2018 derogatory description of Muslim women wearing the burka as 'letter boxes'. In contrast to many of her peers, Queen understands that the way that terms of abuse are used constructs otherness, authorises assumptions and legitimises racism including Islamophobia in school.

As discussed in the same focus group, some of Yasmine and Queen's peers think that within the terms of white privilege, there can be special dispensation granted by some Black, Asian and mixed-race people for their white peers to use words:

> Yasmine: Because she had a Black friend she thought she could say that word, almost as though she had been given permission to say that word. So in her snapchat there is her lip-synching the song thinking that it's appropriate to say that […] they literally repeat the song, thinking it's just a song
> Queen: they think its ok
> Yasmine: I'm not aiming it at anyone, it's just a song, but there's meaning to the word and so why are you saying it?

Yasmine exposes the unequal power distribution of her white peers who use the n-word despite its meaning, and even with 'permission' given by people of colour in school. Where this usage feels like an imposition, the idea that this girl can act with impunity adds to the insult. It also ring-fences the girls' right of reply to the imposition of abuse. As someone who defines herself as a Pakistani Muslim girl, Yasmine does not suggest that she has personal experience of the n-word being used against her, but she (and similarly to Queen regarding Islamophobic language) understands its impact in the context of her experience of racialisation processes and racism in the predominantly white school. Such events fashion the girls' understanding of the hostile terms of engagement that co-existing with white privilege exacts upon them. However, the sensitivity they have to the imposition that using certain language entails is not widely understood, and each girl has little room to challenge the use of terms of abuse.

In addition, the girls are not supported institutionally with clear messaging about what constitutes unacceptable language usage. Without being helped to mount a challenge to the use of abusive

terms, in the same focus group, Queen describes that there is so little institutional understanding or support for challenging offensive language as it is used in class by a teacher:

my English teacher said 'n*****' twice and then she said it the next day after.

Although it is not directed towards anyone in particular in class, Queen sees those teachers using offensive terms endorse the use of racist language around school. This signals to the girls and their peers that there is no need to consider the harm that certain language can do and to desist from using it. Even though, as Shain (2010) also found, some girls do not openly object to the offensive use of p***, this needs to be understood within prevailing power dynamics operational in the predominantly white school. As Sheila suggests:

I've been called [p***] for so long, like in Year 7 used to get called it […], I'm kinda used to it

Sheila is 'kinda used to' terms of abuse, and this has inured her to its effects. There is a sense that Sheila is pragmatic, deploying a necessary coping mechanism. Within institutionalised white privilege there is a failure to challenge the inappropriate use of racist language. Sheila appreciates that taking offence would intensify her visibility and is unlikely to be rewarded. Without any obvious understanding of the nature of white privilege as this relates to language used in and around her school, Sheila cannot rely on institutional backing to substantiate any personal challenge she might choose to make, and Sheila's peers do not need to worry about any reprimand for offensive language.

In the face of institutional shortcomings which fail to improve understanding of the impact of white privilege in school, there is a limit to the changes the girls themselves can make to improve their situation in school in the short term. Rather than be understood as agents of their own response or character, and to be seen as better placed to understand manifestations of white privilege, the girls are counselled on how to respond. Instead of being seen as having cause for concern, Queen is counselled not to take offence:

I also think it's really sad, like I've just been thinking about it, we get offended a lot, but when people say, 'oh you don't need to get offended by that', they are saying that to us. White people are saying that to us when we should have every right to feel offended by something, of what someone says.

Queen is encouraged to mistrust her own knowledge and judgement about what is an appropriate response to inappropriate language and behaviour. Queen is told there is no 'need' to 'get offended' on terms that do not match Queen's understanding or knowledge, and which stifle any right of reply that she might want to make.

Rather than suggest that there is any benign aspect to people using racist language in school, Cookie suggests using racist language in school results from an active assertion of white privilege. Using terms like the 'n-word' can be done without any responsibility to those who might feel the impact of its usage, as Cookie suggests:

> No, it's like people just say [the n-word] and take it lightly […] All I'm saying is that any white person knows that saying 'n*****' to a Black person is offensive.

There is evidence of an intentionality because without any sensitivity to the impact, 'people' feel entitled to use the word n-word and do so 'lightly'. This willingness to knowingly cause offense results in an aggressive assertion of white privilege and power. According to Cookie, those saying the n-word 'to a Black person' are being intentionally hostile, amplifying the harm that can follow interactions between those with privilege who can determine what those with whiteness can do and speak. This contributes to a harmful environment, one in which the girls are more easily marginalised as there is no room to re-negotiate harmful, racially abusive terms of engagement.

The way that racialised expressions of abuse are used around the girls illustrates that together ignorance and privilege underpin the terms of engagement between the girls and their peers, and that these terms are non-negotiable. In the absence of a sufficient institutional effort to challenge racist and sexist language, abusive language actively contributes to the structuring of a hostile environment.

5.3.2. Unrepresentative staff group

Where visual difference remains a compelling site of otherness (Hall, 1997b), and institutions are structured around whiteness (Ahmed, 2012) and white privilege (Bhopal, 2018), the lack of representation of difference in the teaching staff of each of the three schools is something noteworthy to the girls in one focus group:

> Gail: there are no brown teachers
> Zoe: yeah, there are no brown teachers.

This lack of representation is worthy of comment as it reinforces the vista of whiteness as omnipresent and omnipotent in the predominantly white school. Where Sheila, Queen, Mo and Olivia in two of the three schools have been fortunate to feel 'cared' for by staff or institutional caregivers, this has been valued but as the exception to the norm. Zoe is crestfallen when her tutor (a young white woman) who has been a critical source of support, leaves her school to change jobs. This tutor's ability to understand her (and her family's) experience of physical violence and bullying has been instrumental in fashioning Zoe's well-being in Year 7 and into Year 8. However, Zoe

understands that this tutor has been exceptional and is unlikely to be replicated in her predominantly white secondary school.

Low levels of representation of Black, Asian and Mixed-race teachers can result in a failure to institute systems which positively contribute to students' well-being (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In another school, Naomi does not see herself represented in the teaching staff:

> I would rather talk to an ethnic teacher to be honest. Not that there is any like any problems with any … white teachers or anything but it's just that they don't have the same connection as I would have with someone who was ethnic. They wouldn't understand in the same way.

It is not that Naomi has a 'problem' with white teachers, but the same connection is not possible. This has implications for pastoral care in her school. Naomi is disinclined to talk about her experience, as they 'wouldn't understand'.

The lack of representation of teaching staff also has implications for classroom management. Fiona suggests that there is a subtly exclusionary atmosphere operating in some of her classes. There is ease between some boys and the teacher in her chemistry class which is not simply a feature of race but also gender:

> It was more like [the teacher] having banter with someone. Or it was just like a cheeky thing they said, like that seemed to be the way that they interacted.

Fiona characterises a 'cheeky' interaction based on 'banter'. There is a 'motivated' failure to notice how power operates in incidental and seemingly inconsequential ways, but which sustain the inequalities at the heart of whiteness (Gillborn, 2008: 10). As Fiona suggests, teachers are 'motivated' to keep a positive class atmosphere even if this means deliberately not paying attention to some behaviour in class:

> They would get a banter so they would keep working rather than pick a fight because they said one thing that seemed to take precedence…

In order not to disrupt the way the class is 'working', 'banter' is used in class to contribute to a 'nice' working atmosphere. This suggests interest convergence as Fiona, like many of the others in class needs the class to settle down in order to attend to the subject material. However, Fiona's teacher is inattentive to behaviour that she notices. Not wanting to disrupt the lesson, leads to an unwillingness to 'pick a fight' in response to 'one thing'. This begins to structure interest divergence as the teachers' inactions effectively bolsters inequalities between boys and girls, and white students and her. Although Fiona explains why teachers sometimes fail to act, given their other responsibilities, she also examines teachers' perceptions about what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour:

Umm yeah, never teachers! It's interesting actually. But I guess, they had bigger issues in the class. They had people like properly misbehaving like what, like this is properly misbehaving but in a more physical way. Or they were helping people who were struggling.

Fiona shows empathetic understanding of the complexity of the teachers' role. But Fiona also suggests that what teachers perceive to be a priority is determined by who teachers define as 'struggling' and what constitutes 'misbehaving'. Within these definitions, Fiona considers that teachers are inclined only to deal with 'proper' misbehaving. Managing banter differently may be beyond teachers' capabilities. However, as Fiona points out it is 'never teachers' who challenge certain interactions in class even where there are pronounced racist or sexist undertones.

Things that happen in class go 'under the radar' when teachers fail to notice what is going on (George and Clay, 2013: 6). Naomi is also aware that there are costs of her science teacher's 'inattention'. Where a priority is accorded 'fun' as a vehicle for classroom management, unacceptable behaviour occurs:

> When, like in that science class, even though it's all fun and games, people like to make their comments […], that's the class where people are talking about the racist jokes and all of that stuff and in that class specifically so it comes from there, even though it's like fun and games.

The failure of teachers to be aware of the situation that the girls face means that under the guise of 'fun and games', 'racist jokes' are unchecked even when a teacher is present. Although their teachers do no set out to explicitly exclude them, through their teachers' 'motivated inattention', banter can lurch towards racist jokes. What goes 'under the radar' restricts the girls' ability to be accorded value and respect as equal members of their class, taking part on an equal footing.

A failure to acknowledge white privilege as a source of harm is also established through an attempt at a denial that any harm is intended. In addition to using terms of abuse as though these are not offensive, sidestepping a recrimination that harm is intentional often centres on a retrospective claim that the intention is to be humorous. As Naomi suggests:

> If you're not pretty, or they don't like your race, or your religion or something they just don't like about you…People like to make racist jokes in school, and then when you, like talk back or say something or just if you say something they don't like, they'll just get defensive and be like, 'it was a joke. I didn't mean it.' But they did.

Since the interaction is framed around 'jokes' there is little right to recourse for each individual girl. Offensive jokes often establish and maintain social norms and police the boundaries of the body as a material and social entity (Sharpe and Hynes, 2016). Whereas it is easy for their peers to disavow their actions as the source of harm, everyday racism masquerades, as Naomi suggest, as just 'a joke'. Underpinned by white privilege, sexism or racialised sexism, 'if you're not pretty', or racism 'they

don't like your race', the processes of racialisation create a hostile context as they demarcate and boundary the girls' responses. The girls appreciate the difficulty that this presents, as Naomi notes:

> Umm, if you get too defensive, they'll make out you're the bad person. But if you are too relaxed about it, they'll just carry on.

By being 'defensive', Naomi knows that she is easily typecast on account of her response. But if Naomi fails to react, then those who goad her will simply continue. Within the terms of recognisable and acceptable femininity (McRobbie, 2009), Naomi cannot mount an effective challenge to exclusionary but habitual ways of operating and communicating. Were she to query what has happened, Naomi is at risk of being re-inscribed as 'difficult' or 'angry'. This limits her options for any challenge that she might have wanted to make.

Where displays of 'ignorance' will not be 'noticed' or dealt with by teachers, or where teachers encourage expressions of banter, this leads to a pattern where there is a differential impact which affects racialised girls' inclusion. Such behaviour begins to structure the girls' exclusion and experience of discrimination. It reduces the girls' room for manoeuvre in the classroom, effectively intensifying the 'compression' (Fordham, 2016) that the girls face in their school environment, creating an atmosphere. As Hope describes in her history lesson:

> just like stuff that is sort of not like not necessary, things that didn't have to be said but people still said them.

Hope identifies that certain events fail to be registered by the teacher. This allows things to be said. Where there is heightened emotion, including what could be suggested to be reasonable expressions of pain, shame, fear and anger in response to 'double standards' (Chapman, 2013) the girls' expression of their concerns are ring-fenced.

Kimora feels that she can be targeted by people in class but that she is not supported by her teacher:

> Miss was right there, and I don't know if she heard or she didn't want to hear, but she was there.

Kimora suggests that 'Miss' might or might not have heard what some boys in her class say. But Kimora also suggests that it is possible that Miss 'didn't want to hear'. Within the classroom, the individual girl must decide what to do given a difficulty in mustering any teacher support.

Much of what happens in school is easily dismissed as low-level disruption, rather than being seen as racialised 'events'. They appear 'ordinary' in a complex environment. They are noted and noteworthy to the girls', fashioning their day-to-day experience in school but may not even be noticed by teachers. The way that teachers handle what teachers might understand as 'low level

disruption' begins to inform a culture which the girls see more clearly than others around them. From the periphery, the girls exhibit a perception advantage (Rollock, 2012). This 'advantage' however, does not help offset the need for them to continuously manage their responses to exclusionary and alienating experiences. Within the terms of acceptable femininity (McRobbie, 2009), the girls are expected to overlook deficits in classroom management.

Within the predominantly white classroom, habitual and exclusionary ways of operating means that communicating their experience of unfair or hostile behaviour is not likely to be understood or positively received. Instead, as racialised girls who present a counter-narrative, they can become susceptible to rebuke or reprimand (as Zoe, Barbra and Bob discuss in a focus group) or retaliation as Fiona suggests:

> Maybe [I could have] said, 'could you stop this kid from saying racist things in class, like consciously gone to the teacher, but I never saw that as the way to go, as a route to helping. Because I thought, 'they'll get told off,' they know it's me, I get embroiled in this cycle.

Even though structuring a hostile environment may be incidental and unintended, it includes 'racist things' being said in class. Having considered her options, and aware that there could be ramifications of getting 'embroiled' in a negative cycle, Fiona decides that there is little point involving her teacher in any attempt to improve her circumstance as it will not 'help'.

The classroom culture affects Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in all three schools. It is something that Fiona, like others, including Gail, Zoe, Naomi, Kimora, Barbra and Bob, must handle without being able to rely on any institutional or teacher support. Their teachers often fail to notice, censor or reprimand objectionable behaviour that marginalises racialised girls, enabling the prevailing culture and racialised girls being marginalised to continue unabated.

5.3.3. Structuring interest divergence in the curriculum

Through explicit decisions and exclusions, whiteness remains central as a defining determinant of what and whose knowledge is privileged (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994; Mignolo, 2011; Turner, 2015). This has implications within the girls' classes as well as the wider school curriculum. Robin sees a bias towards Christianity in RE:

> They focused in on Christianity. We didn't really discuss other religions at all.

As well as omissions that the girls see, there are also ways in which what is taught substantiates and perpetuates a disrespectful view of the other and their cultures or religions. Within what is seen as 'legitimate' knowledge (Collins, 2000; Wynter, 2003; Mignolo, 2007; Bhambra, 2014), one of Sheila's teachers is comfortable challenging the foundations of the Koran:

He was like, you know the Koran, 'it's all fiction' […] Yeah he went, it's just made up stories.

There seems to Sheila to be an ease in communicating a lack of respect for Islam's ontological validity in one teacher's class. He dismisses the Koran as a work of fiction, asserting assumptions of the superiority of rationality over religious belief to the class. In another school, Fiona suggests that signalling disrespect for both racial and religious difference is a consequence of teachers' lack of experience of the wider world. Moreover, this suggests that what might be regarded as an individual teacher's aberrant view is not challenged by senior staff in either school or the curriculum more generally.

Narrowly framed understandings of an appropriate syllabus and the function of education seem to the girls to be derived from a lack of any systemic impulse to widen the scope of education and to decolonise the curriculum. Even when the school attempts to extend the scope of the curriculum, there is a failure to meaningfully disrupt a centredness on whiteness and instil respect for difference and varied experience. As discussed in a focus group, Yasmine notes that, demarcated within a short timeframe, there is a reliance on Black History Month to educate students:

> Why is there only one month dedicated to Black History Month? Why do we only talk about it in that period of time? What about the other months? […] That month comes, and that's it, want to talk about this.

As opposed to being woven through the curriculum, Yasmine notes that there is little priority given throughout the year to 'Black history'. Signalling a low priority, rather than being seen as a critical component of the formation of contemporary Britain, global and colonial history is seen as an 'add on' to the main syllabus, as Mo and then Queen suggest in the same focus group:

> Mo: They don't care enough about it to keep it up, to educate, they put some posters up that they know nobody's going to be able to read because who has the time to be standing around in the hall when you got lessons and then
> Queen: They take it off straight away as soon as [the month has] ended.

This approach to Black History Month, and Black history more broadly, strikes Yasmine, Mo and Queen as tokenistic because of the time that the 'posters' are up, and the difficulty reading the resources given their location outside class. Instead of education serving to instil respect for different aspects or perspectives in history, their schools seem to signal disrespect to Black and colonial history and the colonial experience and its legacy.

As Cookie adds in the same focus group discussion, a failure to re-evaluate and situate 'Our Island story' (Gove, 2010) in a wider context of a global history and to signal the importance for studying this context has consequences for the way that the materials are treated:

when they are up, they normally get ripped up. […] people are just so disrespectful about them, like the, when one was in the [block], I saw people drawing on it. I saw people just like disrespecting it, like graffiti and stuff.

The 'add-on' nature of this aspect of the curriculum encourages a propensity to further re-inscribe the terms of otherness in school. The girls' peers are not actively encouraged to see the value of this learning as seen by the treatment of these learning materials. This seems personal to Cookie as it is 'just so disrespectful'. Seeing the materials disrespected also has implications for the girls when they are called upon to share information. It suggests that they might also be subject to a lack of respect. Nonetheless, and without accounting for the pressure that this places on the girls, they are called upon to speak knowledgeably about Black history. Although Fiona is Mixed-race and has a Black African father, she is expected to be knowledgeable and able to inform others in her class about the African American experience:

When we were doing slavery, when we were doing African American history, I was the voice of the Black community.

Fiona has no lived experience of being African American or of Caribbean heritage and confesses to know very little except for what she has researched. But her visible difference is seen as conferring an almost automatic knowledge about Black history. Moreover, despite the risks of adding to her hypervisibility, Fiona is expected to be willing to share this for the benefit of her peer group and teachers.

Hope is also Mixed-race, and she too suggests this results in a pressure to perform as an expert:

I think it's because like we've got two ethnicities and so it's like, I don't know it's like you should know like twice the stuff.

On account of Hope's looks, she is expected to know a lot of information on two contexts, histories and cultures. Ophelia, Yasmine and Mo also speak of the effort they make to 'know' accurate information about their history and heritage. Ophelia suggests that her parents go to great lengths to ensure that she is informed on issues about which the school may not be well placed to educate her, including accurate information about slavery. Nonetheless, without diminishing normative notions of academic excellence which construct the girls as less capable of knowing (Joseph, 2010), there is specialist 'cultural' or racial knowledge that the girls are expected to know and share.

Moreover, the girls describe the use of the source material which represents the enslaved Black body as a site of violence. This further accentuates the white gaze on the girls. Akin to what one of Chapman's (2013: 621) respondents reported, where white peer groups' 'swivel' their eyes 'because we are talking about slavery', Year 9 Gail and Year 8 Barbra in another focus group say:

> Gail: if they are talking about slavery or something, everyone is looking at the board and they mention Black people and everyone
> Gail and Barbra: everyone turns around,
> Gail: and singles you out.

At certain points in the curriculum, the racialised gaze is intensified. In another school, Year 8 Hope also mentions that the effect of the gaze upon her in some of her history classes is upsetting when she says:

> the looks people were giving me when we were doing specifically lynching.

These discussions are difficult to deal with emotionally, as they centre on experiences of violence, living 'in the wake' of violence and 'near death' (Sharpe, 2016: 7) for people from Africa and in America. Within the terms of otherness, particularly Black and Mixed-race girls are linked to enslaved people and those subject to Jim Crow laws in the US. This intensifies an already powerful gaze on the girls as people who will have insights or information. Poorly handled discussions and source material ratchets up the burden on the girls to handle their peer groups' reactions to experiences of gendered and racialised violence. Hope suggests that there are profound impacts if teachers' fail to manage the class effectively:

> And I think that the teachers need to like acknowledge that [it was] the people that make us feel uncomfortable. Because it wasn't specifically the curriculum that made me feel uncomfortable, it was the people that were doing like little remarks about me.

Discussing an intrinsically difficult discussion and subject area leaves Hope exposed. She is not disquieted by discussing slavery, lynching or racial politics. But she is 'uncomfortable' with the scrutiny and discussion about her, as though she is a racial artefact.

As described in all three schools by Hope, Gail, Barbra and Fiona, they, and not their peer group, face the consequences of a lack of sensitivity when teaching this area of the curriculum. As the girls are susceptible to being inscribed as historical artefacts of a brutal past, they must negotiate and navigate the additional burden of handling the toll of complex emotions alongside the intensification of the gaze.

Without broadening the scope of the purpose of school to positively educate on issues associated with difference, in all three schools the girls suggest that ignorance diminishes opportunities to substantiate intentions aimed at expanding the curriculum beyond a narrow rendition of 'our island story'. Moreover, the girls' expertise on this subject matter does not overturn wider constructions of them as unknowing or override widespread and entrenched assumptions that are made of their wider capabilities, or the value of their knowledge. Only with this specific subject matter, on slavery or African American history, are they seen as knowledgeable and treated as a resource.

Without sensitivity, the idea that barbaric practices occur elsewhere fail to overturn constructions of innocence embedded into discursive whiteness and Britishness. This effectively begins to structure the curriculum as a domain of interest divergence. An exclusionary narrative of Britishness with incidental, ahistorical and decontextualised discussions on some aspects of US history and centring on a narrative of the end of the slave trade as resulting from the heroic efforts of Wilberforce, distract from any focus on British responsibility, or the violence underpinning the British Caribbean plantation system. This leaves a heavy responsibility to individual teachers to handle difficult conversations. Where the teachers fall short, the way that the curriculum is structured and then taught contributes to structuring a hostile environment in predominantly white schools for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

5.3.4. *Black Lives Matter*

Unsubstantiated and performative inclusion affects the way that practices and processes in school are structured. Alternative knowledge claims do not tend to threaten conventional knowledge. Claims 'are routinely ignored, discredited, or simply absorbed and marginalized in existing paradigms especially when these are based on 'alternative epistemologies' which challenge 'truth' claims based in whiteness (Collins, 2000: 290). The slogan 'All lives matter' fails to capture the systemic toxicity and violence in societal expressions of anti-Blackness (Yancy and Butler, 2017). Now in Year 11, Queen has had an argument over 'All lives matter' with Matilda (someone who had been her friend in Year 10). From her research outside school, Queen knows that Black people die at disproportionately high rates, killed by the US police, a symptom of the systemic violence underlying a need for 'Black Lives Matter'.

Over the course of a year, the school authorities do not structure an appropriate response to the girls. Queen is unsupported in her exposure of an epistemological point of contention that exists between her and Matilda. Her school fails to appreciate the potential for Queen to experience this as a form of marginalisation. Inside her school Queen's narrative can be dismissed as overly emphasising the importance of race in structural arrangements, accentuating the potential for her to be regarded as playing identity politics. Furthermore, in school, seeing her objection to 'All lives' frames Queen as outside of the realms of legitimacy and reasonable-ness. This way of seeing Queen can be utilised to explain why her friendship has broken down. Since Matilda will be seen by teachers and her peers as embodying 'innocence' and academic capability, this begins to build a 'case' against Queen:

> Yeah she appears innocent, […] she acts really innocent, 'oh yeah I'm really good at my work'.

Matilda can make a display of being 'really good' at her work and can act 'innocent'. In contrast, even though Queen does not 'misbehave', she is in danger of aggravating a construction of her as difficult, hostile, and oppositional to school and other students. Matilda is more readily understood as a 'victim' as perceptions of victimhood are gender-specific and racially differentiated, 'shrouded' beneath an invisible veneer of acceptability 'politeness and civility' where the 'bully is the person who often appears to be the victim' (Fordham, 2016: 39). This enhances the potential within the racialised gender politics in school to mis-recognise Queen as an aggressor and Matilda as her victim.

Within the school's institutional power there are limits placed on Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' ability to either speak of their experience or be heard when they do. Over time this failure to understand the girls' perspective sets up a context of mutual misunderstanding and mistrust. In another school, Olivia believes that the school authorities 'can't hear you'. Queen says:

> You can't tell them, no! Either way they won't learn […] they won't understand what we've said. They won't respect us as people.

Queen suggests that 'they' cannot learn from or even understand a different perspective and so are not able to respect 'us'. Within racial and gender tropes, Queen is easily dismissed within constructions of her as irrational and unknowing. Although Queen does not accept this perception of her as unknowing, it still places boundaries on her ability to be understood and recognised as knowing:

> No, she very uneducated, yeah, but she always thinks, because she is smarter than me, you know, she is pretty smart because she is smart she thinks she can always, you know, be better than me […] yeah be right all the time […] because it's like I know way more than you do but they always think, 'no we know, we know better.'

Within racialised constructions of intelligence (Gillborn, 2018) and where Matilda is known to be clever in school, Queen cannot be understood as knowing more than the 'smart' white girl or than the school authorities. Their school's failure to commit to a meeting to resolve the conflict does not serve either girl well. However, within racialised understandings of each girl, Queen thinks that a lack of resolution will ultimately 'protect' Matilda:

> They are quite biased and I feel like it is because I am Black that they wouldn't do [the meeting], or that they wouldn't like me. They would think that she is the victim because she is white.

As they are 'quite biased', Queen realises that it is Matilda who retains legitimacy as an innocent victim. Queen knows that if she continues to protest 'All lives matter', she will be seen as disregarding white lives and will herself (and in contrast to Matilda) risk being seen as being ignorant and racist. Although Queen challenges what Matilda knows, assumptions made about Queen remain

established and entrenched. Matilda is not seen as politicised and can be cast as innocent of any ill-intent, naïve about the political dimensions of voicing support for 'All lives matter'. Black Lives Matter can be understood as a campaign with a polarising interest and intent, seeming to demand 'special consideration' for Black people. In the context of a difficulty understanding Black people as innocent (Butler, 1993b; Wun, 2016) Queen's analysis can be ignored, delegitimised and her concerns are easily marginalised.

In committing to the affirmation that Black lives need to matter, it is Queen who can be seen as the source of the problem, pivoting away from the interest convergence of 'All' to 'interest divergence' of 'Black Lives Matter'. This means that her school has less obligation to act and without the meeting, the school feels protected from the risk of exposing the limits of its institutional know-how and understanding. Although Queen needs support in school, this is not understood and cannot be acted upon as she is not recognised as a schoolgirl who needs care. This situation is intrinsically stressful to Queen. She remains constrained and contained by the perceptions of those in positions of authority and responsibility.

In the absence of any visible institutional understanding of the issue of Black Lives Matter, and of the true nature of this friendship breakdown as Queen sees it, Queen realises that she stands to gain nothing from repeatedly challenging Matilda's social posts:

> It's like I want to say something to prove that I'm right, do you know what I mean, and they are wrong but it's like I can't be bothered with it any more…

Queen determines that she can no longer be responsible for challenging Matilda's or the school's institutional ignorance. Queen realises that rather than be appreciated, challenging the institutional reading of what has passed between the two girls would be in vain. Systemic ignorance is too deeply embedded for Queen to tackle independently or single-handedly. Perceptions of girls, their friendships and 'petty squabbles' (Besag, 2006) remain intact within her school. Her predominantly white school can sidestep any perception of an institutional failure on account of both race and gender to respond to the girls' conflict. Instead of equal access to a meeting centred on Queen's need for resolution, there is a form of retreat away from Queen as a student who warrants comparable care to other young people in need of resolving less politicised conflicts. Pathologising Queen's character means that the school can abdicate its responsibility to Queen. This contributes to the emergence of school as hostile space where conflicts are sidestepped rather than resolved, and overarching power structures remain intact.

5.3.5. Lack of support

There are different levels of understanding of the impact of white privilege and hostility between the girls and others in school. This helps to explain a failure to institute adequate school support systems for students of colour (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000). Year 11 Sheila discusses a photograph of her hens which she has taken to illustrate her feelings about her position in school:

> One brown one and three white ones […] because it's the brown one that is the odd one out.

This represents Sheila's feeling of being ill at ease and isolated. In the context of low teacher expectation and stereotypes, Rhamie, (2014: 57) argues that teachers' perceptions create 'a situation which leads to a sense of hopelessness' because it seems 'deep-rooted and unchangeable'. Also in Year 11, Queen uses a photograph of stools in one of her school classrooms to symbolise her perceptions of her lack of meaningful access to care and support within the predominantly white school:

> so it's the stools without backs, you know, they do not have support, they will not support you, […] you could fall, you know what I mean as a metaphor you could fall in life, fall in mental health and stuff and then … that one chair, with the back support is out of order, so even though you want that support for you- like … so you don't fall, you can't get it. And that is what I feel like. […] I feel like I could get support in this school, but I would never get it, do you know what I mean? […] yeah, I just feel like they wouldn't really do anything to help me. They would be like sympathetic but they wouldn't actually … help me.

Queen describes a system of support based on sympathy for the individual. This is supposedly available, but what the school currently offers is flawed as it does not result in actual 'help'. There is a lack of understanding of each girl's particular vulnerabilities within expressions of racism (Awan and Zempi, 2015; Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, 2015). Black girls continue to be seen through a lens which centres on constructions of strength and that they can deal with whatever happens to them (Hines-Datiri and Carter Andrews, 2020) but as Queen suggests it is necessary to understand the intersections of vulnerabilities that the girls face:

> It's just being vulnerable because you are Black and a woman at the same time, because you don't know what is going to happen, you know. 'Cause I know women get it bad of all you know races and stuff, and sexual orientation, like women get, you know it is just sad umm, but I think it is worse being a Black woman as well because you are like double more vulnerable.

Queen sees that their environment impacts on minority girls' safety through being a girl or woman, but that visible racial difference makes matters 'worse'. There is a constant level of threat from what might be 'going to happen'. Instead of considering that young girls should be able to cope with everything that happens to them, Year 8 Barbra suggests that it should be easy to empathise or understand why she would want help dealing with racist name-calling:

The thing is, if that N word was being said to you, you'd want someone to help you.

Girls of colour continue to be marginalised through neglect or misunderstanding of their concerns, effectively creating what Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda (2015) term, 'push-out' as a feature of their schooling. Without understanding the hostility that the girls continue to experience, there is a failure to overcome systemic exclusionary features of the girls' school life. Their schools continue to ignore rather than 'help' the girls. Year 10 Kimora suggests that:

> But then it is really not a joke. It's like quite serious. Yeah, and then I try to laugh it off, and then it keeps on like happening around me. I have I have to block it off a bit... if I had more back-up then they would probably like leave me and other people alone, more. And it would just be more nicer for people to stick up for us.

Kimora is aware that although it feels personal to her, what happens in school happens to her as well as 'other people', describing a lack of support for 'us'. This helps frame her experience in a wider context of the lasting legacies of racial hierarchies and thinking as they are manifested in relations around school, noting that if there was 'more back-up', 'they' might 'leave' her and others 'alone, more'. Instead, there is a continuing experience of 'push out'. Without a visible institutional response, Kimora, like 'other people' has to deal with what happens around her without anybody who can advocate, or 'stick up' for 'us'.

Where each event in each school is treated as an individual case, despite being often repeated, and reoccurring in each year group, Fiona suggests there is a need to institute systems so that younger students do not have to deal with what happens to them on their own:

> But I also don't want [other girls in younger years] to be so alone. Umm. Argh. There's so much. Sorry.

Facing negative experiences 'alone' is difficult. There is 'so much' each cohort must deal with every year. In the context of a denial of the reality and threat of racism and sexism in the predominantly white school, and given the toll that this has, Cookie agrees. She sees that there are mental health impacts for those who experience racism:

> And also there's this thing around like mental health and stuff, […] people are being, have to suffer racism every single day like in school and stuff, they need to put like more support in place for people who go through like racism.

Cookie sees that having to 'suffer racism every single day' takes its toll. The lack of support or understanding in school amplifies the sense of isolation felt by the girls. In the absence of adequate institutional facilities or understanding of their perspective, the girls' schools fail to offer support

which might have meant that each school could be better placed to mitigate some of the effects of racism.

5.3.6. 'Friendship', isolation and hurt

In addition to a lack of institutional support, the girls also need to manage a lack of understanding of the ongoing significance of racism in their day to day lives in school within their relationships with their peer groups. Fiona suggests that this divergence of awareness about racism amplifies their sense of isolation even from people that are seen as the girls' close friends:

> One of my close, close friends, has said, 'ah good job racism isn't a thing anymore.' I was like, 'how an earth have you seen this? umm! And perhaps she just said that without thinking but to tell me it's not a thing.

Fiona's very 'close' friend, unabashed in her privilege, asserts that racism has now become a thing of the past. Fiona refuses to accept her friend's epistemological imposition instead arguing:

> I was like, 'it is a thing!' Even in our generation it is certainly a thing. In every one unfortunately.

For Fiona, the problem of racism is not going away, 'even' in her 'generation'. Even if their peers do not see it, Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, with their perspective advantage, are aware of both overt and more subtle manifestations of racism.

Within performative expressions of friendliness, Queen perceives that there is seen to be a value attached to white students posing with Black students as 'friends'. Therefore, some of the girls' white peers materialise photographic 'assets', taking images with Black people which are then posted on social media accounts. Queen suggests that being photographed as friends is not the same as being real friends:

> Because no one really wants to know us. They want to, to be friends with us so they can get the popularity on snapchat or something. It's like these white boys, they do football and as soon as a Black person is there they want to be best friends with them. So that they can take a picture with them saying, 'oh yeah. I'm not racist, I've got a Black friend' – do you know what I mean?

Queen does not trust the genuineness of some of the multi–racial friendships that she sees around school. On their social media accounts, 'posts' act as visual representations suggesting a proclivity to inclusion, niceness, and virtue, as well as confirming these traits as embedded within whiteness. Like the school publicity and brochure images, social posts increase the visible distance between institutionally endorsed friendship and inclusion codes, and overt racism. In pointing to the superficial underpinnings of 'popularity on snapchat', Queen differentiates between style, image and substance, surmising 'no one really wants to know us'. The gain that posturing as friends offers is to

their white peer group within the terms of white privilege. Queen does not think that friendships are substantiated meaningfully or in ways that provide foundations for genuine inclusion.

Using football and boys as her example suggests that Queen also sees that there are distinctions between boys and girls. Boys of colour, particularly Black and Mixed-race boys are more able to capitalise on stereotypes of 'cool'. In the predominantly white school, Queen sees that there is a desire to be seen as cool, and to like aspects of Black culture, associations that boys can more easily access within terms of masculinity seen as acceptable and covetable in school. Photographs are taken to show that racism does not exist, as images with 'a Black friend' prove, but also to secure this 'cool' association. As girls in school, Queen feels that Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are more socially precarious than boys of colour.

As explored by most of the girls - Fiona, Queen, Mo, Yasmine, Gail, Hope, Kahmia, Olivia, Naomi, Kimora, and Sheila - the failure to understand this social precariousness within white privilege and a racial system leaves an emotional legacy inside their friendships. Within a systemic racialised status quo with idealisation and beauty norms orientated around whiteness (Morrison, 1970; hooks, 1992; Camp, 2015; Weekes, 1997; Burcar, 2017), Mo's friends do not overtly or intentionally signal 'disrespect' to her, but they prioritise knowing about beauty products over cultural awareness:

> This is what the thing is, right, I say this to my white friends all the time. Obviously I'm friends with them for a reason, I know that they won't disrespect me in that way umm, but I'm like, if people cared about race, cared to learn about our race, the world would not be like this […] They have resources. They search on the internet flippin' make-up palettes. They search on the internet to get educated, do you know what I mean. If they cared …

Mo is friends with white girls who have access to resources. Boundaries of required femininity in terms of cultural viability and acceptability have been re-established without a need to establish antiracist solidarity (McRobbie, 2009). Although all girls have choices about their interaction with beauty privilege, their choices are demarcated by the terms of feminine normativity. Mo sees that her friends use the internet, but their motivation is not to learn about the geopolitics of race. Instead, they exhibit a 'inattention' to 'race' and antiracist solidarity, prioritising maximising their beauty assets. Moreover, this does not encourage any interest convergence in challenging notions of beauty and hair norms in the predominantly white school.

Where they have the economic means, Mo sees that white girls have choices to have straight or curly hair (not kinky or textured), or a fake tan (rather than dark brown or black skin), and an ability to choose to access what is deemed desirable and attractive within white beauty norms. In a society where this leads to dominant definitions of attractiveness, Mo understands that a confused picture emerges. Careful not to generalise all white people in school, in a focus group Mo says:

I'm not going to say all, because obviously it's not all, a percentage of the white people here [in school] want to have … our features, our good features without the stereotypes. They want to have our curly hair but without … having to maintain it. They want to have … our 'tans' …

Mo sees that within beauty standards, some Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls have features which are able to pass as 'good', particularly if their skin is 'honey-tone' shades of brown which, in Mo's words, is 'not too dark' and hair that is 'curly' rather than textured. As well as being able to pick and choose features, Mo suggests there is no obligation for girls who can choose to curl their hair 'to maintain it' or to have to deal with the stereotyping that also accompanies Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

In the same focus group as Mo, Yasmine highlights that shows like *Live Runway* are important as a discussion point of what is judged attractive in school:

They see all the models on *Live Runway* and they think, 'oh yeah, I want to be like that […] But they don't understand the racism that comes from it. They don't see the emotional side to it. They just see the physical side and the appearance and that's what they want.

Some commentary on aspects of the othered body is nominally positive – 'I want to be like that'. This suggests that these aspects are covetable and beautiful. In inviting the gaze, Yasmine sees that this programme extends an invitation to look and project value onto particular features and hair. Moreover, this occurs within a failure of the girls' peers to understand all the negative implications that accompany their looks. What is enviable is an 'exotic fantasy [of the other,] not the reality of living under oppression […] which is neatly forgotten and suppressed' (Walkerdine, 1990: 209). Although it is acceptable to be beautiful within the terms of white beauty standards, Yasmine recognises that there is no understanding of the racism that underpins the lived experience of being seen as different where this is measured through proximity or distance to norms established in whiteness.

Yasmine suggests that ways of performing friendship also have a bearing on how she can relate to others in school:

My last group of friends the majority of them were white and you can't really relate to them to talk about your experiences and stuff like that. So the conversation … it is like small talk. It's never like deep conversation.

Yasmine feels that there is a lot of 'small talk' that precludes her sharing information meaningfully about her experience. She does not see a commitment to understand what racism means, or to appreciate the threat of racism that underlies racialised girls' lived experience:

there's no point just saying you are not racist. If you are not going to know anything about it.

Yasmine sees that it is performative and hollow to simply assert that 'you are not racist'. This leads to a greater experience of isolation in school and within her friendships. Moreover, fashioning appropriate responses remains exhausting and emotional 'work' since the scope to design suitable responses to racism and racialised sexism is restricted by long established assumptions and stereotypes. Despite the way the girls cope with what happens to them, the hurt remains, and they have difficulty in simply shrugging it off. As Yasmine suggests:

> Muslims, so why do you keep saying that. There is only so much you can say, like how many times do you need to say it? It is hurtful. You don't need to keep, carry on talking about 'Muslims being part of ISIS! All Muslims are terrorists!' and stuff like that. It's really disrespectful […] and it's easy to say but you don't understand how it really hurts when it is said to you. People don't really understand the struggles that go behind closed doors. And then when people start retaliating, well it's because people are actually hurt. Like no one is angry because like just angry. They are hurt. They come from a place of sadness. They are angry because they feel like oh, they're not being like treated fairly or something is like that going on, which is obviously why.

Inheritances of sadness and hurt are added to by a sense that it is a struggle 'behind closed doors'. Yasmine sees that it is difficult not to 'start retaliating' to events and behaviour that are repeated 'many times' and which constantly re-inscribe hurt and a lack of respect. Yasmine also understands that it is not easy to deal with or neutralise any emotional effect of racism because of a sense of injustice that it entails. After the Arianne Grande terrorist attacks, Yasmine was upset by one non-Muslim friend who wrote on snapchat how she 'related' to Yasmine. This friend suggested that she understood how it must feel to be a Muslim when all around people were saying "all Muslims are terrorists". But this left Yasmine questioning:

> How can she relate to me? I honestly don't know how she can write that and say, 'I know what you are going through' but do you know what I'm going through?

The friend's proclamation is difficult for Yasmine. Rather than inquire, the friend has imposed a narrative onto Yasmine which allows little space for her autonomy over her feelings and depth of her hurt. Her friend's statement feels shallow to Yasmine, a further imposition on Yasmine in the context of her friend's white privilege. This friend is positioning herself as all knowing, empathetic and understanding without offering Yasmine any meaningful support.

Cookie also has experience of the limits of friends' support:

> If someone is being racist in front of their face they'll stick up for me but I think it's in terms of emotional support, they can't really help you.

In the context of not really understanding the hurt involved, Cookie does not feel that there are emotionally supportive options:

> Like they don't know how to help you. They don't know what … like being there emotionally […] I don't want to have to tell someone how to be a supportive … an emotionally supportive friend. I don't feel like they need to like, 'oh yeah'. It's like we don't really have options like, that's it.

Cookie sees that her friends would need coaching to know how to respond. Since that would add to her already taxing burden of dealing with racism, this is not something in which Cookie feels able to invest.

Racialised girls appreciate that there are consequences of systemic injustice and structural inequality that are beyond the frame of their white peers' awareness. An innocence of the subtler manifestations of gendered racialisation, a lack of awareness of the implications of white beauty norms in school, and the impact of racism, including Islamophobia, all emphasise that the girls are alone in their appreciation of the nature and emotional consequences of racism. There can be a burden to explain things to their girlfriends, but this extends the emotional toll that ensues handling difficult circumstances. Within the terms of white privilege, their white friends perform girl friendships within normative codes for behaviour, easily able to signal inclusivity and generosity. This does nothing to diminish white girl privilege but becomes an added dimension of the isolation that Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls face in the predominantly white school.

5.4. Embedding interest divergence: exclusions and systemic failure

Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls come to expect that they could be on the receiving end of violence. However, this arises in the context of a discursive terrain that suggests that the other is a threat to white people. White people acting in an abhorrent way are seen as an aberration – racists as 'strangers' (Ahmed, 2012). This exceptionalism for the white 'stranger' is not extended to an individual Black, Mixed-race, Asian or Muslim person who acts in an abhorrent way. Such individuals' actions are taken as confirmation of the accuracy of stereotype and assumptions. These in turn underpin the norms which are operationalised within institutions. Even when overtly racist attacks occur, these are not understood as violence endemic within whiteness (Evans-Winters and Hines, 2020; Taylor, 2020; Bhambra, 2014). Racialised hierarchies continue to accord middle-class 'whiteness' with positive associations such as fairness, 'niceness', and well-mannered politeness (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2005, 2010; Bhopal, 2018).

Seeing violence that is perpetrated by white people as an aberration, bolsters the propensity for interest divergence. Rather than diminish white privilege, a discursive exceptionalism takes hold. Mo explains the consequences of this, referring to the experience of school shooters in the US:

There are so many white school shooters and white people do stuff, and you don't go, 'oh white people are terrorists, terrorists! so one, […], group of Muslims who believe in something totally different then what that whole religion is supposed to be believing in, do, do one act which is obviously disgusting you cannot put that whole race together and say, 'they're all the same.'

Mo suggests that perceptions of whiteness are not altered despite some white people's extreme acts of violence. The association between whiteness and innocence remains fixed. When extremely violent acts are performed by a white person, these are seen as the act of an abhorrent individual, without subsuming all white people into a category of 'terrorist'. Innate positivity associated with whiteness is not diminished. In contrast, Mo argues, the ability to discern the individual from the group is not replicated for Muslim people. When such acts are performed by Muslim individuals, an 'obviously disgusting' act tarnishes the reputation of the 'whole religion', subsuming all Muslims as 'all the same'.

Whereas Sheila is asked whether she has a 'bomb in her bag', there is not a comparable construction of white menace even following expressions of racial violence perpetrated against the girls. The girls must deal with expressions of symbolic and physical violence that few others in school link to a problematic construction at the core of whiteness. Moreover, within interest divergence, Gillborn (2010) argues that there is a mobilisation of a general white 'interest' despite there being differences within whiteness. This is evidenced by a complete absence of support for Sheila after George instigates an attack by a group of people in her year at school:

Yeah I know, like [George] was next to me, I was walking, six white people and just me on my own walking home, and [George] was like ' ahh Sheila', he was like, 'F*** off, you are not walking home with us you F***'ing brown b****.' Then [Brittany] comes up to me because she hears [George] say that, and then they're all having a go at me.

This manifestation of hostility, which George clearly signposts as related to Sheila's visible difference, is spearheaded by him as a white boy aggressively performing what he understands as his superiority to impress the group of girls. There is an assurance that underpins George's racist attack on Sheila. But what is also communicated within the white group is that this is a strategy to exclude and isolate Sheila that works. Sheila is easily picked off by George. In failing to counteract violence some of the group initially act as bystanders, prepared to secure their 'interests' rather than challenge George, and diverging from Sheila's interests. There is no expression of gender solidarity, and the group fail to stand against George and his overt and violent expressions of hatred towards Sheila as a brown Muslim girl. 'Then they're all having a go.' No one tells the lead perpetrator to stop, including Brittany who has been someone Sheila considered a friend in the past:

> So if she was me, and I was her […], I'd probably like, if my friend was being racist, I would tell them to shut-up and stuff. I wouldn't like go along with it.

Saying what she would have done in Brittany's place, indicates that Sheila would have hoped to be able to rally some support from her. The group around George do not see a responsibility to condemn him. This incident confirms the dangers of Sheila being 'on her own' where there is a failure of the white group to deal with racism. The group might consider that George's blatantly unacceptable behaviour is 'exceptional' and not reflective of their beliefs or values. But they fail to appreciate the impact or consequence of racist acts and bystander behaviour. Echoing deeply rooted systemic failures to address racism in its varied manifestations, the group fails to stop an overt act of racism as it unfolds in front of them. Some are even prepared to join in, even though they might usually consider themselves, 'not racist'. The groups' interest convergence, around George and whiteness as opposed to gender and race, leaves Sheila without an ally. Without challenge, hostile attitudes and acts seem to be tacitly authorised in the friendship group. Even if 'bystanding' is unintended as a source of harm, when coupled with the lack of any individual, institutional or structural challenge to racism, it has profound consequences. In manifesting obvious interest divergence, and entrenching the hostile environment, racialised girls are left vulnerable to racism and racialised sexism.

Their experience of hostility perpetrates and embeds interest divergence but also has profound and long-lasting implications for the well-being of racialised girls, as Cookie suggests:

> People used to say unnecessary stuff. Really being horrible. Just saying really nasty stuff […] it was definitely a struggle and it was like, in terms of, some people are very racist.

Having experienced a lot of provocation from her peers saying 'unnecessary' and 'really nasty stuff', and without a unified institutional response to issues of racist name calling, Cookie's school life becomes a 'struggle'. Moreover, such overt manifestations of hostility, hate and interest divergence suggests that there is legitimacy in Critical Race theorising which argues that racism is 'permanent'.

5.4.1. Compression in the dominant social order

An institutional failure to deal with even overtly racist and sexist acts become part of a systemic denial that there is anything awry. Since 'emotions of fear and hatred stick to certain bodies' (Ahmed, 2012: 2; Lorde, 1984; Sharpe, 2016), girls in the predominantly white school need to deal with open expressions of hostility. Breaching containment imposed by feminine normativity is dangerous in the context of an institutional propensity towards negative perceptions of the girls. Where 'girl' is already a troubling category, there are sustained efforts to contain 'trouble' (Ahmed, 2015). In their schools, opinions are easily confirmed of the girls as 'guilty' of wrongdoing, even as

this pertains to their performance of girl. Typecast, the girls are easily characterised as not behaving appropriately. Constructed and understood as operating beyond the boundaries of acceptable middle-class femininity means that the girls are framed as either the problem or aggravating any 'problems' that they face. In a different school to Cookie, but also in Year 10, another Black girl, Naomi, suggests that sometimes when she responds to insult and provocation, this reaffirms assumptions of who she is seen to be in the white gaze:

> So I end up saying something but then I'm automatically 'the angry Black girl'.

Without a need to reflect on the cause, Naomi is 'automatically' assumed to be 'angry'. She is held accountable for the difficulties that she faces because of what is judged to be her inadequate or inappropriate response. Both she and Cookie are contained within inaccurate perceptions that their character and responses are, at least in part, responsible for amplifying any difficulty that they, as Black girls, face.

Cookie describes the mounting 'compression' that she experienced which only latterly resulted in her expressing anger:

> I think it was last year, last year, I was in a lot of trouble, in and out of trouble but it was because I was just getting fed up you know when you've had a breaking point, you just have a breaking point. Like for me from Year 7 to Year 8, like all I'd done was people like bully me, say stuff and always, I'd always ignore it but I was the sort of person, I was calm and collected, I won't say anything or do, I was like, 'just leave it alone', but then in Year 9 it was just like for everything that's gone on, you just get so angry, I just can't deal with it anymore.

Cookie has been bullied in Years 7 and 8 and was 'just so full of anger' in Year 9. Although Cookie has deployed a range of strategies, including being 'calm', 'collected' and ignoring what happens, in Year 9 she reaches her 'breaking point.'

Rather than be identified within a larger context of a dominant social and racial order (Fordham, 1996) ignoring how racialised and gendered structural violence works helps the school to construct Cookie's anger as the root cause of the problems that she faces. When everyone in class ignores a boy who uses abusive language directed at Cookie, he escapes any penalty. As an institutional manifestation of interest divergence, there seems to be differential treatment resulting in a more pronounced consequence for Cookie's anger than for the action of the other student who provokes Cookie:

> If I get angry and do this then I'm in trouble. Like I'm in trouble 'cause I retaliated because someone decided it was alright to call me the n-word but school wouldn't do nothing about it. So it's stuff like that…

Cookie's angry behaviour is easy to label as unacceptable in terms that are consistently and readily understood in school. She is seen as challenging the teachers' authority and in need of behaviour management. The rules on behaviour do not explicitly target any student on account of race or gender. Understanding and presenting rules as non-racial and neutral (Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly, 2018) decontextualises her anger. Cookie's experience of racism and her subsequent reaction to it are overlooked on account of her anger. It allows her school's failure to respond to Cookie's experience of racial hostility in Years 7, 8 and 9 to be rendered irrelevant and ignored. The lack of response to the name-calling and racism that Cookie has experienced all the way through school is not taken as sufficient to excuse her response. Therefore, within an ahistorical approach, her conduct is understood as amounting to a challenge to the school, its staff, and its justifiable and necessary codes for behaviour, and a pre-existing image of her as an angry Black girl is upheld. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for her dislodge pre-existing narratives, adding to the compression that she experiences. Instead of being seen as someone in need of protection from verbal racist abuse, Cookie is seen as someone who warrants exclusion. She goes on to suggest that this is a lot for an individual schoolchild to handle:

> That really is the struggle of it, you don't really have options. Either have to keep it inside, but then when you keep it inside it, it gets a lot obviously.

Without sufficient institutional back-up, and in the context of institutional amnesia, there is a need to 'keep' experiences 'inside' This is difficult emotional terrain as 'it gets a lot'. Separately from Cookie's one-to-one interview, the younger Year 8 girls in a focus group concur with this analysis. They recognise that there is an ongoing emotional toll of the labour involved in trying to manage various dimensions and manifestations of a hostile environment:

> Zoe: You know how Ophelia said she was angry with her mum, yeah, you keep it in at school
> Ophelia: I do get so angry
> Zoe: get so angry.
> Barbra: Basically I just hold my anger in and just cry. I just cry.
> Zoe: Yeah. Yeah.

The girls have a range of emotional responses to the hostility that they face. These include sadness and anger. The Year 8 girls also share a sense that they must retain their 'composure' in school, whereas at home they can express themselves more freely including being angry with family members. This has an impact in terms of 'tiredness' (Nash, 2019). Although 'decompressing' out of school, needing to deal with the injustice and anger that they feel, results in their being exhausted. As Cookie suggests:

> And every time I came home I was just drained. I wasn't sad, I was just drained from anger.

Although her school fails to understand her perspective on the nature of her racialised experience, and the continual impact of race underpinning the interaction between her and her peers, Cookie is left 'drained' and in need of summoning more resource to deal with what happens to her.

The concept of compression is useful to consider the difficulty each girl faces. In addition to a lack of systematic school response, which leads to necessarily individualised responses to name-calling and abuse, the girls' difficulty is added to as there seems to be an institutional propensity to blame the victim. There is a failure to unravel elements of the hostile environment and structure more appropriate responses to racism and racialised sexism in the predominantly white secondary school. This further embeds interest divergence, and the hostile environment, as no one in authority takes responsibility to challenge the prevailing power imbalances between the girls and their peers.

5.4.2. Fear of racism

Black, Mixed-race, and Muslim girls have great difficulty 'fading'. Some of the girls, including Zoe, Gail and Queen are aware of their vulnerability to hostility and violence because of their experiences and those of their close family members. They link this to media presentations of the supposed threat that they and their communities present. Zoe sees that informed by the press, people in school come to believe in an omnipresent Muslim threat:

> You see on the news, terrorists and that. They believe every Muslim is a terrorist I guess. Yeah some people believe that…

Unlike their peers who are seen to warrant being nurtured and care in school, some of the girls describe how they remain tied to a perception that they are a threat to white people. Zoe's experiences of Islamophobia and racism in society affect her decision not to wear a headscarf to school. Initially her mum would have liked Zoe to wear one, but when Zoe explains how she feels that this could make her vulnerable to expressions of hostility, her mum changes her view:

> And like my mum is like she wants me to wear it like but she says, 'you don't have to wear it if you get too scared.'

Zoe feels 'too scared' to wear a headscarf as it might make her a target of other people's aggression. Although Bob describes herself as 'strong', and reports some of her peers seeing her as 'scary', this does not mean that she is safe from harm. Bob explains that "some people don't like" her and how her typical 'African mum' encourages Bob to miss training for the sports team:

> She's like, 'be home before its dark'. I'm like, 'mum, I'm leaving at three, be home by four.' And she's like, 'Be home, early as you can.'

Bob does not take part in school sports in the winter. Travelling home after dark if she plays matches or attends training is perceived to be a risk by her mum. Without any signal that this risk is understood in school, it seems to Bob and her family that they alone are aware of a need to structure Bob's safety.

For the girls and their families, a sense of unease remains. When expressed, hate has a profound impact (Sharpe, 2016). As Queen explains, there are long lasting impacts of being attacked. Queen describes the process involved in coming to terms with a racist incident that happened five years earlier when she was in Year 6 and coming home from school:

> I was like 11. […] I got pushed out onto the road, where cars were going quite fast, and like, people saying 'go back to your country', you're a f****** monkey and stuff, and they started making monkey sounds. It was awful […] and I was just walking home, and I thought it's because they hate me anyway because they are quite bullies and err I just thought, like older, like now I think, 'no, that was a racial attack!'

Queen now understands that she experienced a 'racial attack'. She understands the nature of this hostility better than her Year 6 self, when at that point her only frame of reference was a school-based discourse of 'bullying'. Even so, understanding it as a racial attack does not overcome a legacy of Queen's trauma. As a child facing real physical danger, being pushed onto a busy road, the legacy of this hate is a memory that remains traumatic and traumatising.

Their knowledge of racism affects the girls although their schools seem to remain ignorant of racism as a critical dimension of their lives that racialised girls need to navigate. Without institutional shifts to prioritise listening to the girls' attempts to explain their perspective and experience, there is an ongoing mismatch of knowledge which perpetuates interest divergence. As a mode of operating this makes mutual understanding more difficult between the girls and their schools, and even inside of school friendship groups. It is in this context that retrenchment against a genuine commitment to foster equality and inclusion takes hold in all three schools.

5.5. Retrenchment: containment of criticism of schools' responses to racism and sexism

Within norms structured into the predominantly white school, the person objecting to the status quo can be characterised as being objectionable. Sewell, et al. (2021) suggest that those experiencing racism can be understood as having personal shortcomings or weaknesses, as they are unable to overcome hurdles that others manage to overcome. Within prevailing power imbalances (Paechter, 2018) this discursive frame strengthens an institutional impasse, maintaining a context in which institutional shortcomings can be overlooked. Since the girls' understanding of the nature of

racism and racialised sexism does not fit with their schools' perception, any concern about the shortcomings of the institutional response to racism can be dismissed. The lack of drive to consider the girls' perspective lends legitimacy to the view that racism and racialised sexism continue because of individual failings, further distracting from a need to consider institutional failures to address racism and racialised sexism. Instead of pursuing the goal of improving equality of access and inclusion, this represents a form of retrenchment.

Being susceptible to being caricatured as oppositional diminishes the girls' chances of successfully securing any gains from critiquing their schools' responses to either a lack of understanding of their perspective or actual experiences of racism in school. Therefore, the girls describe their parents' counsel, suggesting they 'rise above' what they experience in order to avoid trouble or any risk of retribution. Queen's mother suggests Queen should 'just ignore [Matilda] and stuff' as their dispute over 'All lives matter' has dragged on. It seems as though she is concerned in case Queen becomes seen as the source of the problem. Mo also suggests:

> And my mum always says, 'oh we're better than this.' And our family says to us, 'if they say something, ignore it.'

Mo's family encourage her not to endanger her opportunities in school through making any complaint. The families know that there are systemic and structural failings, and that this makes it difficult when girls challenge the status quo. Although racism is always unacceptable, Mo's mum encourages her to endure what happens, or 'ignore it'. They do not accept a narrative of 'deficit', as is evidenced in Mo's mum's use of a collective 'we', confirming to Mo that 'we' are 'better than this'. Although the unpleasantness, name calling and abuse continue largely unabated, Mo and her family understand that racism within the school environment is the problem, rather than anything inherent in Mo's own character or behaviour.

With so little institutional understanding or support in place to respond to the girls' concerns about racism, racialised sexism, and violence, some girls choose not to raise their concerns about racism or sexism. A lack of institutional 'back-up' means that it feels to some girls that it is easier not to involve the school authorities, as Sarah suggests:

> If they made a racist joke, I wouldn't really talk to them. I would rather like keep it to myself.

Sarah highlights that since there does not seem to be clear messaging about how her school will respond to racism, it is easier to ignore it, and carry on as though there is no problem. There seems to be little confidence that vulnerability to jokes and other threats that she faces will be properly understood in school. Without being sure of the response, Sarah suggests that she would not attempt to challenge another student:

> I think if I did like, there would be problems. Like if I did, it would oh like, 'wait, we should solve the problem', it's kind of like, they might turn on us.

Sarah suggests that the fear of retribution acts to rein in her objection to a problem that she perceives. There could be harmful consequences. It is better to attempt to 'fade' (Ahmed, 2012) rather than object to something that other people do not see as objectionable.

Although Kahmia initially 'passes' and is made to feel welcome when she first arrives in school, she realises that she remains vulnerable to becoming the butt of a joke, or having unpleasant things said. Her difference is weaponised even in her friendship group:

> like when I first came, it was like, everyone was really nice. And like I didn't experience like any racist things, anything like that but then as it has gone on and I'm more friendly with a lot of people, it's like, everyone can make a joke, it's not like everyone but a few people just like say a few things. Like people that I know, people that are around me quite a lot but it's not constant like I don't feel like I get it as bad as some people would do.

Expressing that she has some ability to pass within white middle-class femininity and take a 'joke', suggesting that her experience is not as 'bad' as 'some' people, Kahmia also describes experiencing 'racist things'. As she has got to know more people, she has become more visible around school. When others in the group begin to feel that her popularity presents a threat to their status inside of her friendship group, racism is deployed as weapon to encourage her to know her place and the limits of her inclusion within whiteness and a girls' friendship group.

Raising an objection to the racial status quo constitutes a risk to each girl. It is in this context that the girls describe the caution of their parents in making challenges to the schools' lack of awareness. Knowing what they do about the wider context of institutional racism, the girls and their parents realise that their schools are unlikely to understand the issue adequately and therefore cannot be trusted to respond appropriately to reports of incidents in school. There is increased vulnerability to retribution. Without a recognition in school of institutional failures which negatively impact the provision provided to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, it remains difficult for individual girls to counteract the hostility that they face.

5.5.1.   Systemic failings: Deferring action

Institutional intransigence resulting from a failure to recognise the persistence of hostility including racism and racialised sexism continues to impact the girls' school lives. Without leadership and clear institutional commitment to tackle the problem of being a visible minority and racist name-calling in school, Ophelia suggests that name-calling continues to be an aspect of school life:

> If someone says the N word and then just walks off, [teachers will] be like tell us when it happens again.

Always deferring an institutional response means that the behaviour persists and any confidence that the girls have that it is worth telling someone is diminished. In addition to examples of a failure to act even though schools receive information from the girls, there is also retrenchment from stated policies and processes regarding Muslim girls' experience of Islamophobia. Given a lack of experience of working together and effectively with Muslim girls' cultural, religious and social background (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018) young Muslim girls at school can become discursively constructed as 'folk devils', at risk of radicalisation and even of becoming 'jihadi' brides (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018; Meetoo, 2021). Although Sheila ignores some abusive name-calling, sometimes she feels a need to act:

> But then I've been called like 'Taliban' and I do report it. I'm not going to lie they actually didn't do anything.

Even when informed of what is happening, the girls' schools do not appear to be willing or able to act on the information. This limits the institution's opportunity to learn from this type of experience, continuing the girls' school's failure to comprehend racism, and within it racialised sexism.

Cookie has also followed the protocols for reporting incidents:

> When you do do what they ask you to do, which is to report it and then it'll get sorted, no one does anything about it.

Cookie tries to effect change in school so that the problems that she faces will be resolved but no action is taken by the school. There seems to be no shared interest, or interest convergence, or any institutional ability to tackle racist name-calling. Schools communicate a hesitancy to address racism for fear that they might get it wrong if they trust the girls. Every time Cookie attempts to share knowledge of her experience, an excuse is made as to why the teachers' inaction is appropriate:

> someone has said the n-word to me and every time it's like challenged, 'oh we didn't hear it properly', and like, 'we weren't really there so we can't really blame it on someone'.

Cookie describes how teachers think that it would be wrong to trust the girls' testimony because 'impartial' teachers have not witnessed anything. Over time this encourages a sense that there is little point telling anyone about what happens. She, like other girls, realise that this type of incident is one that the teachers would rather not have to deal with. Instead of dealing with racism, the girls' teachers seem eager to dissuade the girls from making their experience known.

Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls seem more aware than anybody else in the predominantly white school that they remain vulnerable to experiencing racism, sexism and acute levels of hostility. An apparent denial of the lived reality of racism accentuates both their isolation and the potential for

hostility. Sheila offers a critique of her school's failure, noting a distinction between her primary and secondary school experience. Sheila suggests that there is a denial of the ubiquity of the 'reality' of racism in her secondary school, highlighting institutional inactivity around racist behaviour:

> …when I got in Year 7, I found it a big struggle [to] face the reality because, I think in primary school it is a bit more like the teachers, like there's any racism the teachers get, and all the kids know that they'll get in deep trouble. In Year 7 that's when like … I kinda of realised that people don't really get that much in trouble for saying stuff.

In Year 7, Sheila realises that people could act with impunity rather than get 'in trouble for saying stuff'. Name-calling persists because perpetrators know that there will be no consequences. Racism had, in Sheila's experience, been more effectively dealt with in primary school where 'all the kids know that they'll get in deep trouble' for behaving in ways which are clearly communicated as being unacceptable.

There is a failure to publicly condemn racism or support the girls' when they oppose racism. This, and the lack of communication of an institutional message about the measures that will be taken against those who perpetrate racism in school, acts as a retrenchment from the stated goals of inclusion and equality. Further evidencing a hostile school environment. Cookie suggests that perpetrators feel safe as they know, 'nothing will happen to me!' There is an awareness from the girls' peers that there will be no ramifications for unacceptable behaviour. Even overt expressions of violence and hostility are not dealt with, and perpetrators can continue to escape punishment.

The girls highlight that racism and racialised sexism reoccur each school year, but it is not apparent to the girls that there is any development of strategies, policies and procedures to meaningfully effect change. Instead of responding to racism as ongoing and treating it as a systemic problem, schools respond as though it is an unusual event, a one-off that affects individual girls. Although there are policy statements, encompassing a loosely framed and abstract institutional aversion towards racism, the girls' schools do not seem to be able to deal with racism effectively. Many of the girls try to push against the institutional lack of understanding, but a distinction between their and their schools' levels of understanding structures a retreat away from stated policies and goals to deal with racism and sexism. Instead, this lack of understanding and resolve structures retrenchment, and a lack of response to either individual acts or institutional racism and sexism within the predominantly white school.

5.5.2. *Distrust of the girls*

Since there is no obvious construction of Black girl as victim (Crenshaw, 1991), and where the girls necessarily have to raise incidents on a case-by-case basis, this culminates in the girls being positioned as untrustworthy and unreliable witnesses, even pertaining to their own experience of

attempting to challenge racism and racialised sexism. Complaining about racism is seen as subterfuge or a cover for their misbehaviour. Despite Year 9 Gail's willingness 'to help' and tell the 'truth' about misbehaviour involving her old (racially mixed) friendship group, the Headteacher says to Gail:

> I've been doing this job for a long time, and I know children and I know when someone is lying, and umm, you're lying to me.

Rather than believe Gail, there is a default position of not believing her. Starting from a point where the girls are assumed to be guilty makes it easier to destabilise a view of the girls as worthy of trust.

Within the terms of retrenchment, some of the girls see that reporting their experience will serve little or no purpose and could invite unwelcome and unpleasant extra scrutiny of the girls' motivation for openly talking about their experience of racism. After a long period of trying to alert the school authorities of the prevalence of racism, Sheila uses a term of abuse aimed at whiteness. She is thereafter accused of having double standards and criticised:

> [a teacher] comes in and says 'oh yeah, she's being saying racist stuff' but I've had so much racism against me. And I've said this but they take no action, and as soon as I have said one thing, like 'whitey', they are angry about it.

Although Sheila has experienced 'so much racism', the teacher highlights that she is guilty of expressing 'racist stuff'. There is an immediate upset when she says 'whitey':

> yeah, I know it's not right for me to say 'whitey' but I said it once. And they were saying words and stuff and I had it for like a year and like they didn't do anything.

Sheila has tried to report her experience of name-calling, but it continues over a year without action. The institutional response seems to consider her use of a racist term more serious. Sheila has become an unreliable witness having been 'caught' being racist in school. Sheila is seen as having a vested interest in perpetuating a narrative which centres on her experience of racism, and of not taking responsibility for her own display of what is perceived to be equivalent name-calling. Without querying the disparity in toxicity associated with the term 'whitey' and the n-word or the p-word, or other racial terms, she is blamed for perpetrating racism. This dents her ability and credibility to call out the racism that she faces. Sheila is seen as operating a double standard and being biased against whiteness.

Students of colour are aware of double standards that operate in school. They know that they are more likely to be reprimanded than white students who are also involved in negative behaviour (Chapman, 2013). They understand that they are often seen as a source of trouble. Those who perpetrate racism seem more able to escape censure. A presumption of white students' innocence

in comparison to their non-white counterparts' 'guilt' (Wun, 2016) also affects Bob. When Bob highlights her experience of racist name-calling, the teacher who comes across her and other students does not believe her, believing that she is making excuses for being late for her next class. Without any presumption of an intrinsic right of reply (Spivak, 1988, Bhabha, 1994, Bhambra, 2014), and instead of persuading her teacher, Bob becomes embroiled in an argument over what has happened. This prejudices her ability to be heard when she raises her concerns with a teacher who is reprimanding her in the corridor for being late to her next lesson. In response to her report of the n-word being used in the corridor, and in contrast to the perpetrators, Bob remains in danger of being seen as rude and surly. When the teacher asserts, 'they didn't say that', Bob responds:

> Yes they did. They said it to my face. Just say it to me and my friends in the corridor.

No other witnesses to this incident mention any racist name-calling, and there are many bystanders. This means that rather than be seen as someone who is honest and polite, Bob cannot shake off the impression that as a Black girl, she is ill-disciplined, and untrustworthy. Bob's response is delegitimised, diminishing her ability to be seen for who she is. Bob values her access to a good school and education but her attempt at asserting a corrective or counter-narrative is misread as an excuse to cover for bad behaviour.

Instead of expressing gratitude at being included (Ahmed, 2012), Bob is presenting a problem to the member of staff that they would rather not acknowledge. Bob's narrative complicates the teacher's response because she resists an institutional imperative to deny that both racism and sexism are every-day features of the predominantly white school in corridors and other places further from teachers' control. Meanwhile in a growing epistemological schism, and retrenchment between the girls and their schools about what is and is not acceptable, Bob learns that the risk of her being late to class is more institutionally condemnable than racism.

There is a desire to contain the girls' criticism of the lack of school response to stop racism, as well as a propensity to blame the girls when they express their frustration and anger at their continued exposure and lack of protection from hostility and abuse as this occurs in class and around school. Schools do not acknowledge this, but institutional failure to deal with racism directed against the girls in school structures further retrenchment.

Downplaying the impact of racism amplifies the ontological distinction between the view of the school authorities and those of the girls. It appears to the girls that there is a preference in their schools to deny that racism and racialised sexism are a problem. This limits attempts to challenge it. Moreover, alerting the school authorities to their experience results in greater scrutiny of each girl in

what seems to be an effort to discredit the legitimacy of their claims. When asking for institutional recognition of a problem with name-calling and abuse, the girls are asking for help with a problem that their schools fail to fully understand. The schools' difficulty in accepting the reality of racism structures a predisposition to distrust the girls' testimony. Bringing attention to racism continues to be an effort in vain, ineffective in a context where the girls cannot be 'heard'. Institutional retrenchment from dealing with racism and racialised sexism also helps explain a growing reticence of the girls to alert the school authorities of their experience.

5.5.3. Failure to utilise reports of racism to improve girls' situation

The girls' schools seem to lack a willingness to learn from the girls. Tiring of rising above 'it', a lack of visible action taken by her school communicates to her that racism is either not a problem in need of an institutional response, or that racism is acceptable. In the face of an institutional shortfall, Mo suggests:

> And it's just got to that point now when I'm fed up of ignoring it. Like I have to do something about it.

Mo has weighed up the risk of misrecognition and disapproval on account of challenges that she makes to institutional and institutionally sanctioned narratives, and decides to report what has happened to her:

> It got sent to [Headteacher] and loads of people knew about it, because I was telling loads of teachers…

Mo's parents support Mo's (as opposed to her school's) narrative that the racism that she experiences is a problem. Their understanding of racism helps Mo resist feeling isolated and unsupported, and seems to have some effect in the short term:

> So obviously I've told my parents, my parents have called in, they got taken out of one of my classes.

Shared with her parents, Mo can achieve a small measure of change. Her parents' outsider perspective can exert limited pressure on Mo's school to act. However, the effect is temporary, and the boys are only removed from one of Mo's classes. Although problems persist over time, and even where there is some awareness that inequalities and discrimination reoccur, the school fails to embed change. Despite her and her parents' efforts to overhaul the impact that some boys' behaviour have on Mo's school life, separate occurrences fail to be seen as a pattern which warrants further inquiry:

> There was still stuff being said in my other classes because they were in quite a lot of my classes.

Challenging the racism that they experience remains difficult for the girls as it is only carried out individually, on a case-by-case basis. This reinforces a structural impasse which is more appreciated by the girls and their families than by their schools. When Cookie's parents call the school to prompt institutional action, there is an acknowledgement from someone in school that there needs to be an improvement in Cookie's situation:

> we [school] need to do something about this, it's getting out of hand and she's clearly not the only one who is suffering with this.

In theory the school can see that there is a problem which is 'getting out of hand', and this causes 'suffering'. Although the school authorities receive the information, and it seems to elicit some sympathy or even compassion, it results in no discernible institutional change and the issue remains at a personal 'suffering' level. Whilst the admission is made that Cookie is 'not the only one', the school does not appear to act as though there is a wider problem. Verbal assurances are given but these do not result in a commitment to change or any recognition that racism is evidence of a systemic failure with impacts on each girl. Ultimately the admission does not result in meaningful change. Cookie's parents cannot overcome the hostile environment that she faces in school:

> My parents rang them so many times. My dad was getting really pissed off, sorry. He was like, 'there is no reason why my daughter should come to this school and feel like uncomfortable like, and you know and just having to just come home just very drained. From being in school, she's not coming to school to deal with people, she's coming to school to learn and stuff.'

Dealing with 'people' is not Cookie's purpose in coming to school, the purpose of being in school is 'to learn'. Despite her resourcefulness, deploying policies, school protocols and her dad's support, Cookie continues to face barriers to her learning in school.

Even though both Mo and Cookie enlist outside support in their attempt to challenge the hostility from their peers in school, neither Mo nor Cookie can prompt action from their school to stop the racism and sexism that they face. Vincent, Rollock, Ball, and Gillborn (2012: 350) find that, by virtue of the need to operate in 'White-dominated fields', Black parents 'have their cultural and social capital devalued, rejected and treated as illegitimate when they encounter educational institutions'. When the girls and their parents do act, refusing to accept racism, the school does not support their joint effort. Disruption continues in each of their classes, thwarting the girls' and their parents' efforts. Perhaps as a consequence, Mo decides not share information about her school's inaction with her parents:

> I don't like want to tell my parents that nothing is being done.

Mo decides to protect her parents from knowing that there continues to be an inadequate institutional response even following their joint effort. Through its inaction, their school confirms that despite following the protocols for reporting incidents recommended by school, and even when the Headteacher is informed, her school either chooses not to stop, or cannot stop the racism that occurs. Lorde (1977) knows that 'silence' will not protect against racism or sexism. By reporting what happens, the girls and their parents stand in opposition to the institution's lack of acknowledgement of racism as a problem. However, the girls cannot ultimately compel the school authorities to overturn aspects of a hostile environment. There is no shift institutionally, the boundaries on the girls' opposing the racism that they experience remains intact, calcifying the hostile environment through processes of retrenchment. The girls are unable to contest either the perceptions of those in school, or their schools' inability to meaningfully address the racism that they face.

5.5.4.   *No school-based forum for the girls to share their experience*

Race inequality is entrenched within the English school system, actively developing 'patterns of not seeing' (Gillborn, 2008: 10, 163). Their schools seem to continue to deny the validity of the girls' experiential knowledge to challenge the status quo and institutionally entrenched narratives that racism is rare rather than 'normal'. There is no reliable institutional route to facilitate knowledge of racism in any of the three schools and the girls' schools continue to fail to recognise that racism is part of everyday experience. It remains difficult for each girl to use their authority based on their experience as a source of overcoming racism collectively. Although there are many such experiences in school, these are approached as though they are one-offs and personal as opposed to a reoccurring pattern of behaviour, or a consequence of an institutional effect. Rather than unseat school knowledges (Youdell, 2011), there is a failure to learn how frequently the girls encounter racism, and each experience remains a personal narrative. This fails to prompt any understanding of the girls' experience at an institutional level. This presents a difficulty coordinating efforts to overcome racism in school, encouraging institutional inaction, but also presenting a difficulty to the girls. Without gaining a picture of what others experience, the girls remain isolated and less able to collectively challenge racism in the school context.

There remains no way to meaningfully share experience inside the institution. Not knowing that others have had similar experiences further compounds Mo's sense that her school cannot be trusted to deal with racism. Her school remains institutionally untrustworthy even if there are individual teachers and staff who are capable of responsiveness. Mo describes how this persists over time and is repeated within each year:

> And I think that is also annoying because I didn't know that that had happened to [Cookie]. But the fact that … stuff like that is happening to people in the younger years, we're Year

11s, and I've had a lot recently as well. From Year 10 to Year 11, I have had a lot of racism and I wouldn't say bullying but racism and them comments.

Mo's knowledge that there is a distinction between racism and bullying cannot be utilised within her school. Efforts to tackle 'bullying', understood in general rather than specific terms, remains the schools' priority. This impairs both the schools' and the girls' ability to develop effective means with which to deal with their experiences or overcome racism as a part of their school life.

There is a failure to perceive as necessary an institutionally initiated support structure to facilitate sharing information about the girls' experiences. The lack of representation of minority ethnic staff may contribute to a lack of facility to share the girls' experiences more communally. Cookie highlights that there is no equivalent facility for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls to the one which LGTBQI students have available to discuss their collective experiences together and with a knowing adult:

> 'it's a way for them to talk about their experiences […] it is like a support system for them, […] we don't really have this, if you know what I mean, we don't really have oh … I don't want to say a 'race club'.

LGTBQI students have a facility to share their experiences, meeting with a particular teacher in a classroom for tea and cake. Were there to be a 'race club', this would offer a 'support system' through provision of a place for the girls to talk about their experiences. Such a Club's existence would also show that the school recognised the girls' experience of racism and racialised sexism as equivalent to discrimination faced by other minorities in school. Instead, it becomes increasingly clear to the girls there is an institutional inattention to their experience, and a failure to account for their perspective or what happens to them. They feel that there is no real willingness to know or understand racism and consequently a lack of advocacy for them.

Sanctioning a 'race club' would mean that the school acknowledges that in present day society, there remains a need to institutionalise responses to racism. It would also facilitate greater understanding and clarity of the issues that racialised girls face. This would add an awareness to contextualising individual girl's responses and could start to make meaningful change possible in school. It would also improve the girls' sense that their schools are responding to their situation as opposed to ignoring any need to act. However, in none of the three schools is this facility available. Therefore, there remains no avenue to collect information about the school context to improve the situation of all those racialised and experiencing racism and racialised sexism in school.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has responded to my research questions which sought to find out about support, barriers, experiences of discrimination and the changes that racialised girls would like to see. Although a few racialised girls access individualised support structures, many racialised girls would like to see more institutional support to offset marginalisation, racism, sexism and racialised sexism. They see a need to change the environment and the structures that lead to the ongoing replication of barriers and negative experiences every year for a different cohort of racialised girls. They question tokenism, including the use of their images for publicity and in the curriculum. They would like to see improvements in the levels of understanding and knowledge, including of Black Lives Matter. Many spoke of changes that are necessary to institutional responses to racism and racialised sexism. These include formalising the means to collect the girls' narratives of their lived experiences to utilise the girls' experiential knowledge to make improvements to school-based processes dealing with racism, sexism, and racialised sexism.

Following the thematic analysis of the girls' narratives, I have found that Critical Race Theory offers insights into analysing the persistence or permanence of racism, however it morphs and is disguised inside the workings of a predominantly white school. Amidst a changing topography of racism, prevailing power relations, inertia, and the seeming impossibility of overcoming racism, sexism and racialised sexism, a hostile environment emerges, one with deep-rooted flaws in supporting the educational and well-being goals of racialised girls. Lacking a root and branch critique of structural forces at play, and without an awareness of a need to unpack constructions of normalcy or improve the current situation that racialised girls face, there is institutional complicity in the reproduction of a system where interest divergence and retrenchment is increasingly structured into educational policy and practice and operationalised in schools.

An unquestioning and exclusive legitimacy is accorded whiteness. Subject to the vagaries of white privilege and marginalisation, each girl becomes constrained through a perception of them as less knowing than the school authorities. Although they would like to be seen as experts of their own experience, in a hostile school environment, they are not seen this way. Instead, prevailing perceptions of racialised girls limits the way that each girl can register a challenge to the current racialised status quo. The formal and pastoral curriculum, interactions in class, as well as in more informal spaces outside of class, fail to educate or extend horizons of students in schools. It therefore seems to the girls that ignorance is structured into different dimensions of their school life, something which acts as another boundary to their agency. By themselves, ultimately the girls

cannot overcome structural barriers, realign established power hierarchies, or representations of them constructed through a white lens in the predominantly white space.

The denial of any organisational problem is made manifest through welcoming diversity. Within a discursive formulation of racism as an aberration, the predominantly white organisation presents itself as a site of welcome and inclusion whatever a person's race, gender and class. This helps to forestall any perception of a need for change. Through the denial of a problem, there is no need for the organisation to facilitate change or counteract exclusionary processes.

Since the institution is positioned as beyond reproach through its approach to diversity, even when racism is experienced by people within the institution, this does not overcome complacency in the organisation. The individual who highlights racism within an institution is seen as bringing forward an issue that would rather be ignored, as the institution's ostensible values decry racist and exclusionary practices. Therefore, the individual who experiences racism continues to be characterised as the problem, as their experience highlights the inaccuracy of an institutional narrative built around welcome and inclusion.

In all three schools, the educational experiences of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls continue to be affected by their race, gender and class. A failure to acknowledge and address white privilege amplifies its power to structure the school environment, leading to a confiscation of acceptability for the girls. White privilege exacts an emotional and imaginative 'penalty' structured into the fabric of the predominantly white school. This penalty underpins the terms of co-existence within school spaces, tacitly operating as white spaces. One penalty is the use of offensive language which reinforces the unevenness of the distribution of power between the girls and their peers in school. As an imposition on many of the girls in school, using terms of abuse actively limits the girls' freedom to respond, establishing a discursive boundary between each girl, their peers and the school authorities.

Being anachronistic and 'projected onto strangers', means that expressions of racism are seen as an aberration, not part of the day to day but an exceptional happening. If addressed at all, such aberrations can continue to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis without a need to question the structures or processes that allowed such a happening to occur. Without adequate support structures in school, the girls' experiences of racism and sexism leave a legacy that they must manage independently.

Although there are many hostile encounters in school, each occurrence is treated as a one-off incident. Each incident remains understood as personal to the individual girl who experiences it,

compounding their sense that they are alone in facing this type of experience. Although their perception is disputed, taken together, the girls' reporting of racism in school could have offered a counter narrative to any assertion that there is no problem with racism in school. Instead, the girls' opposition to a fixed institutional discourse which continues to deny the reality encourages a perception that they are oppositional to school as opposed to racism or sexism.

When the school authorities fail to act in any visible way, this seems to condone racism. In the face of institutional inaction, opposing racist name-calling necessarily remains at an individual level, and the potential for wider change is limited. Instead of understanding the girls as needing institutional support, there is no overhaul of the structural context in which expressions of racism can and do occur. Schools institutionalise retrenchment through an inability to clearly communicate that racism is unacceptable through acting when it occurs or when the girls report it. The schools frame opposition to racism as act of hostility to school and necessary school structures. This can encourage perceptions that those who oppose racism do not care about their education.

Despite the girls' efforts to illuminate what remains opaque or obscured in the predominantly white school, the hostile environment remains intact. Rather than responding to a need to address or overcome hostility, the school's inability to listen or hear what the girls say leads to both interest divergence and retrenchment. Whereas interest divergence leads to a failure to address institutional racism and sexism, retrenchment institutionalises the lack of any institutional response to racism and racialised sexism over time. Perpetrators are seen to be able to act with impunity as they know there will be no adequate institutional response. As a consequence, some of the girls do not report their experience as it will serve little or no purpose and may invite unwelcome and unpleasant extra scrutiny of the girls personally. The constancy of an underlying hostility and threat of harm, however the girls challenge it, makes for weariness in the girls' decision making - about whether, when and how to challenge what they encounter in their everyday lives in school.

Picking and choosing between strategies has varying degrees of success, but their fortitude and ability to be in school for the right reasons means that the girls are not determined by the negative structural forces at play in their lives even if these do constrain their room for manoeuvre. Rather than allow their experience of school dictate who they are and can be, they begin to establish their potential to disrupt fixed and well-established ways of seeing them. The girls' agentic decision-making affords them the '*potentiality* of an act of power' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 145). This is a useful frame within which to explore the forms of resistance employed by the girls as set out in the following chapter.

6. Resistance in the predominantly white secondary school

6.1. Introduction

Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white schools are highly visible on account of their difference from their white peers. They operate in contexts in which white norms are socially constructed, transmitted, legitimated and reproduced. This chapter explores what Youdell (2011: 16) depicts as students' 'everyday struggles and resistances' in school as seeking 'to unsettle the ways in which influence, prestige, status and their exclusions are rendered in schools'. This definition of resistance suggests a need to refine understandings of responses to circumstances that face Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, and particularly conceptions of survival, agency and intention. Mirza (1992: 23) also suggests that it is necessary to unpack unrealistic, or 'romantic' appraisals of Black girls' action and decisions as political or defiant gesturing. Often, she argues, girls and young women act pragmatically in the face of inequalities and stereotyping. This suggests a need to explore manifestations of autonomy, self-definition, and self-determination. Rather than being cast as a 'sign' for an unacceptable other (Bhabha, 1994), I examine how racialised girls go beyond 'unsettling' towards ousting the legitimacy of the sign at least for themselves, using their own resourcefulness to change their situation and increase their scope for breaching boundaries in school. This chapter also establishes the extent to which racialised girls create counter-narratives which are more authentic for each's sense of herself and foster hopefulness. By the end of the chapter, I will have shown that many of the girls demonstrate their capacity to resist expressions of prejudice, racism and racialised sexism in school and that there are differences in the ways that this happens.

6.2. Resistance in the face of boundaries: Survival, counter-narratives and self-care

Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls operate in a context where racism and sexism persist. Schools fail to recognise that racism is endemic in education, and normal, 'fluid and relentless', rather than rare (Gillborn, 2018: 67). Within the terms of white privilege (Bhopal, 2018), the girls understand that there are consequences of racialisation in the predominantly white school. Institutional processes as well as open expressions of racism are not separate from wider society, but seep in and are replicated within school (Youdell, 2012). However, without accurate reporting systems or indeed any encouragement to report, or confidence in the value of reporting, the nature and extent of racism and racialised sexism remains obscured in school. A proclivity to deny racism as a problem detracts from an ability to improve the institution's responses. Instead of developing knowledge which

enables an overview of individual incidents as a basis to perceive the changes needed institutionally to respond appropriately to individuals and at a structural level, school authorities deal with each incident as a stand-alone occurrence. Individualising each occurrence also extends the possibility and plausibility of framing girls who complain of racism and racialised sexism as oppositional or untrustworthy. This failure impairs the schools' capability to instigate meaningful change.

Establishing counter-narratives (Dixson and Rousseau Anderson, 2018) is critical where there is a mismatch of perception between what the girls know and what their schools fail to see or act upon. Developing their narrative centred on their lived experience therefore becomes a critical mode of resistance facilitating each girl's survival in school. As Cookie suggests, 'just having to like get through [each day] was difficult'. Counter-narratives enable the girls to look at their schools' failings to change the racial status quo. Through interrupting a dialogic space (Bhabha, 1994), the girls challenge the view that racism has been adequately dealt with in school.

In a focus group with Mo, Cookie steers the focus from any discussion of her character. Her narrative centres on the hostility underlying her school's lack of action to change the racial status quo and make improvements to her situation:

> It was horrible but I was like why do I have to go through this, it's not right.

Where schools fail to acknowledge that there is a problem, they can sidestep a need to respond to racism, however 'horrible' it might be for individual students. As Cookie's counter-narrative shows, this is 'not right'. Mo also questions the inadequate institutional response to stop the disruption in her lessons:

> And I was like, 'why do I have to put up with this? [the perpetrators] supposedly got told off, yeah whatever, but they didn't get … exclusions.

Discursively, Mo does not accept her school's response as adequate. She cites evidence that perpetrators avoid serious punishment. Neither Mo nor Cookie, (or their parents who have been involved in challenging the school's lack of response) are 'merely' reactive ciphers (Tate, 2005: 163). Experiencing 'moments when [they] are subjected to violence, particularly by social structures that have been constructed to discipline and surveil' (Nash, 2019: 119), Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls refuse to be silenced, resisting the disavowal of their lived experience of racism and sexism. In 'talking back' (hooks, 1989: 5), many girls have 'an opinion' and dare 'to disagree' with their schools' lack of knowledge, understanding, ability to find out and then take effective action to resolve established patterns of behaviour.

Although, they interrogate their schools' inadequate response, the girls remain constrained by constructions of them as less capable of knowing within prevailing ideologies of gender and race. Since not all discussions of experience or perception are considered to hold equivalent discursive legitimacy (Spivak, 1986, 1988; Alcoff, 1995), when the girls discuss their experience, there remains a presumption of the girls' 'ignorance' in their school, a readiness to see the girls as less capable of knowing and to characterise their responses to their circumstances as oppositional. This means that it remains difficult for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls to change perceptions of how widespread racism is in their predominantly white schools. This raises questions of how to respond intentionality or willfully (Ahmed, 2014b) since theirs are not narratives that fit within discourses understood as legitimate and credible in school.

In order to facilitate the possibility to become 'authors' of a person's 'own' life in order to survive, offset and create possibility to overcome exclusion even within highly governed and surveilled spaces, Emejulu and Sobande (2019: 6, 7) suggest that resistance is necessary through engaging in 'radical counter-storytelling about whose knowledge counts'. Therefore, Naomi centres her counter-narrative on her centrality, understanding her schools' failures to hear from those who recognise that racism continues to be a problem in school:

> 'Cause some people believe that racism just doesn't exist but it really does and it happens in this school… constantly.

Despite the belief of 'some people', Naomi resists the narrative which denies the existence of racism as a constant feature of her school life. Challenging school knowledge (Youdell, 2011) Naomi disavows her school's denial of racism. In expressing her disagreement with her school's approach that there is 'no problem here' (Gaine, 1987, 2005), she exhibits a 'refusal to be voiceless in the face of incredible economic and social imbalance' (Fordham, 2016: 12). To characterise Naomi as oppositional to her school would be inaccurate, she is oppositional to ignorance of racism as a reality that others in school prefer to ignore or cannot see or adequately address and which therefore becomes a systemic failing.

Refusing to settle 'for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe' (Lorde, 1978: 57), Naomi establishes for herself the legitimacy of her counter-narrative. She establishes that her knowledge, as opposed to the schools', is critical to undo ignorance so that action can be taken within the institution. Naomi claims her own authority to interrogate institutional inaction legitimised through a narrative of denial, refusing to accept her schools' view that racism is not a problem:

> Umm, people being more open about the reality…like to pass it off as or just push it aside but we actually need to sort it out.

Naomi holds the institution to account for a failure to act effectively, calling attention to an institutional ignorance of racism as a 'reality' that needs to be dealt with rather than ignored. Naomi knows her situation better than most around school, establishing a discursive dissonance between her and the institution's understanding of racism. This impairs her school's ability to 'sort it out'. Naomi uses 'we' as opposed to 'they' to critique her school's inability and inaction, suggesting that the school authorities, by themselves, will not act as 'they' do not know what they need to do.

Although she is unable to overcome the structural and institutional barriers that she faces, Naomi breaches a constraining discourse which could pitch her clear-sightedness as the problem. Despite its inherent inaccuracy and basis in an institutionalisation of ignorance, using 'we' also suggests the importance that Naomi places on a collective effort. This denies the accuracy of a perception of Naomi as troublesome or oppositional although this negative perception of both her and her counter-narrative might persist.

Since bringing racism to the attention of the institution means that individuals can be branded as difficult (Ahmed, 2012), some girls voice their counter-narratives away from the school authorities. Yasmine talks back to her school's failure, also extending her criticality as a central, rather than marginalised frame of reference. Her critique (Ahmed, 2014a) leads to a different response to Cookie and Mo in the same school. It has more parallels with Naomi's response even though Naomi is in a different school, and Naomi, like Cookie and Mo, is a Black girl. In their counter-narratives, both Naomi and Yasmine assert the value of their own knowledge to become 'authors' of their lives. They refuse to accept the 'shoddy' and 'convenient' but they do so away from an institutional gaze.

When there are questions posed about the legitimacy to be in certain spaces, passing through, or passing as someone else 'is what you have to do because or when your legitimacy is in question' (Ahmed, 2017: 120). Although Yasmine suggests that she can pass for white in terms of her skin colour, her name suggests a Muslim identity and she self-identifies as Pakistani. Presently in Year 10, Yasmine describes having ham placed in her bag when she first came to the school:

> When I was in Year 7, the ham thing got put in my umm bag. And so that was one of the bad experiences I would say of being Muslim I was kind of nervous, 'why is this happening? What is the need to do this?'

Although initially Yasmine wondered whether it is a mistake that ham 'got put' into her bag, she comes to realise that this was an intentional act. As a young Year 7, this experience is unsettling, and she describes feeling nervous. She comes to realise that this is an example of covert hostility which

exemplifies 'one of the bad experiences of … being Muslim'. Yasmine fears the risk of retribution from her classmates.

> […]And I thought maybe it was a mistake, but now I'm feeling, my bag was shut, it's not a mistake to open my bag and put a piece of ham in there.

There are weighty emotional dimensions and there is labour involved in processing what has happened. Yasmine says that perhaps she should have done more when the ham is put in her bag. However, at the time, she did not want to make what has happened to her known to her class as this would add to the repugnance that she feels having to deal with the ham:

> I left it. Kept it quiet. I felt embarrassed. Not going to come out to the class and say, 'oh Miss, I've got ham in my bag, [and on] my hands. Can I go and wash it off now?' So I just lied and said it was ink on my hands.

Yasmine is alert to the possible ramifications involved in how she decides to deal with the ham on her hands. She does not see the point of telling her teacher what has happened to her because she is already 'embarrassed' and sharing accurate information could make matters worse. Reporting incidents incurs personal risk. A lack of clear communication about how the school deals with racist and sexist incidents leaves her without support or a procedural route in which she has any confidence. When reflecting on why she did not report this incident in Year 7, Yasmine understands her decision. In not reporting the incident, Yasmine prioritises a need to protect herself:

> And I don't know I didn't really say anything about it. I just sort of left it. [...] If I could go back I would say something and I would have done something about it… But I was Year 7 and I was new to the school. […] I didn't even know how this stuff worked any way. I didn't know [anyone in school] could help me. What could they say? So that's why I probably kept quiet about it.

A lack of clarity fails to reassure Yasmine. Now in Year 10, Yasmine considers the options available to her Year 7 self. She was unsure of the action the school would take to 'help' her, questioning, 'what could they say?' Although she might regret not having said something, Yasmine knows that this is not a personal failing, but an institutional shortcoming. School has not structured the environment sufficiently well to protect her, especially since at the time she was 'new to the school.' She chooses not to engage with her school's inability to respond to racism appropriately, refusing to make up for the deficit in her school's shortcomings. Where the structures and institutions have not been overhauled to improve the situation of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls, Yasmine can see the necessity to prioritise survival as a form of resistance.

Yasmine thinks that the school does not actually want those who have experienced this kind of incident to come forward. She realises that her school would find it difficult to deal with, and would rather assume that it was an unusual or aberrant event:

> 'oh it was a mistake' or something like that. It's like, 'we don't accept this in our school. It's not part of our policy' or whatever, 'we don't agree with this' but they won't do anything about it. They won't take the time. It's their duty to look after the children of the school 'cause we are meant to feel safe and stuff. Ham in my bag, how is that acceptable?

Since bringing incidents to their school's attention suggests a response is necessary, Yasmine is mindful that she may even be framed institutionally as a nuisance for alerting the schools authorities suggesting that 'they won't take the time'. Yasmine's narrative has turned away from her response, that is choosing not to report this incident, towards her understanding that there would be an inadequate school reaction. The school would use the defence that it has a 'policy', stating that they do not 'accept this in our school'. But the policy stands in for activity (Ahmed, 2012). Their policy is a minimum standard, not a substantial effort – 'they won't do anything about it'. As Yasmine sees it, hostile and traumatic events do not trigger an institutional response to its duty of care. Moreover, this institutional failure to effectively communicate policies and procedures, leaves Yasmine unsupported, but it also means that three years later, Yasmine is still not confident in her school's approach to keeping her and others like her 'safe and stuff'. In asking 'how is that acceptable', Yasmine reinforces the validity of her counter-narrative, questioning the school's abdication of its responsibilities to 'the children of the school'. Unlike her school, she recognises that instead of being well-placed to deal with what has happened to her, there is a distinct possibility that her experience will be repeated as other brown Muslim girls arrive in Year 7.

Her school has not positioned itself to be able to learn from Yasmine's experience and allocate proper resource to the problem of racialised bullying or racism. In refusing to share her information, Yasmine's resistance also means that her school remains unable to effectively overcome its institutional ignorance and anticipate such incidents. An inertia in policy continues, as does a lack of institutional mechanisms to deal with what happens. The school's denial of racism as a problem leads to a renewal of the hostile environment every year for each new cohort of students. Although Yasmine's resistance to her school's inertia underpins her counter-narrative and centres her as an agentic decision-maker, she is regretfully responding to the reality of her school's abandonment of responsibility to counteract hostility and more meaningfully structure inclusion. Hers is resistance as survival in the face of boundaries caused by her schools inability to effect meaningful change to a problem that it is easier to deny.

6.2.1. *Critical Counter-narrative: Failure to structure a good education*

Through questioning their schools' ongoing institutional ignorance relating to wider contexts and concerns that the girls see are important, they are better placed to resist the impact that institutional failings might otherwise have on them. Using 'calculation' and 'interrogation' (Bhabha, 1994: 266), racialised girls extend the value that a 'perspective advantage' (Rollock, 2012) offers to them personally. They query the purpose of education in school, exhibiting a clarity that many in the institution lack. As Mo argues, institutionalised ignorance impairs her school's ability to deliver a good education:

> [My parents] are sending me to this school for a good education, but this school isn't educating people. This school especially does not try and educate them.

Mo critiques her school's failure to deal with her experience of racism in school. In her counter-narrative, she links this to what she sees as her school's failure to offer a substantial education.

The girls' counter-narratives surrounding the nature of a 'good' education also leads to critiques of the curriculum and individual teacher's ability to manage their learning and inclusion appropriately. Black people's experience of slavery means that teaching this area of the curriculum demands a sensitivity and awareness. Yet in different schools, both Hope and Fiona are aware of the risks in discussing slavery in the predominantly white history class. Hope focusses her analysis on the teacher's failure to manage the class effectively. The content of the lesson involves black bodies, killings, and brutality, without criticising the inhumanity involved in the system. But Hope is more aware of the difficulty that this poses teachers than her teacher appears to be:

> sometimes like teachers like need to be a bit more aware of what's going on [sometimes I have to] justify myself when I shouldn't have to. Some of my family were slaves […] but I'm not a slave.

Hope's ability to critique what is wrong with the lesson enhances her ability to resist aggravating her hyper-visibility. She has Jamaican ancestors but refuses to 'justify' herself or accept being seen as though she is 'a slave'. 'Focused with precision', capable of becoming 'a powerful source of energy serving progress and change' (Lorde, 1981: 127), Hope's anger is measured. Through her clear thinking, she resists an incursion into her privacy, refusing to be objectified as a body in service to a history lesson.

Fiona also uses her anger productively at the end of a history lesson. In this lesson, instead of stressing Black people's resistance to the system, Africans are seen as responsible for developing the Atlantic slave trade, and its demise is attributed to white men presented as 'saviour' figures. Rather than be fearful of her anger (Lorde, 1981), Fiona's resistance leads her to critique the teacher's materials and the ensuing class vote on responsibility and culpability. Fiona exhibits a 'social

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"consciousness" imperative for agency – deliberative, individuated action and specificity in analysis' (Bhabha, 1994: 265). She decides to embrace the risk involved in being angry in full view of her history class:

> And I would never speak out to a teacher, like I wanted to be that nice person but I was incensed. I went to the front of the class and actually had words with the teacher, because I was like, 'how on earth… is this right? Like how on earth? How are African people the reason for slavery? And the fact that the resources we were given were so biased to the point where the class actually thought that. And I am still angry about that to this day. I haven't got over it. I just couldn't believe it and I guess back in that position I'm so glad that I could say, like that I had got that … But that someone should have been able to see it.

Although it disrupts her steadfast efforts to re-position herself as 'nice' and risks re-orientating her in a white gaze towards being an 'angry Black girl', Fiona resists being silenced (Collins, 1998; Bell, 1992). She talks back to a teacher who suggests British innocence regarding establishing an economic system and empire. Fiona re-centres the British Empire in the development and longevity of the Atlantic slave trade. She takes a lead to realign the content of the lesson based on what she rather than her teacher knows. Fiona is mindful of the risks to her but decides to speak, feeling a sense of responsibility to herself, and a wider Black community.

Fiona returns to a question of responsibility, stating that it should not have been her responsibility to challenge this understanding of Britain as a colonial power beyond reproach. Her teacher 'should have been able to see it.' She enters a liminal temporal domain where her memory of this lesson is bought into her present, commenting 'I haven't got over it'. Memory of the past is not a concrete or fixed entity (Ali, 2012). It serves as a medium through which to reflect and develop future strategies for resistance, extending the liminal realm of the counter-narrative beyond the past and present, and into the future.

Beyond the remit of a typical schoolgirl and towards self-determination, Fiona signals a connection to a wider community affected by an African diaspora and beyond the predominantly white secondary school. Resisting the limitations of her class teachers' knowledge and know-how, and confident of the accuracy of her fighting words (Collins, 1998), Fiona shares her critique in class, putting her anger (Lorde, 1981) and analysis (Ahmed, 2014a, 2014b; Bhabha, 1994) towards a common good of enhancing her school's ability to deliver a 'good education'.

Centring their narratives on their recognition of the reality of racism and racialised sexism that they face in school, Mo, Hope and Fiona bolster their sense of self through establishing the accuracy of their counter-narrative. Authoring these therefore bolsters their resistance through surviving particularly hostile classes. Strengthening the girls' practise of self-care, their counter-narratives therefore enable the girls to resist some adverse aspects of their educational experience.

6.2.2. Sharing experience with friends and family

In their largely white friendship groups, the experience of racism also goes largely unacknowledged and misunderstood. Where the girls' friendships allow them to share their experience of sexism, these same friendships do not afford them any or adequate resource to discuss their experience of racism. Kimora suggests that, amongst all her friends, she can only talk freely with Naomi. In the face of white privilege in their friendship group, Kimora trusts Naomi as another Black girl to understand her experience of school:

> Naomi is usually like the only one I talk to about it. She just kind of like gets it. Umm. Most, 'cause, most of our friends don't err like understand what's going on, or they don't believe what's going on.

Although the school and the wider friendship group fail to 'understand what's going on', their mutual understanding of their experiences is a site for resistance which re-affirms each girl. Reframing and reflecting on their experience together prove that racism is not something personal to either Kimora or Naomi, but an experience that they can both relate to and that it is helpful to share.

Even if their wider circle of friends fails to understand the impact of racism, Kimora's friendship with Naomi expands access to a discursive space away from what is widely considered legitimate in school. Rather than needing not to speak of racism for fear of being misunderstood and being a source of discomfort, Kimora or Naomi can express how they feel honestly. Each girl confirms to the other that what happens is not acceptable and should be challenged in school:

> Umm, some stick up for me but then some don't understand it so they don't say anything. And yeah. But Naomi does.

Kimora and Naomi's wider circle of friends mostly fail to understand or appreciate a need to 'say anything' since they do not have direct experience of this type of hostility. Although her other friends do not understand how important it is to signal an objection to expressions of racist hostility, 'Naomi does'. Together, Kimora and Naomi can act as allies, resisting racism. This is agentic self-care. It increases their ability to resist the potential for racism to harm either Kimora or Naomi.

Being in predominantly white schools, many of the girls (for example, Barbra, Kahmia, Sarah, Hope and Gail) are often the only Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in their friendship group. This restricts their ability to share their experience of racialisation and racism within their friendship groups. However, instead of remaining isolated in their understanding of racialisation and racism, a number choose to discuss their experience with their parents or siblings. Archer and Francis (2005) suggest that 'family capital' helps explain the educational success of British Chinese pupils. In all three

schools, 'capital', in the form of sharing insights within families of the reality of racism, is utilised by Black, Mixed-race and Asian girls. Accessing their family's knowledge or capital as a form of self-care increases their ability to resist negative impacts on their self-esteem. Rather than internalise racism's damaging narrative, Fiona recalls how 'every day' after school her (white) mum asks her to 'retell my day, like pick through it'. Sheila describes her (white-passing brown) mum, who is 'is like my best friend – I'll speak to her about everything'. Gail speaks to her (Black) dad, who 'understands more like the problems that teenagers face in schools. Cookie's (Black) father also helps her to centre her best interests as opposed to being distracted by other peoples' responses to her. Hope sometimes talks to her brother who 'sort of went through the same thing at his old school' and therefore 'knows what it's like'.

Through sharing their lived experiences with select friends and family, the girls resist the potential for internalising any perception that they are a 'problem' in school. Instead, they maximise their access to their friend's and family's 'capital'. Where they perceive there to be a shortfall in care available to them in school, racialised girls discuss their experience with those who they know will understand. Together they can see that, like their white peers, they warrant care and compassion. Although their schools fail to install adequate measures to show that caring for the girls is a priority given the burden of racism and racialised sexism that each girl faces, with intention the girls enlist the resource of others who they know will understand the reality of their school lives.

6.2.3. Recuperation: agency and a refusal to be defined by experience of racism

In lieu of structural change or indeed a robust institutional response, the girls often must handle what happens to them resourcefully. As events unfold in school, there are continuous provocations that the girls face which present them with a need to assess their situation and make attempts to overcome constraints on their well-being. Although these experiences could boundary their ability to thrive, they refuse to be cast as non-agentic victims of racism and take measures to recuperate in and beyond school. Exerting agentic decision making in this context extends the possibility of self-care into the realm of self-recovery and recuperation. Experiencing something 'almost every day for a lot of my school life', Fiona realises that she cannot 'start an argument everyday about it'. She understands a need to minimise the number of interactions that involve exchanges based on ignorance.

In a different school, the confines of systematised white privilege also limit Cookie's ability to realign other people's thinking. But in Year 10, Cookie moderates her Year 9 responses to her situation, realising that continually fighting with other people will not be fruitful as it will sap her energy without obvious gain, reducing her capacity to recuperate:

It's just like very difficult to speak to people when they are uneducated and half the time they don't know what they are talking about. So it's not worth my time trying to put my energy into all of that because it's just going to make me angry.

Cookie is better placed to survive school through resisting responding to each provocation that she faces. This offers her greater opportunity to succeed in school. Aware of a need to 'play the game' (Puwar, 2004), rather than risk being re-inscribed as 'angry' on account of her response to racism in school, Cookie takes responsibility for changing her response:

where most people are white and people are going to be racist and I just have to deal with it, like it's not correct, it's not right but there's nothing I can do. Can't put something in their mind and make them believe that being racist is not right but I can, my dad always told me, 'you can't control what people's actions be, you control your reactions'.

As a form of resistance, talking through her experience with her dad helps Cookie to recognise that she can resist responding reactively to the racism that she faces. Cookie knows that people will continue to be racist, and are easily confirmed in their opinion based on stereotypes and racial tropes but between Years 9 and 10, she focuses on taking responsibility for her own responses:

Just suck it up and try my hardest to be here for the right reasons like you know, not … try … just to try to be here to learn and not to argue with people.

Instead of arguing with people, Cookie is determined to be in school 'to learn'. She re-affirms her own agentic responses which affords her more potential for recuperation. This is not 'wasteful' of anger as an informative force for change (Lorde, 1981: 127) as it directs Cookie beyond the destructive force of an overwhelming anger and allows her to contain the damage that racism could do. She is therefore better placed to resist being determined by external impositions and disruptions which would distract her from her own purpose and intentionality.

Anger is not the only emotional response exhibited by the girls in school. Gail also consciously sets out to resist being subsumed by feeling overwhelmed by despair and emptiness. She used to have her 'pair' or best friend in her classes. Like Gail, her 'pair' is Mixed-race. Although Gail has been welcomed in a new group of white middle-class friends, away from her 'pair' and continually hiding how she feels about aspects of her life, Gail feels a need to structure her day to allow for recuperation. Having vaccinations is a source of anxiety for her peers, and even though it could position her within a recognisable and acceptable performance of femininity, Gail does not let down her guard and show any vulnerability:

Yeah. 'Cause I don't like crying about things. Like yesterday we had jabs and people crying and stuff. I don't want to be seen as like I can't handle it when I can.

Gail feels the need to continually perform independence, strength, and an appearance of being able to cope. Although she can rely on her 'new' friends, and a counsellor, who has advised her that she does not need to always perform 'strength' and 'emotional availability' in school, Gail feels a need to 'handle' any situation that she faces in school. Nonetheless, this takes a toll on Gail:

> like in school, I don't really … enjoy it, like I said, and … umm, … I kinda feel … empty but like … that's why with the gym I go, I like going to the gym because I just like umm, I'm away from everything … that I'm thinking about from school.

Gail's experiences make her feel 'empty' but seeing a need to be 'away from everything', she devises strategies to help her to recuperate from feeling 'like everything was happening at once'. Gail's resistance to feeling this way leads her to change her lifestyle, extending her access to 'headspace' outside school by joining a gym, getting up early to have time on her own, taking time over her make-up, and having her 'headphones in'. Accessing neutral physical and emotional spaces beyond the confines of her school live, coupled with her personal resource, provides Gail with a much greater opportunity to genuinely renew her 'strength'.

Seeing a need to offset the potential for internalising external or distorted and damaging narratives (Lorde, 1978; Yancy, 2017) also leads Queen to decide to see a counsellor. Like Gail, instead of succumbing to a feeling of being overwhelmed, taking action enhances her ability to breach a damaging and estranging sense of herself:

> 'Cause it is not like, I'm mentally unstable or anything, it's just that things get to me so I have to talk about them.

Even though 'things get' to her, Queen limits the potential of a damaging, isolating narrative through talking. Knowing that she is not 'mentally unstable' underpins her recuperation.

Sheila also seeks out a place of refuge in school to escape an estranging sense of herself. Away from the glare of her visibility following her expulsion from her friendship group, this offers her an opportunity to reflect:

> Miss [Student support] is so nice […] especially in comparison with some of the other people, […] like she's probably the only person. […] was really nice she was having proper convos, she was making me feel better, she's like, 'they're just trying to make you feel like you are not normal.'

Seeing 'Miss' enables Sheila to manage her circumstance effectively. Talking to someone trustworthy in school re-aligns Sheila's sense of self within an expanded, more inclusive realm of 'normal'. Sheila also uses humour to deflect some of the harm racism can do. Choosing to be 'happy', 'loud' and unapologetic for being Muslim reinforces her sense of herself and her agency. She does not 'want to get offended', deciding to laugh off being called names, including 'p***' and 'curry muncher':

I just laugh. Because I don't really get offended.

Deciding not to 'get offended', Sheila's laughter works at different emotional and practical registers, communicating a nonchalance about racism and its effects. She uses it to communicate a lightness as opposed to a sense that her situation defeats her, refusing to be a vessel for racism. This allows her space to recuperate and destabilises readings of her as a victim of racism, or of lacking agency on account of her religion or colour.

In defining processes that occur in school as normal and day-to-day, rather than extraordinary or personal, Hope also diminishes the potential for racism to hurt her. Explaining why she does not need to be hurt by some of the things that are said by one of two close friends that she has in school, Hope suggests that expressions of hate are almost 'natural'. Although one friend 'will accidently say things', Hope says that 'he will always apologise for it because he knows' how it makes her feel. Hope's resistance to racism cannot be understood as arising from any lapses in memory as she presents a coherent narrative centred on her appraisal of her situation. Her response centres on her agency. She decides to continue to resist the damage racism would cause to her friendship and the support that even this friend provides her in school. Rather than condemn her friend's ignorance, Hope contextualises her friend's views, arguing:

> his dad is like very racist, so I think he gets it from there.

Hope is aware of the transmission of racism as a parental inheritance. Instead of challenging her friend, which would mean taking responsibility for educating her friend, and his parent (as well as potentially others in her school), Hope decides not to overemphasise her friend's views and any impact that these have on her within school.

Naomi's experiences could also alienate her from being clear about what will serve her interests. Through reflection, however, she too deploys positive strategies that offset the potential for everywhere in school to be a hostile and alienating environment. It is easy for her peers to disavow their actions as the source of harm, where everyday racism masquerades as 'just a joke'. Naomi chooses a different response to Sheila's laughter but similarly finds space in school to stay away from being hyper-visible and typecast. Naomi goes to the art room, where she is well placed to express her talents and keep away from trouble:

> so, like I don't get in trouble at all but a way that I stay out of trouble is by going to art class or like during lunchtime I go art or after school. Instead of going out at people and being that angry girl that people see, I can write all my emotions down or draw them on paper and document them there.

Naomi shows a self-awareness that she needs to stay out of places and away from people who could provoke her or be a source of trouble. Channelling her creativity (Uzor, 2019), Naomi accesses the art rooms. Here she challenges a fixed and estranging view of herself, giving herself room to recuperate. She becomes a successful insider who can feel a sense of pride, celebrated for employing complex emotions imaginatively.

The girls know their circumstance and that they need to structure their responses and possibilities for recuperation and self-recovery. They know that however they respond, were they to allow this, some interactions that they have in school will be negative and could be damaging to their sense of who they are and want to be. They therefore set out to de-emphasise the impact of negative interactions, emphasising that their responses are 'normal' given their circumstances and accessing 'spaces' where they are more able to express themselves authentically. They navigate their way around the predominantly white school, choosing particular people and places, and prioritising re-centring their own sense of self and mitigate the potential for internalising either harmful narratives or of racism more generally.

Drawing on resources that avoid docility in the context of physical, symbolic and spiritual assaults on their personhood, and as a form of survival, Fiona, Hope, Gail, Queen, Sheila and Naomi go beyond containment to facilitate their self-connection and self-care. Agentically they respond to barriers to inclusion that they face in school, including racialised gendering and racism. They act intentionally having accessed the relative merits and constraints of their situation. Their recuperation therefore acts as a form of resistance in the context of barriers and boundaries that they face. They are therefore more able to expand the space they have available to resist the damage that racism could do to their intentionality, becoming better placed to achieve their potential.

6.3. Self-definition

Deciding on a response to the hostile environment necessitates decisions on whether to be consistent or inconsistent with the norms of the institution to maximise opportunities for freedom in the context of compression, constraint, and containment. In the predominantly white school, seen through a lens which threatens to contain each girl according to essentialist or reductionist renderings of her identity, there remains a risk that each girl remains invisible and hyper-visible. Therefore, disrupting categories and blurring the boundaries that have the potential to fix, or limit those who would be contained within them, allows the girls to go beyond being determined in the gaze, and create new possibilities for themselves.

6.3.1. Resisting fixed learner identities

Instead of the power to name one's own reality (Collins, 2000: 321), assumptions are made of academic prospects in school according to race (Gillborn, 2018). Black and mixed-race girls are seen as problem learners (Youdell, 2006). However, as Bob (a Year 9 Black girl) illustrates, this is not a fair or accurate assessment. Bob wants to do well at school and rejects being fixed to a negative learner identity. She is clear about why she comes to school:

> [I] just come to school to learn, not to like play around or get into trouble.

Bob names her purpose in being in school, knowing what an education offers her. Ophelia (a Year 8 Black girl) is also determined to do well in school. Ophelia does not want to perform to norms of any type. She is prepared to work rather than accept assumptions that others would impose on her and which would constrain her aspirations:

> And most people they don't really care about school they are always like, 'yeah, it's ok. […] I feel like I'm the only one who works hard in my class to be honest apart from this other boy that I know.

Despite her peers' failure to prioritise their education, Ophelia sets her own goals, realigning her learner identity through her stated purpose to be in school to learn. She works 'hard' and expects that this will pay off, no matter what others may think of her chances of making a success of herself. Despite not being in the top classes for many of her subjects, Ophelia knows that hard work, organisation, and perseverance will be important in determining her success in achieving her long-term goals:

> because I really want to be a lawyer. I really want to get on top of everything.

Ophelia resists accepting limits on her ambitions and is determined to supersede limited expectations of her. As their narratives highlight, Bob and Ophelia, like many of the girls refuse to accept negative learner identities. Determinedly they refuse definitions that do not align with their self-perceptions. They resist assumptions fixed to them on account of their racial identity, as though this offers 'real' information about them as individuals.

6.3.2. Disavowal of an outsider status

Whatever their approach to opposing or seeming to comply with their schools' aspirations (Fordham, 1996) several girls engineer ways in which they can structure their right to an identity beyond constructions of them as racial outsiders. Using 'mimicry' or sly civility as possible strategies of resistance offers an outward appearance of the acceptance of the ideological claims of the wider community (Bhabha, 1994). Understood as conformity by Fordham (1996: 39), the 'Self "passes" as (an)Other in order to reclaim an appropriated humanity.' Bhabha (1994) argues that being seemingly

the same is only possible for a fleeting moment, as the other is almost immediately recognised as not the same. Nonetheless, avoiding foregrounding difference (Zhou, 2004), Robin chooses not to highlight her Chinese cultural heritage in school:

> I'm in touch with like, my Chinese culture, in parts, umm, especially like the food, language, but to a limited extent, and that's only really at home. So when I'm like … I don't tend to think about race … that much […] I haven't really been forced to think about it. And I think that I'm probably an exception here. Maybe.

Robin chooses to be 'in touch with' her Chinese culture when she is 'at home', a private space. Choosing not to foreground her cultural identity in school, enables Robin to re-negotiate and become relatively freer to transgress racialised discourses. She does not 'tend to think about race … that much'. Without being 'forced to think' about race, Robin accesses relatively more space in which to operate relatively freer of the constraints of being racialised. Robin creates a discursive liminal space between her understanding of the processes of racial categorisation, using the caveats, 'that much' or 'maybe'. Although these highlight the 'fleeting' nature of passing, Robin still discursively disrupts the rigidity of racialised and racialising borders. Within this resistance towards fixed racialising thinking, Robin also shows awareness of the specificity of racialisation. She considers herself 'an exception'. She 'maybe' aware of her ability to access more 'privilege' than her Black, Mixed-race, or brown Asian peers.

With her friends, Robin's disavowal of being an 'outsider' also sees her cultivate a strong sense of belonging and entitlement to occupy her school space as her own:

> So 'top hill': that is where me and my […] friends, used to just hang out. […] There was a lot of, 'meet you at the hill', 'ah see you at the hill!' That was just our place. That was our hill essentially. It got a bit busier in the summer, but still our hill.

By claiming collective ownership over 'our hill', a space in school, the field acts as a symbolic domain for Robin's feelings of belonging and togetherness, as well as a material site of friendship. Again she resists being cast as a racialised other. Her membership in a friendship group is tangible and recognisable as a girls' friendship. It is based on 'reliability, reciprocity, commitment, confidentiality, trust and sharing' (Hey, 1997:117). It creates space for Robin to be seen as an insider, fitting in with schoolgirl imperatives to be part of a social group who can then occupy space as though it is theirs to occupy.

Through a conscious and continuous efforts at reciprocity and trustworthiness (Hey, 1997) in her otherwise all white friendship group, Kahmia also resists being understood as an outsider. She actively sets out to perform acceptability in school. Within the implied terms of engagement (Puwar, 2004), she fits in within assimilationist imperatives (Shain, 2003, 2010; Fordham, 1996). Prioritising

academic success as a high performing Year 9 Indian girl in school, Kahmia faces few risks of being misrecognised as being hostile to school. Nonetheless, Kahmia also resists simplistic readings of her as a 'model minority' one assumed to be overly focused on academic achievement. Instead of directly subverting a reductionist perception of her as a model minority, Kahmia expands it through her friendship through her deliberate performance of a 'nice' schoolgirl. Secured through her 'display' of 'the feminine qualities of sensitivity and care' (George, 2007: 134), Kahmia goes beyond a singular reading of her academic prowess also establishing her trustworthiness and friendliness:

> Yeah we sit next to each other because we work very well together as well because we just kinda like [laughs] get along. If I don't know something she helps me, if she doesn't know something, or if we both don't know something, we work together on it.

Kahmia makes explicit that reciprocity underpins her friendship with her white best friend. They 'get along' and rather than being alone in not-knowing, they work things out together in a good-natured way. Kahmia describes academic equivalence and taking turns 'not know[ing] something' as enabling constructive relations, unmarred by obvious displays of competition.

Through their performance of 'nice middle-class feminine' friendship, both Robin and Kahmia resist a narrow racialised positioning, re-inscribing the meaning of their colour and culture, beyond fixed boundaries of who they are understood to be. Based on their self-definition, and rather than be considered as racial outsiders, this is a form of resistance that asserts these girls' right to belong in the predominantly white secondary school.

6.3.3. Positively contributing to the school community

Many of the girls want to make a positive contribution to their schools, and they do, including through taking on leadership roles. Moreover, rather than offer individual and ad hoc verbal challenges to stereotyping, being racialised, sexism within racialisation, and racism, through performing leadership roles in their schools, these girls become better placed to drive change in their school environment. This expands the possibility to breach containment within narrow and damaging stereotypes. However, even though these acts of resistance cannot be regarded as oppositional and positively contribute to the school community, they are not straightforward to perform. Even aspiring to hold these roles leads to questioning of aptitude in the context of long-held stereotypes and assumptions. Pursuing a leadership role requires Ophelia to make a case regarding her suitability because she defies expectations about who can be considered suitable:

> 'Why would you be [school leadership role], you are so badly behaved?' but I'm not though. I think I have got one detention in two years. But that's not bad.

Since she is 'already' positioned as performing 'girl' imperfectly (Fordham, 2016), Ophelia needs to justify her suitability. At least in part arising from established notions of femininity, Ophelia is not

afforded any space for deviation from an 'perfect' behavioural record. Ophelia chooses to reject narratives centred on an expectation of higher standards of behaviour for her as a girl. She frames having had 'one detention' as something 'not bad'. By resisting being defined as a student who is 'badly behaved' because of 'one detention', Ophelia refuses a starkly binary depiction of herself, as either a badly behaved 'bad' girl, or perfectly behaved 'good' girl.

In making a challenge to this narrative, Ophelia also refuses to attempt a straightforward 'business as usual' performance of a feminine norm of passivity and acceptance. Her challenge to her peers is direct. It is not performed with 'gender-specific uncertainty […] but with unmediated confidence and certainty (Fordham, 2016: 12). In this too Ophelia openly challenges what she finds unacceptable in other people's narratives and asserts the accuracy of her counter-narrative that she is suitable to perform a leadership role.

Although Ophelia may not intend to create distance from normative femininity, her agentic challenge is embedded with resistance to strictly understood binary gender distinctions and racialising stereotypes. Moreover, her resistance to 'gender appropriateness' and 'the omnipresence, invisibility, and toxicity of gendered racism' (Fordham, 2016: 41-2), convert Ophelia's resistance to norms associated with femininity – of being passive, docile and accepting of constrictive narratives – into an understanding that she is qualified through her distance from this compressed way of performing Year 8 girlhood. However, even though Ophelia succeeds and secures the role, there is no generalised translation of her successful breach of feminine normativity for other girls, who might like to perform leadership roles in school.

Through her pursuit of a mentoring role, Fiona potentially invites less scrutiny in her school than Ophelia does in hers. With the potential to help others to navigate a route through (Back, 2005) a hostile school environment, Fiona prioritises helping to meet the institutional shortfall in care that she has witnessed in school. Although she is a Mixed-race Black girl who has held various leadership roles through her school years, Fiona is seen as less directly disrupting or threatening of feminine normativity. Through mentoring, Fiona extends her performance of feminine caregiver:

> Especially some vulnerable, isolated ones, […] like empathize with more on that level, because I'd experienced something similar to that

Effectively utilising her experience of feeling 'vulnerable' and 'isolated' to help others who face isolation, Fiona acts within the realm of the personal, particularly through her compassion and empathy. As Fiona is prepared to help younger students, she visibly retains intelligibility as a feminine nurturing figure, even within a racialised construction of her gender. Although it still chimes with other racially gendered stereotypical roles, this focus on care offsets the potential that

Fiona faces of being casually re-inscribed with a different racially gendered stereotype or being seen as an aggressive Black woman. Without needing to be overt in her challenge to the institution's shortcomings, Fiona also asserts the value of her knowledge of the vulnerability and isolation that is possible in school.

Gaining access to someone with more institutional power than class teachers, Olivia can also query the functioning of the hostile environment. Although Olivia, Naomi, and Kimora discuss 'rude' or racist behaviour, it is only Olivia who can bring her and her friends' experiences to the attention of someone with school leadership responsibilities. This extends Olivia's power to deliver her counter-narrative. Olivia emerges as an individual who might be able to inform a member of staff about racialised girls' lived experience.

In all three schools, performing these leadership roles is an extremely positive form of resistance for the girls. Through their roles, Ophelia, Fiona and Olivia represent that it is possible to breach stereotypes and unseat the validity of unquestioned fixity of assumptions attached to them as Black and Mixed-race girls in school. Ophelia, Fiona and Olivia offer leadership which defies assumptions and undermines preconceptions that they are oppositional to school. Their leadership roles also offer the girls some personal protection from being marginalised institutionally as these roles amplify an opportunity for each girl to be seen as an individual, rather than as a 'type'.

Through extending their visibility as 'role-models', the girls extend the realm of 'schoolgirl', and also increase their potential to be seen as girls who positively contribute to their school community. Resisting containment in this way offers hope to other girls who can identify with Olivia, Fiona and Ophelia. However, although this might realign the perception of each girl personally as the exception or exceptional in school, they cannot embody a counter narrative and undo wider normative assumptions associated with being a Black or Mixed-race girl. As individuals, each girl cannot overturn stereotypes or assumptions even if they manage to resist some of the effects and extend their scope for self-definition.

6.3.4. Rebellion and risk

Using liminality as resistance (Rollock, 2012) the girls discursively breach the boundaries imposed in prevailing school-based discourse about who they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to respond. There is a great deal of negotiation and re-negotiation which can either serve to reinforce or renounce the prevailing codes governing students' school lives (Paechter, 2018). Over time and on different days, this leads to different responses, some of which have foundations in the limits that exist in school for realising self-definition in the white gaze.

Through their friendship, Queen and Mo resist feeling as isolated as they might in school, but they cannot overcome being seen as intimidating:

> Mo, she, we've been best friends since Year 7, and like everyone has been quite intimidated by us because we are two Black girls that are quite loud, funny and stuff, like we don't care what people think.

Queen and Mo resist the damage that an exterior and distorting gaze has on them by performing 'not caring' what people think. But as an act of rebellion, this has limits and Queen still needs to resist accentuating the gaze:

> I was waiting for Mo … to be dropped off at the corner because we always meet there you know. And umm like I'm there putting my lip-gloss on, I'm listening to music and I'm laughing because I'm texting people and everyone is just looking at me

That 'everyone' looks, increases Queen's sense of being ill-at-ease. Rather than attending to a 'compulsory' project of assimilation (Fordham, 1996; Shain, 2003, 2010) and feminine normativity (McRobbie, 2009), Queen resists containment. She puts on her lip-gloss, listens to music, and texts people. Nonetheless, breaching feminine behavioural norms, her rebellion risks confirming her status as an outsider.

Fordham (2016) describes the ebbs and flows of a racialised order within which there is often a lack of recognition of violence as anything other than overt, or physically aggressive. Responding in ways that emphasise 'contingency, indeterminacy and conflict' (Gilroy, 1997: 334), Queen breaches the boundaries others would impose but this remains difficult and a source of discomfort:

> everyone is looking at me, and I do feel uncomfortable but I've got to get rid of that because that is who I am […] I will display my emotions however I feel like. I am a very comfortable… I'm not a comfortable person but I am comfortable with myself.

Queen knows that she is hyper-visible and scrutinised. Nonetheless, she refuses to make herself less visible or morph her behaviour, even if this could make her more comfortable. Queen asserts she will 'get rid' of feeling 'uncomfortable' because it is not being different that discomforts her, it is the containment that she experiences in the school environment. In refusing to give in, Queen goes beyond her discomfiture. This is an ongoing project of resistance but her rebellion against being seen to be desirous of fitting in or fading could be a distraction to achieving her other goals in school.

Distinctions in the distribution of 'relevant capital' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 145) involves a myriad of responses to the dominant social order, and this resistance fashions complex and sometimes illogical responses to racism and a knowing refusal to conform to cultural norms in school (Fordham, 1996). Ophelia refuses other people's definitions of 'naughty', or 'normal'. She resists containment, accessing the football pitch despite its normal exclusivity as a boys' domain. She

pursues goals based on academic achievement and leadership, but although obviously it is against school rules, Ophelia also choses to be absent from assembly and form, and sells things in school:

> there is some stuff that I do that I can get, I've never been caught for it but I could get like excluded for some things that I cou- that I do. Like I skip form or assembly because like I don't wanna go […] I wouldn't really class myself as like a seller, but I sell [things] for cheaper prices. So umm, someone, a boy wants to borrow [this] so I've just got it in my pocket.

Ophelia asserts her autonomy, resisting boundaries and rules within school. She suggests that she wants to be 'normal' but nonetheless takes risks that could see her 'excluded' if she is caught. Ophelia has become used to the hustle involved in negotiating who she is and what she wants. Rather than be cowed into conformity, she actively pursues her rebellion, putting in place precautions which see her manage information and networks:

> But, yeah, not a lot of people know that so kinda keep [it like] that. Because people are like kinda snitches […] I don't need enemies. I don't need people like that. I don't need to be annoying. I'm me.

Ophelia wants to be herself. She keeps details about her dealings quiet as she does not want to invite trouble. But neither does she want to follow rules that seem to limit her freedom to be who she chooses. Rather than confine herself within an idea of what is expected of her as a Year 8 girl, Ophelia negotiates the boundaries and resists expectations on many counts. In her judgement, school is a route to her future success but one which must be handled decisively and with purpose. Ophelia is convinced that she must do justice to her own potential and goals. She does not direct her efforts to fitting in or conforming to other people's perceptions of her limitations, or indeed limits on her self-definition. Instead, Ophelia takes decisions which could risk her future ambitions, running the risk if she is caught, of 'proving' that negative assumptions about her are accurate.

Her rebelliousness does not have legitimacy within school, but Ophelia is used to being seen negatively, operating beyond what school classes as ideal. Being experienced in her attempts to breach boundaries, Ophelia adds to the potential risks that she faces in school. Rather than construct an understanding of whether what she does can be justified, Ophelia's practices of resistance might be seen as a habit of her school existence and a need to be willful. She is used to navigating her way between the fixities and certainties that often exclude her on account of both her gender and race, going beyond other people's definitions of what a schoolgirl should and can do.

6.4. Self-determination, autonomy and authenticity

Schools function within persistent and ongoing structural and discursive systems, which serve the interests of those with greater privilege, on account of their race, economic class, gender, sexuality,

and nationality. Where norms and ideologies are understood as universal, Collins (1998) argues that disrupting the prevailing discourse is an important source of resistance. The 'fear that we cannot grow beyond whatever distortions we may find within ourselves' Lorde (1978: 58) suggests:

> keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads us to accept many facets of our oppression as women.

Imposed from beyond women and girls, 'distortions' can lead to a reiteration and acceptance of external justifications for 'oppression'. For Lorde, overcoming external impositions represents an unwillingness to accept 'powerlessness', a necessary precursor to 'self-connection'. Collins (2000: 321) suggests that self-determination is the power to decide one's own destiny. In their resistance, many of the girls describe ways that they focus on their ability to determine their subjecthood and aspirations. Fiona understands that she cannot be captured through a simplistic or singular reading of what she is supposed to represent:

> I can also be intelligent and weird, or, umm, and confident, and that's ok, and that's not just putting me in a box just by being myself, I'm just creating my own space.

Through her acknowledgement of different aspects of herself, Fiona expands definitions of who she is. Rather than 'putting' herself 'in a box', Fiona develops her facility to be creative, an individual curating her 'own space'.

Asserting autonomy through subverting the power of the gaze becomes a form of resistance. Being aware of the 'difference between the passive *be* and the active *being*' (Lorde, 1979: 111) enables an ability to respond in ways that afford 'growth' (Lorde, 1981: 124). Therefore, Queen is deliberate in her disruption of the gaze to enable her greater autonomy to operate in a space where it is easy not to 'feel comfortable' or 'accepted as people':

> A lot of people think we are wild based on the colour of our skin they think we are quite animalistic, and rage out, and so I've been quite calm and collected.

Queen does not accept the confines that a white gaze could impose based on her 'colour', as someone 'animalistic'. Instead by being 'calm and collected', Queen deliberately expands a view of her, setting out to overtly promote her humanity in order to disrupt how people view her:

> I've been like, they try and get to you and stuff and that is not who I am, I'm not being an angry person. I think, I'm just chill but they don't expect that, it is something that a lot of people don't expect.

Queen deliberately disrupts an erroneous impression others may have of her. Queen is not angry, but 'just chill'. Queen refuses to ask for permission to redefine who she is. In one of her photographs for this research, Queen described visualising herself as a beautiful flower, distinct from others around her who lack colour or any distinguishing features.

Refusing to understand herself as a victim of racism in her 'posh' white school, Bob is still seen in ways that do not relate to her personally but are still applied to her as though they are accurate. Together with her friends, she also expands established views of who she is and can be, laughing about the absurdity of some responses to her, 'too many to count'. She describes hostile attitudes towards her which seem bound up within versions of idealised femininity and fear of her as a Black girl:

> I'm big. I'm strong. Lots of people who don't like me, tell me that they are 'scared' of me.

People claim that their dislike of Bob is warranted because they are 'scared' of her. Within 'the depersonalization of racism' (Lorde, 1977: 42), Bob is characterised as a threat in a 'good' predominantly white school. Re-inscribing what her body means to her, Bob goes beyond a singular narrative of herself as 'scary'. Bob understands neither her size nor strength to be negative attributes. Bob does not attempt to change such perceptions of her. She resists engagement and sets about to define her value on her own terms. Bob does not need to take any responsibility for what others think, nor does she allow their narrative to influence her own:

> I don't care I just want to be myself. They can say what they want but I don't mind.

Bob's mental and emotional resource foreground her ability to be herself. In not caring what 'they' say, Bob is able to determine for herself greater autonomy over what her body and character represent.

Within a range of Asian femininities 'struggled over' in school (Shain, 2010), Sheila recognises the constraints of her context, and moves beyond 'fixed or static' depictions of who she is. Since Islam is seen to be the cause of a lack of agency and a barrier to 'empowerment' (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018: 228) it is assumed that Sheila will not like her religion because it imposes too many restrictions on her. Expressions of a religious identity are not the norm within a secular setting (Shain, 2003). Although Sheila does not want her religion to be at the forefront of how others identify or judge her, she likes being a Muslim. In asserting that she likes her religion, Sheila asserts her autonomy over her identity, resisting the secular norms of her predominantly white school.

Within constructions of Muslim culture as having less concern for girls' education (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018; Zine, 2006), receiving behaviour sanction points 'for misbehaving' could justify a pre-existing view that as a Muslim girl, Sheila does not prioritise her education. However, Sheila invites trustworthy adults in school (such as the Headteacher and Miss Student Support) to know more about her and her ambition, resisting being understood as a girl who seems not to care about her education. Sheila has an ability to enlist adults in a communal project of resistance against her

profound isolation in school, creating space to realign her past, potential and prospects. Sheila's narrative of her journey through school realises her as a good 'prospect', and worth staff investment:

> I'm doing well in science [Headteacher] knows I've been friends with people who are quite bad influences.

Through being part of a 'badly behaved' group, Sheila has performed against type either as a Muslim girl or as a 'model minority'. This has enabled her to breach a threatened containment of being seen as a Muslim girl, 'alien', or as a problem learner. Through her relationships in school, Sheila comes into view as an individual, not simply as a member of a group:

> but like, ermm, everyone says I've changed so much and [Headteacher] was like 'oh, you've done so well.'

Sheila creates a narrative centred on herself in a multi-dimensional sense, someone with a capacity to change:

> 'cause I've quietened down a lot now. I used to be really loud, be a really bad rascal! Said that to Miss [Student Support], I just used to be really loud.

Sheila discusses her past with Miss Student Support. She does not disregard her previous autonomy as a 'bad' girl. Rather than shy away from narratives of mixing with the 'wrong' types, Sheila highlights that she used to be 'a really bad rascal', and 'really loud'. She builds on the distance that she has already created from her and other 'model minority' and other Muslim students to become more visible as herself. No longer simply lost amongst 'bad influences' or stereotypes, Sheila emerges as a person with a past, able to articulate what this past means to her as an individual.

Sheila steadfastly realigns fixed ideas of her character in ways that resonant as authentic and true to her sense of who she is. Sheila establishes her own priorities in school, not as a bad girl, model minority, or a Muslim but within terms of reference that she sees as building her future. She curates a view of her journey from failed friendship to one of academic success, considering her academic strengths in the sciences. Sheila establishes a narrative which focuses on future opportunities for her to flourish in Sixth Form. She resists a sense of failure in her friendships to capitalise on possibility and consolidating her academic progress through school:

> I know we've got two months until our exams and then Sixth Form and they're there but I'll be fine in Sixth Form, […] because you know there's a difference between Sixth Form and school. In school you can't really get away from people … you don't like but in Sixth Form it's a bit more relaxed because you are not really in the same lessons

Despite her need for milestones to try to distract herself from worrying about her lack of social networks which leave her isolated and visible as such around school, 'where you can't really get away from people', Sheila can look forward to a time that she can interact and move around school more freely. Through her use of rhetoric, Sheila maintains an optimism which captures more of a sense of herself than the despondency that could otherwise threaten to overwhelm her.

Sheila is clear-sighted about her goals. She works within the institution's framework that the individual is the source of the individual's problems. Retaining a concentration on the individual alleviates an institutional responsibility to remedy structural shortcomings. For example, instead of prioritising a need to overcome systemic issues which affect the girls' success in maths and sciences, or basing their response on inequalities between racial groups, or boys and girls, her school, in its response to Sheila, can claim that its action is focussed, 'child-centred' and specific. In her resistance, Sheila establishes the grounds for interest convergence. As their interests converge, her school can use Sheila as a success story whilst Shelia accesses the help in school that she needs to achieve her goals. Shelia can resist the limits of her current circumstance whilst being rewarded by the school with support.

Renewing her resistance to her current circumstance, centred on making a success of her education, relies on her self-determination, drive, and intelligence. Foregrounding these attributes enables Sheila to extend her intelligibility as an academic and capable schoolgirl. Highlighting the ongoing impact of ad hoc provision for supporting the individual Asian girl in school, but without stressing any institutional need to address the issues faced by other racialised girls in her school, Sheila's resourcefulness enable her to have a future focus that makes her current situation bearable.

In addition to racism in personal interactions, Fiona also sees that there is a structural context which will impact on her. She appreciates the implications of a lack of institutional response which leaves her self-determination a critical feature of her educational success. She knows 'all the cards' are 'staked against' her:

> I wasn't a boy, I wasn't white so I didn't have those kind of advantages in, and I saw [being a white boy] as an advantage.

Fiona realises in Year 7 that since she 'needs' to compete with people who have 'some natural advantages'. Although 'other people wouldn't notice that was happening' she cannot simply relax but needs to determine her own chances of success. Therefore, she manages her responses:

> I couldn't say that that was necessarily a bad thing because as it built up – maybe through a negative idea – but it built up a work ethic that still drives me now and means that I can push myself a bit, well maybe not a bit more, but I'm happy doing that, and doing a bit extra to make sure that I can get where I need to be and I can achieve my goals which I might not

have developed until a bit later on, you don't know how it would have gone. So yeah it's from the start. I remember my friends going, 'you were fun in primary school and in year 7 you changed' but it was sort of click, 'I need to get on now, I'll have fun later'.

Fiona is prepared to be exceptional in a context where her school or her peers may be largely unaware of the magnitude of her efforts. In Year 7, Fiona has an awareness of a 'negative idea' or structural barriers that could impair her success. Her friends express disappointment with the change that they witness, but rather than let negative perceptions offset her drive or distract her from her purpose, Fiona describes how she resists performing to type, either as a Year 7 or as a Black Mixed-race girl. Even though her friends may be relatively freer to lack focus, Fiona knows that she does not have this same choice. Fiona's peers do not need to express similar levels of aspiration. In Year 7, they do not necessarily even have an awareness of boundaries that could negatively impact on their chances of success.

Fiona is determined to resist boundaries on both her right to self-determination and her aspirations. Through her autonomous decision-making, Fiona continually proves her ability and capability in the face of structural barriers to her success. She continually works to assert her excellence in a context where negative appraisals of racialised girls are easily confirmed, and institutional shortcomings and failures are overlooked. Her window on her future allows her to enter a liminal realm of hope, a space relatively freer of immediate constraints. Within this space, she can set her own ambitions for her future, sure that her decision making, and hard work will reap dividends.

6.4.1. *Making connections in and beyond school: Fuelling hope and inclusion*

Through adept discursive knowingness and becoming 'keepers of hope' (hooks, 2003), with varying degrees of success, the girls make connections within their wider community to offset the potential of prevailing norms to do harm and to stand as 'truth'. Resisting a damaging legacy of both 'containment' and 'disdain' (Collins, 2000: 171), Mo expresses her connection to her African heritage. She refuses an external imposition of reductionist and damaged constructions of Blackness:

> I am very connected to my African side. Umm, I'm a musician and so I think it brought me my music side. It also makes me very connected to that.

Mo celebrates positive aspects of her 'African side'. She affirms a positive sense of her cultural heritage, seeing this as key to her musical talent.

Freeing herself from being overly determined by outside impositions and norms, Fiona also creates a schism between an outside designation – different, other and less – and an inside approval. She too has been hurt by the opinions of those around her who have negatively commented on her

appearance in the past. But now Fiona expresses pride in her ability to find information and connect with people as a way to take care of herself. Beyond a refusal of white beauty norms, Fiona commits to self-care through accessing a wider sense of community and an online network. This places Fiona beyond the confines of outside perceptions of her worth:

> There is YouTube tutorials that taught me how to do my hair and make-up and what best to find to suit me by people who looked like me telling me to do certain things that was one of the best things as a teenager to have discovered about the world, about myself, and there is all these wonderful blogs and websites. It's like 'girlstalk' and Adwoa Aboah she talks about all sorts of things […] It's like you are not alone sort of thing. They are passionate and they are talking from experience and […] know how to express it so even if you are going back to an empty house you are not going back to an empty internet forum. There's people there […] And yes, you need to be careful because there are also these many negative people out there but there are these wonderful places of … acceptance and experience we can draw on now […] if you are in an area where it is predominantly white […] I have people on [Instagram] who talk about Afros and body confidence and explore the world and dance where they go and give their perspective on politics and that's an input I want because I don't really get in my immediate circle everyday.

Through breaching physical constraints on her networks and accessing information online, Fiona becomes comfortable going beyond emulating white beauty norms. Fiona sees beyond negative comments made to her in the past. She develops meaningful self-care practices including taking care to minimalise the chances of online abuse. This extends her capacity for hope and well-being. Engaging with others with passion and expertise, Fiona can resist the impositions of unattainable beauty and hair ideals:

> You don't have to dress like everyone else. You don't have to have hair just as straight as the other girls in your class […] Don't be afraid … of your Afro or your big curly hair or whatever hair you have.

Fiona establishes a non-confrontational, unobtrusive resistance having recognised the impossibility of 'mimicry'. Resisting responding to the white gaze to be just 'like everyone else' and fit in, in Sixth Form, Fiona embraces aspects of difference, and disrupts the authority of the normative, through a refusal to 'be afraid'. Connecting with a community beyond school, Fiona feels able to take care of herself, contextualised through a political reading that self-care is not self-indulgence. Beyond an act of survival, it offers her a further opportunity to be agentic, thrive and secure her own goals pertaining to her future and who she would like to be.

6.5. Conclusion

Although Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls can see clearly that changes are necessary to overcome negative aspects of their experience, they no longer rely on their schools to make changes, or assume that structural change will happen. Instead racialised girls make changes themselves to

manage their situation as they see it. Following a thematic analysis of what the girls say, in this final findings chapter I have framed the girls' agency and the actions that they take following their awareness of the need for change within an understanding of resistance.

Drawing attention to racism and sexism takes the girls beyond the 'social norm of contemporary femininity' of having a 'well-planned life' (McRobbie, 2009: 77). In disagreeing with their schools' understanding of them and their experience, the girls breach the boundaries tethering them to fixed perceptions of their racialised and gendered identities (Collins, 1998) troubling pre-existing narratives which position them as 'inadequate' or 'difficult'. They refuse to passively accept 'business as usual', expressing subjugated knowledge, an 'insurrection' (hooks, 2003: 2) against exclusionary feminine norms and the denial of racism and racialised sexism in their schools.

There is no single way that racialised girls respond to their experiences in school. Through dealing with racism as a 'difficult' reality rather than a feature of their lives which they can disregard, the girls rewrite negative narratives that are imposed upon them, asserting their knowingness over the ignorance that they witness from others in school. Through their varied forms of resistance, the girls displace a narrative where they are produced and understood as the problem or as simply oppositional in school. The girls see that it is not their presence or activity, nor their race, gender or humanity, but the lack of an appropriate and sustained institutional response to racism and sexism which need to be understood as the problem.

The girls are therefore more able to resist being docile in relation to their experience in school and the damage racism could inflict. Although discursive and material parameters limit their responses to their everyday situations, the girls do not relinquish their agency or simply accept what other people think. They interrogate systemic failure and are clear about the need for change, and they see the need to develop personal strategies to resist the damage that racism, denial of racism and a hostile environment could have on their personhood. Nonetheless, the school context remains a constraint on the girls' well-being. This means that for some, there is a necessary orientation of their resistance towards survival.

Finding 'space' to reflect, the girls develop and maintain relationships in exceptional circumstances. That they can do this highlights their resourcefulness, ability to adapt, and resistance to a hostile environment. The girls draw upon a community of friends and family, finding others who understand their perceptions and create distance from racism's negative narratives. The girls deploy a range of strategies to create space to operate in ways they chose in school and not be limited by perceptions of them. Taking on leadership roles in school acts as resistance on numerous registers, including

offering institutionally sanctioned routes to extend the boundaries of perceptions of each as 'good' as they contribute to the school.

Some of this capacity for successful resistance can be explained by age, racial identity and experience and some of which might be judged more successful and more sustainable for each girl in the future. Although there are overt acts of rebellion which could lead to trouble, perhaps particularly for Ophelia, affirming the accuracy of stereotypes that she has done so much to resist, many of the girls take on more expansive versions of who they are and who they want to be including pride in all aspects of their identities. In particular, the older girls are able to foster feelings of belonging and acceptance within a wider community. Framing their aspirations within an orientation centred on their hopes and an expanded sense of their personhood expands their discursive possibilities beyond their present circumstance, and towards an unfolding of a future self, full of yet unknown potential and opportunity.

7. Conclusion

According to Mirza (2015: 1) at the heart of Black British feminism is a 'postcolonial impulse' to document counter-narratives and memories of those who experience racialisation and gendering in the context of the entrenched power hierarchies at play in British society. This thesis responds to this impulse, building on literature which sets out the value of Critical Race Theory, Black feminist and postcolonial theorising. These theoretical approaches have established research priorities centred on those with lived experience of relatively less power in racial and gender hierarchies. This is an important context for the research, which addresses questions illuminating aspects of racialised girls' visibility, marginality, and experience of hostility and resistance.

Despite decades of theoretical and empirical work looking at inequality in English schools, prioritising this research remains necessary because of the ability of racism to morph over time within specific contexts and policy arenas (Gillborn, 2018) and because of the persistence of white privilege (Bhopal, 2018). However, this is a difficult subject to study. Within this field, this study required access to predominantly white schools, and within those schools, access to a particular group of girls, specifically Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in Year 8-13. As a result, there are limitations that follow on from the difficulty in gaining access to all year groups in all three schools or accessing numerically more girls in each year group to study the sensitive area of impacts associated with girls' racialisation, racism and sexism. Further, because of Covid-19 lockdowns, it was impossible to return to the schools where the research had been undertaken. Nevertheless, this thesis offers a well-founded and evidence-based response to all four of its research questions in the three findings chapters. Moreover, although the girls were not asked directly about race, racialisation or sexism in the focus groups or one-to-one interviews, as can be seen in the semi-structured research question schedules in Appendix 2 and 3, these research priorities were reflected in the responses to questions that were posed about what each girl's school life was like. This is of consequence in understanding the contribution made by this thesis. I did not set out to prove the theoretical value of Critical Race Theory, or Black feminism or postcolonial theory with which to explain racialised girls' experience. Nonetheless, I have shown the value of extending the US canon with UK Black and post-colonial feminism, and feminist Critical Race Theory to analyse social relations in the UK.

Through centring on the thematic analysis of racialised girls' narrative accounts of their lived experience in predominantly white secondary schools, I have responded to the gaps that I identified in the literature to offer an original contribution to understanding gendered racialisation, hostility and resistance. There continues to be a legacy of colonialism and racial hierarchies which means that

greater value is accorded some bodies over others within a difficult to perceive but established order. This has an impact in the predominantly white secondary school. Although at times, the current racial and gender order is clearly revealed, often manifestations are everyday, ordinary happenings, which can, and frequently do pass beneath teachers' radar. With their perspective advantage, racialised girls are well placed to perceive what happens. Rather than seeking to establish any intention of ill-intent or design, they provide evidence that illustrate how processes underpinning racialisation and racism are mundane and ordinary.

The thematic analysis of racialised girls' insights and counter-narratives enables greater clarity of a complex and interactive environment. This thesis therefore contributes rich empirical evidence to extend theoretical understandings of feminist Critical Race Theory and intersectionality, showing them to be relevant to understanding a specifically UK context. Moreover, although this research is centred on the predominantly white secondary school, understanding this context contributes to an appreciation of racialising processes and racism within wider society. The thesis therefore broadens understanding of how girls and young women respond to their situation, contributing to understanding social relations in other predominantly white institutions and UK society more broadly. In showing how the girls resist narratives imposed on them, this thesis also contributes to our understanding of agency and resistance, so pivotal in Critical Race Theory as well as in Black feminist and postcolonial theorising.

Taking a staged approach in a theorising methodology in designing the study was effective since it centred Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' lived experience in focus group discussions, photographs taken by the girls themselves, and discussions in the one-to-one interviews that followed. When I asked the girls themselves what they would change concerning the research process (I asked them this directly in case I could improve it in the other schools I would be going to), without exception, they said that they would not change the methods that I had used. They also suggested that they were pleased to have had the opportunity to take part. In part, this seems to have been a consequence of someone, not in their circle of friends and family, listening to them talk about their experiences.

The quality of contribution that each girl made to the research is a key dimension of how my thesis is well-placed to provide new knowledge. Each girl spoke candidly of their experiences. My theorising methodology gave space for each girl's insights, enabling what was particular to each girl's situation to come into view, providing rich evidence of racialised girls' lived experience in predominantly white secondary schools. Speaking together in focus groups, and then individually in the one-to-one interviews, offered the girls varied opportunities to share ideas about processes which racialise them

in the context of their gender. The girls explored their experience shedding light on the impact of visible difference from norms centred on whiteness as the ideal, as well as constructions of beauty, behaviour and intelligence. Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls have experience of being stereotyped on account of their visible difference.

Discussion-based methods confounded reductionist accounts, based on erroneous ideas that identities are fixed on account of a singular feature of racial or gender identity. My methodology was successful in facilitating a discussion about experiences which emphasised contingency, and the nuances involved in the girls' experience. As an individual, each racialised girl had experiences that were distinct to them but which illuminated some aspects of commonality including the criticality of understanding the social construction of race through processes of racialisation in predominantly white schools. This meant that I developed a sense of each girl as an individual who experienced racialisation but in ways that were specific to their experience. For example, several Asian girls expressed some ability to 'pass' almost as though they are white. Another Asian girl, Sheila, described her very different experience, something which she attributed to wearing her hijab, which led to her being seen as more 'alien' than 'normal'.

Following decisions on my methods, a thematic analysis of the girls' narration of their experience confirmed that a Critical Race Theory and an intersectional lens would be productive in understanding – as set out in the research aim – racialised girls' lived experience in the predominantly white secondary school. Given the importance of counter-narratives in Critical Race, Black feminist and postcolonial thought, priority was given to hearing girls' narratives of their school lives. Listening to the girls' narratives over those usually seen to have more credibility or institutional legitimacy was important since the girls are better placed to understand their experience than the school authorities. Attending to the girls' perspective has been critical given the propensity to deny the reality of racism that the girls face and the ways that racial difference features in their school lives. Their narratives proved useful to consider the importance of visual difference and the accuracy of Critical Race Theory's conceptualisations of race as a social construction utilising discredited racial hierarchies and value systems and fixed using a white gaze. In the context of conceptual whiteness being structured into the workings of the predominantly white school, with an ensuing potential to marginalise and exclude the girls, these methodological decisions also enabled the girls' perspective advantage concerning the construction of a hostile environment to come to the fore.

Given the continuation of institutional barriers, including tokenism, a lack of support, a narrow and unresponsive curriculum, marginalisation, and ineffective policies and school-based processes, the Critical Race theoretical framework of interest convergence, interest divergence and retrenchment

also proved productive. This enabled a response to Gillborn (2018) regarding the criticality of understanding racism as cyclical, rather than static. The ability of racism to change depending on context affects the British educational system. It makes questions of intent of British policymakers or school leaders less central than the ongoing consequences of inadequate institutional responses. Following iterative analytic processes based on what the girls said of their experience in their schools, this conceptualisation of the nature of racism enabled a possibility to explore interest divergence and retrenchment more fully to interrogate the current policy regimes and school-based provision. School-based diversity policies, curriculum development and classroom management are found not to fundamentally alter the racialised status quo in part because of tokenistic responses to institutional racism. The girls make considerable efforts to fit in within normative constructions of middle-class 'nice schoolgirl' femininity to offset the possibility of being exposed to racism and individual expressions of prejudice. Yet despite their efforts, it remains difficult for each girl to counteract a view of them as 'space invaders'. In the girls' experience, a lack of effective school-based measures to deal with racialised sexism and racism at a personal and institutional level remains a barrier to inclusion. Having considered institutional racism as an example of interest divergence, conceptualising the nature of racism means that it is possible to analyse retrenchment as a product of the institutionalisation of racism following a lack of an appropriate response to the girls' experience of racism.

In the first findings chapter, I explored what can be learnt from Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' experience of being noticed as visually different on account of their colour, race, religion, ethnicity and culture. As they are seen to embody difference, the girls become sites of otherness in relation to their peers and school norms. Their schools are a critical context as whiteness underpins the everyday workings of the predominantly white secondary school. Here they are not simply seen as girls, but specifically Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls. As such, each girl becomes 'raced' through specific processes of gendered racialisation. This works through gender and where whiteness, although invisible or at least difficult to discern, retains its centrality in establishing norms and maintaining power relations. In its articulation of what it is to be visually different in the context of conceptual whiteness and the ensuing prevailing norms of the predominantly white secondary school this thesis therefore contributes to knowledge which highlights the centrality of the process that racialisation affects Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in the predominantly white school. It brings up-to-date the findings of Cline et al., Arshad, et. Al., Gaine, Troyna, and Hatcher in the UK and extends it with a discussion of racialisation and the importance of visual difference as established in relation to norms determined within whiteness. It also extends this older UK-based research, considering not only the importance of the predominantly white school as a context, but

also that the criticality of gender in affecting girls' experience of racialisation and racism in such schools. In the white gaze, norms associated with femininity and beauty, including those associated with skin tones, body shape and hair are used to map all girls' visible distance from ideals based on white beauty norms. Stereotypes and assumptions about intelligence and behaviour also fix perceptions of racialised girls. These norms take effect establishing boundaries for inclusion and reducing gendered intelligibility of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls.

Identity categories stemming from gendered and raced hegemonies are not stable or natural, but they continue to impact on the girls' lives because of social constructions and representations which enable the reading of the body as though it has fixed meaning. Each girl's difference becomes a demarcated border, monitored through the gaze, perception and touch. This is not an abstract concern as it has a bearing on each girl's lived experience. Based on a perception of distance from white norms, assumptions are made of the girls by their peers and their teachers, reinforcing the boundaries between others' privilege and the girls' otherness. In their narratives, the risk of gendered racialisation came to the fore following impositions arising from attempts to over-determine the value and meaning of each girl on account of how she looks and particularly how she looks different from whiteness. Although they resist a simplistic explanatory binary between whiteness and constructions of otherness, the girls' narratives involve a discussion of how their visible difference is used in practices which have a deleterious impact on them in their school context.

The thesis extends understanding of how, despite differences between racialised girls on account of their racial background, cultural and religious identity, they are both hyper-visible as different from whiteness and the ensuing norms for femininity in school, and invisible within the category with which they are visually most associated. Even within efforts to belittle difference and tacitly fulfil the conditions required in their school's spaces, scrutiny on the grounds of each girls' particular manifestation of difference remains. Instead of being positioned as individuals who act contingently, assumptions are made of the girls on account of their membership of their presumed racial category. Curiosity about difference, friendly inquiry and even advice are natural consequences of visual difference. However, within the white gaze, and addressing the first research question, this thesis offers original evidence that the misuse of information arising from the girls' visible difference leads to a perception that this is a wholly accurate source of information about each girl's identity.

Within what is perceived in school to be a 'single-story' of being a Black, Asian or mixed-race girl, a reading of a single axis of each girl's race or ethnicity or religion, is assumed to constitute each girl's identity. In this thesis, I have shown how in the white gaze, it is also as though each single axis is a

fixed and permanent feature of each girl's identity. Each girl is seen to have little or no autonomy or agency. I have also shown that this has implications for inclusion and exclusion as fashioned in school by both peers and teachers, sometimes, although not always, unwittingly. The white gaze often leads to judgements which confiscate acceptability through establishing distance from a more esteemed and valued whiteness. Responding to the first and second research questions, this means that the effect of their visual difference acts as a barrier to racialised girls accessing support, establishing a context for marginality, which in turn fails to foster perceptions of inclusion in the predominantly white secondary school.

The girls' difference limits their ability to perform what is expected of a schoolgirl in a predominantly white school. They are seen not to conform to racialised and classed readings of the norms within understandings of femininity. The girls experience boundaries, demarcating what is acceptable, in terms of their ability to perform femininity as it is understood through a white-centric lens which surveys proximity and distance from behavioural or beauty norms. This sometimes particularly limits the younger girls' ability to express themselves authentically. Racial assumptions do not provide the girls with sufficient space to be themselves and respond in ways they always like or feel good about. They have experience of times where both bodily and behaviourally, they attempt to moderate the perception others hold of them. These are often unsuccessful, injurious to their sense of self, and even harmful physically. Despite their (mostly younger) efforts to diminish their visibility, whether through attending to white beauty norms or being 'nice', the image of the girls remains fixed. It is easier for the girls to be seen as confirming assumptions than it is for the foundations of these assumptions to be realigned in the face of contrary evidence. Furthermore, the ability of the girls to mobilise social class protection is compromised through colour and readings of their racialised identities within a prevailing discourse of white, hetero-femininity.

Their visible difference presents difficulties which limits their ability to pass as feminine 'insiders'. Yet as 'outsiders', their individuality is lost within constructions associated with otherness, aggravating their difficulties in being understood as individuals, seen for who they are. The misreading of who each girl is leads to mistaken identities. Queen cannot be distinguished from Mo, and Yasmine is seen as an indistinct Asian Muslim girl, not an individual with a Pakistani heritage. As 'outsiders', the predisposition to position each girl as 'not from here', also diminishes each girl's intrinsic right to be understood as an insider with a right to belong. This increases the likelihood of overt manifestations of hostility, exemplified in Cookie's experience of a demand made on her to 'go back to your own country'. Whatever efforts they make to realign the view of them seen through a racialised lens, on account of how their race and cultural background is perceived in their schools,

the girls have a diminished ability to establish a feeling of fully and unequivocally being 'at home' or 'safe'.

Despite efforts to code-switch, the girls' visible difference acts as a barrier to their straightforward inclusion. In a cycle centred on misrepresentation and fixity of stereotyping and assumptions, misunderstanding of who Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls are, leads to them being seen as either 'exceptions' or a 'problem' which further hampers their attempts to challenge prevailing notions. Because of their visible difference, there are injuries, including hidden injuries, that are not understood in the predominantly white organisation. The thesis therefore contributes by developing the understanding that on account of their visible difference, a view of the girls is skewed by assumptions and stereotypes which make it difficult to 'see' each girl as an individual and not as a member of a group. This extends theoretical understandings of racialisation and racism as gendered, dependent on context, and experienced differently depending on which racial group individuals are visually most associated with, as seen through a white lens.

Distinctions in the experience of racialisation between girls visually associated with different racial, cultural and religious groups cannot be overlooked. But what I have shown is that the effects of racialisation are not something that any of the girls can escape, whatever their background. As evidenced in the thesis, there remains a need to undertake research which encompasses an intersectional approach, and which highlights the ways in which race still matters and is made to matter day-to-day in relation to Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in school. Therefore, in addressing the first research question, on visual difference, I find that racialisation in the white gaze acts as a form of containment of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white schools in England. This gendered racialisation and stereotyping reinforces negative perceptions of the girls, on account of their racial, or cultural, or religious identity, or a combination of these. This has an impact on the girls' lives in their schools. Discussing these impacts responds to each of the research questions on support, barriers, experience of sexism and racism including religious discrimination, and some explicit but also implied discussion of what changes remain necessary in the predominantly white secondary school. Where there is relatively less experience of interacting with issues associated with race and racism, and managing responses to racialised sexism and sexist racism, there remains a discomfort and discord between what racialised girls know to be true and what predominantly schools can understand. This limits possibilities for institutional responses to counteract the effects of racialisation, or to bring about meaningful cultural change.

The second findings chapter develops the idea of barriers and a lack of support for racialised girls, further responding to the second research question on support and barriers. Using original evidence,

this thesis set out that the terms of engagement in the predominantly white secondary school are established within the context of white privilege and a lack of awareness of the potential for marginality and exclusion. Although there has been some empirical work pertaining to this, particularly in American schools with specific reference to Black girls, this thesis expands the knowledge of the processes underpinning racialisation with reference to its manifestation and impact in the English predominantly white secondary school. I have also shown that racialisation affects the experiences of racialised girls, whether they are Black, Asian or Mixed-race girls.

I show the effect of gendered racialisation in the predominantly white secondary school in contributing to entrenching privilege, marginality, exclusion and violence as features which translate the predominantly white secondary school into a hostile environment. Under the guise of schools as racially nonaligned, power structures continue largely unabated. Partly because gendered racialisation processes and white privilege fail to register on school leaders' radar, the school authorities are mostly unable to counteract the negative implications of the girls' racialisation in school. Within a context of institutional naivety about the nature of white privilege, it is possible for many who hold privilege to be largely unaware of the parameters of that privilege.

Another original contribution that I make is to establish that theorising girls' experience using Critical Race Theory's framework of interest convergence, divergence and retrenchment is relevant to help explain racialised girls experience in the English predominantly white secondary school. Where the girls' images are used for publicity for the school to celebrate its success with reference to diversity goals, and to signal inclusion, this is an example of symbolic interest convergence. Superficially, there appears to be a convergence of interests between the school and each girl included in the publicity material. However, this convergence is isolated and its impact ring-fenced. The girls have an understanding that the use of their images in publicity is performative and tokenistic. Through the girls' inclusion in their schools' publicity, racialised girls are in service to a denial at the heart of white privilege. Although the girls' images in prospectus or publicity material seems to support the claims of the institution that it is inclusive, there is little attempt to substantiate this claim through embedding necessary change. Rather than follow through on any institutional commitment through concrete actions to welcome diversity and substantiate inclusion, the girls serve as representatives whose images symbolise institutional commitment to the diversity project. Using their images helps present the schools as inclusive without underpinning inclusion through actions that change the likelihood of the girls encountering marginalisation or hostility. This promotes, rather than prevents, a cycle of interest divergence and retrenchment away from equality goals.

Racialised banter is erroneously understood by the white majority as harmless rather than part of a harmful wider culture and pattern of practices within prevailing power structures. Inappropriate language and even hate speech is insufficiently challenged, or excused as unintended, or a so-called 'joke'. Incidents of 'jokes', or racist banter, or other overtly hostile acts such as name calling, may never reach the attention of the school authorities, who can claim, often accurately, that they do not know what is going on between the girls and their counterparts. But rather than accept that racism and sexism (and heterosexist attitudes) can go undetected and unquestioned within an exclusionary school culture, school leaders and teachers abdicate responsibility for addressing the girls' concerns, turning away from instituting better reporting structures, focusing instead on narrower, instrumentalist agendas.

Not recognising the need for, and then embedding change, also extends to tokenistic approaches within the curriculum, specifically around global citizenship, religion and Black history. In part, the girls see this resulting from a lack of representation of teachers with varied cultural backgrounds. Teachers' inexperience handling discussion around race limits how positive or confident teachers can be in their communication on issues connected with religious and racial difference. However, racialised girls also have experience of teachers adding to a toxic culture and refusing to hear from the girls when they complain of hostile acts by their peers. Nonetheless, although it would be easy to pin expressions of hostility on individual teachers or students acting in an aberrant way, a result of the girls attending 'bad' schools, this is not the focus of the girls' testimony. The girls do not consider their schools to be 'bad' schools. Their narratives centre on a lack of challenge to the status quo and the permanence of racism in and beyond their schools, suggesting that there are insufficient challenges to systemic exclusion, hostility, racism and racialised sexism. This is exemplified in approaches to Black and colonial history, a domain for structuring 'interest divergence' between school and racialised students.

Black History Month is 'marked' but attempts to increase the scope of the curriculum to include more Black and colonial history remain peripheral in all three schools. Where this is studied (often in passing in the younger school years), the presentation of Black and colonial history fails to sufficiently challenge constructions of otherness, and even amplifies racialising narratives, the white gaze and use of racist tropes, thereby maintaining notions of superiority and inferiority. However, curriculum priorities and biases are not simply a school-based issue but evidence of a systemic issue, structured through a lack of priority accorded Black British and postcolonial history nationally. Structuring institutional racism through the curriculum is centred on an exclusionary view of British culture and citizenship, and entwined with an exclusive orientation in history, towards un-queried white legitimacy, morality and excellence. Moreover, and nationally, this is further institutionalised

through a core requirement to teach 'British values' as particular rather than held in common with many cultures and locations.

In responding to the third research question, Critical Race Theory proved productive to analyse the nature of racism and sexism. In this analysis, the thesis contributes empirical evidence further highlighting the necessity of taking an intersectional approach and raises awareness of a need to use Critical Race Theory through a feminist lens. I show that it is critical to understand the working of the hostile environment through the lens of a cycle of interest convergence, interest divergence and retrenchment as this is the context in which racialised girls experience school.

Inside the school institution there remains a difficulty accepting that there could be any deeper problem with institutional racism as this does not fit with avowed organisational missions, goals and values. Institutional discrimination also remains deniable given policy commitments to diversity, visibility of 'exceptions', including in school brochures, Black History Month displays, and metrics that are given credibility in school around 'model minority' achievement. Business-as-usual schooling practices therefore continue unhampered by concern regarding curriculum development and facilities for student support.

Assumptions of the girls as less knowing than the school authorities further limit each girl's ability to challenge their marginal status, amplifying the impact of their marginalisation within school, as is evidenced through Queen's dispute over Black Lives Matter. In two of the three schools, there were examples where some girls needed and were successfully able to enlist the support of members of staff. But more generally, instances of exclusion, marginalisation and abuse continue to be addressed at an individual, rather than institutional or systemic level.

There is little opportunity to talk either formally or informally about their experiences because there is little priority given to finding out about Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls' experience. Instead of prompting change at an institutional and structural level, the girls' experiences are discounted even within their social groups, either as imagined or not serious enough to warrant concern. This may be fuelled by a manifestation of the desire to sidestep something so complex, and because of the priority accorded avoiding uncomfortable conversations by those who do not directly experience the harm that arises from a racialised and gendered experience.

There remains little recognition of the ongoing impact of being racialised in school and of racism. Although English schools operate within a racist and sexist society, they function as though they are fair, equal, and safe spaces for all their students. Instead of questioning that there is a real possibility that racism and sexism (and heterosexist attitudes) can go undetected within whiteness, school

leaders and teachers abdicate responsibility for addressing manifestations of racism and sexism. The girls remain encumbered by a failure to learn from their perspective, and the failure to address racism in their schools. It remains difficult for each girl to be feel equally valued where manifestations of white privilege are only visible to the girls as opposed to the school authorities. As well as amplifying the risk of hidden injuries, maintaining the status quo establishes the grounds for interest divergence between individual girl and institution. Where many of the girls (from different backgrounds) describe experiences of overt racism, for example being goaded by their peers' use of racist language, addressing this fails to be a priority in school. Schools fail to develop the knowledge, capability or capacity to deal with incidents as they arise. Ill-informed about the nature of racism coupled with a lack of ambition or obvious action, structures interest divergence and retrenchment between the girls and their schools with those who perpetrate name-calling and other hostile acts seeming to be able to act with impunity.

In addition to offering original insights into the process of gendered racialisation in predominantly white secondary schools, this thesis also demonstrates that, on account of their gendering and racialisation, the girls are not seen as experts of their own experience. The girls see a need for this to change but have very limited success in making this happen at an institutional level. Their counter-narratives, which I use to show how processes of interest divergence and retrenchment operate, continue to lack credibility in their schools. In failing to listen to racialised girls, their schools miss out on a resource in the form of the girls' expertise and insights. This information could have afforded the girls' schools opportunities to make meaningful changes. Therefore, in the absence of attending to racialised girls' accounts, failures persist, including failing to appreciate what lies at the heart of misunderstandings and conflicts between the girls and their peers. Together, white privilege and an inability to hear from the girls dilutes the schools' ability to profoundly alter existing power relations. This means that there is very little change to structural inequalities that affect the girls within what increasingly becomes, however unintentionally, a hostile environment, one where there is a retrenchment from the purported commitment to substantiating inclusion with meaningful policies and processes to institute deep-rooted reforms in the system.

Since the girls are already hyper-visible in school, calling attention to their schools' inability to deal with a problem (of racism and racialised sexism) that their schools would rather deny, aggravates their visibility. Racialised girls are seen to contribute to their problems, susceptible to being blamed for their experiences and often held to a higher standard of behaviour than their peers, as for example, Zoe, Gail, Cookie, Sheila, and Bob highlight. Rather than their experiences of racism being understood as objectionable, the girls' narratives are objected to, and individual girls' accounts are discounted. Their racialised (and gendered) experiences are delegitimised within constructions of

them as less than trustworthy. Therefore, there is little confidence that sharing information of their experience with their schools can achieve positive change. It raises the level of scrutiny that each girl could experience but without necessarily facilitating any gain. Consequently, and although not always a product of age as highlighted by Yasmine, as they get older, many girls stop reporting what happens to them to the school authorities.

Instances of racism continue to be treated as though they are isolated incidents, rather than being seen to arise in an institutional context. As well as frustrating some of their attempts to call for institutional change, racialised girls can do little to offset a perception that they are the source of a problem with racism that would not exist were they not in school. The primary responsibility for continually acknowledging, dealing with, and challenging the hostile environment seems to fall to individual girls. Despite occasional talk from those with authority in each institution, there seems not to be any increase in a general sense of responsibility to act to change the environment. Yet challenging individual hostile acts remains costly to each individual girl who attempts it. They risk being further 'bruised or misunderstood' as often resistance to their situation is misconstrued as oppositional to other students, teachers, and established, nominally neutral and non-racial school policies and procedures, particularly around behaviour management.

The girls' schools continue to lack an understanding of institutional racism. Few in authority or their peer group see what happens to the girls as needing to be challenged institutionally. Further, there is no means established in school with which to elicit information of the girls' experience to gain insights. A lack of understanding of institutional racism and denial of any structural effect continues, continuing to justify why no institutional action is necessary. Individual acts of racism are seen as manifestations of an aberration rather than a normal occurrence within a systemic or institutional failure to recognise white privilege and address racism. A lack of urgency or activity directed towards overhauling a context in which hostility can thrive persist. In the face of this failure, the girls continue to face racism in and around school, and it seems as though the perpetrators can get away without serious consequence even when expressions of racism are overt. Institutional resistance to racism is not evident to the girls. Attempts to change the girls' experience in school, through advertising how to report and what will happen following any report of racist experiences, remain thwarted by institutional inertia and denials that there is any problem with racism and racialised sexism in school.

Further contributing to understandings of how institutional racism and sexism continue to have an impact and affect the lived experience of racialised girls, I show how their schools do not facilitate nor enable the girls to resist racism and racialised sexism collectively. Necessarily in the face of

institutional inertia, the girls' opposition to racism in school remains at the level of an individual challenge, ad hoc even where individual girls involve parents, or individual members of staff. The girls cannot ultimately overcome structural barriers, realign established power hierarchies, or representations of them constructed through a white lens in the predominantly white space. Their strategies cannot overhaul the potential of racism to play a part in their school lives.

Their schools continue to fail to appreciate the need to establish measures to prioritise the girls' well-being and inclusion. The denial of the dimensions of racism and sexism which determine aspects of the girls' lived reality does not diminish the impact of their experiences. Their experiences continue to foster feelings of being misunderstood and isolated. Through their lived experience, each girl understands and knows more than their schools about racism. For some of the girls, what they know is also imprinted with fear and trauma following violence that has affected them and their family and friends.

The second findings chapter showed the criticality of a failure of school leaders to interrogate the nature of white privilege, tackle low level racism and abuse in and around school and a long-term neglect of measures that are necessary to embed change to offset marginalisation and hostility in school. Despite those who would argue that the 'new' race victims are white working-class boys and that disparity in educational outcomes has varied causes (Sewell, et al., 2021), this thesis therefore shows that an intersectional approach within the tenets of Critical Race Theory, Black feminism and postcolonial theorising is necessary to make changes to improve opportunities for Black, Asian or Mixed-race girls in predominantly white schools, and to offset the institutionalisation of racism. Retrenchment, in the context of a propensity to deny that there is a problem and to defer responses, means that individual schools do not develop a sense of priorities driving initiatives aimed at embedding equality and inclusion.

In the absence of responding to the changes that the girls would like to see to improve their circumstance, the final findings chapter sets out resistance to manifestations of racism again extending understandings of the context of the predominantly white secondary school using Critical Race Theory, Black feminist and postcolonial theoretical frameworks. Having provided empirical evidence for Critical Race theoretical understandings of the permanence and mutability of racism, the thesis provides clear examples of the strategies that the girls devise to resist the challenges of being schooled in a hostile environment. I foreground the girls' efforts to survive and even expand their possibility given the status quo in their schools.

Disputing school-based ignorance, the girls assert the accuracy and primacy of their knowledge that racism exists and is a real and not imagined problem in school. Consciously limiting the effect of

harmful narratives, the girls devise counter-narratives which centre their knowledge of racism over their schools' lack of understanding. The girls continue to devise a range of responses which offset the effect of being silenced in the face of a denial of their knowledge and experience. Despite a lack of understanding of their perspective in school, their counter-narratives are effective as resistance against racism in school. They enable the girls to offset some impacts that experiencing racism might otherwise have. In these counter-narratives, they establish their clear-sightedness, seeing that racism is a problem and problematising the schools' failure to attend to what they, the girls, know needs to be addressed.

Their resistance is intentional, agentic and designed around self-recovery, self-definition and determination despite often being characterised as oppositional to school and its necessary rules and regulations. Through experience of what strategies work well and making reflexive decisions about those that work less well, the girls make decisions about how best to breach the boundaries and containment that they face. They see an ongoing need to structure survival as a mode of resistance. Many girls offer a counter-narrative centred on their experience, assessing nuance and variety according to the specific manifestations according to their context and specific racial and cultural identity, as well as their personality and personal priorities. With reflectiveness and care, they assess what information to share within school. There are examples of some girls alerting the school authorities to their experiences of racism, but many do not choose to share their counter-narrative considering their knowledge that their schools are failing to stop racism and racialised sexism. They take decisions, alert to the dangers of making their experience known, prioritising resistance as a mode of surviving toxic knowledge.

There is a realisation that anger can serve a purpose but that its use must be targeted and focussed to serve the girls' priorities. Yasmine, Cookie, Hope and Fiona all reclaim the right to feel angry whilst simultaneously resist being subsumed by anger. Racialised girls realise that they cannot overlook the specificity of their context. They take decisions to enable navigating their well-being and self-hood around school, evaluating the value and risks associated with making challenges given the ingrained propensity of their schools to stick with a denial that there is any problem with stereotyping and racism in school. Although a prelude to self-determination, given that there remain few opportunities for collective resistance in school, challenges concerning the curriculum in class remain ad hoc and represent a risk to individual girls making a challenge. Given prevailing norms and constructions surrounding being Black or Mixed-race, it would be easy for Fiona's direct challenge to her history teacher to be seen as her being an angry Black girl expressing hostility, instead of her intervention being understood positively as stemming from a need to improve the education of all those in her class.

In the context of a need to expand their educational opportunities beyond those offered in school, the girls enter a liminal space where they can share their experience with others who also know about the nature and impact of racism. They tie a 'collective intelligence' (Mirza, 2015: 7) from diverse sources of family, friends and a wider community with what they see and know. Although racism persists, entering this space helps the girls resist the damage that racism could otherwise inflict. They increase their opportunity to share information about how to respond in ways that do not threaten but enhance their own sense of self and their capacity for well-being.

Sharing their experience with others that they know will understand reframes their experience as something collective, rather than personal to each girl. A few of the girls join gyms and sports teams, a few see counsellors. Their strategies enable the girls to find space and scope to recuperate. It offers the chance to expand their opportunities for self-definition and to see themselves beyond their life in school. Using personal and communal memories and being part of conversations centred on collective understandings of the way that their gender and racial and cultural identities play out in school, diminishes the likelihood that each girl sees herself as either a problem, or the source of a problem with racism or sexism. The girls thereby refute the possibility that their experience of racism is a narrative about who they are and can be.

Building on their efforts of survival as resistance, the girls are better placed to repel some of the damaging containment that might otherwise feature in their school lives. Both Kahmia and Robin highlight that through friendship, they resist being discursively constructed as outsiders. In different ways but in all three schools, Robin, like Naomi and Ophelia suggest ways that they assert their right to occupy certain spaces as their own, freer from the racially extended gender compression that they might experience elsewhere. Necessarily these are individualised attempts to offset being 'space invaders', but there are also examples where the girls try to achieve a more general reappraisal of the racial and gender status quo.

In all three schools, there are also examples where some girls attempt to expand the terms and impact of resistance beyond the individual as the central figure involved in establishing the validity of their critique, or beyond individual efforts of survival or recuperation, or beyond disavowal of their status as outsiders. In offering leadership or mentoring younger years, Ophelia, Fiona and Olivia disrupt the white gaze and their containment in it through growing perceptions of who they are and what they offer to the school community. Taking on these roles challenges expectations at many levels, perhaps most importantly through highlighting the critical contribution that they make to their schools' pastoral network. Performing these roles acts as resistance through a visual proposition that there is a need to reassess generalisations and stop applying stereotypes and

assumptions onto Black or Mixed-race girls. This imperative to decry erroneous constructions of each girl's capability and contribution to her school also undermines a tendency to see all resistance as oppositional. These girls serve as role models to other girls who can identify with each of them, highlighting what it is possible to achieve in the predominantly white secondary school. Although they might still be seen as exceptions and exceptional, being visible in these leadership roles expands the opportunity for self-definition for these but also other girls. Moreover, through their access to senior teachers in school, it expands their capacity to be heard as experts of their racialised and gendered experience.

Nonetheless, and in keeping with Fordham's (1996) finding, there are complex responses to conforming to rules in school in the ongoing context of symbolic violence of racism and racialised sexism. This thesis also suggests that there remain some potentially reckless manifestations of resistance in school. In continually having their legitimacy and right to access privileges that others manage to access relatively more easily, a few girls exhibit rebelliousness to assert self-definition beyond containment. These forms of resistance carry risks for these the girls as they could lead to the bolstering of the erroneous perception that racial tropes are accurate despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In going against rules that are commonly understood and applied to all, Ophelia is in danger of unseating all her own endeavours to expand the positive perceptions of what she is capable of and of fulfilling her own longer-term aspirations. Although not going to tutor group or assembly, and helping others to do the same, lacks legitimacy in school, this does not offset the need to understand Ophelia's decision making in the context of her experience of needing to resist containment and the hostile environment.

This thesis further contributes knowledge which highlights that intersectionality is critical to understand the experience of racialised girls. I found that the effects of racialisation and manifestations of racism varied on account of girls' specific character, racial identity, religious and cultural background and gender, but also their age. For example, although to some extent Year 8 Ophelia expands boundaries that threaten to contain her, it is particularly the older girls who can extend their opportunities for self-determination. Through making links to individual members of staff inside school, and linking with communities outside of school, including on-line forums, the older girls are better placed to reflect on their experience. They can see beyond their current constraints and a sense of emptiness or despair at the lack of acceptance of who they are and what they would like to achieve. This provides a sense of release from the compression that they have experienced. Instead of feeling that they must always attend to beauty, friendship and behavioural norms coupled with low expectations of their ability and worth established in conceptual whiteness and enforced in the predominantly white school to their detriment, Queen and Fiona refuse white

beauty norms through their sense that they are beautiful and can be proud of the way that they look and behave. Through her steadfast efforts, Sheila is seen beyond her identity as a Muslim girl and a poor educational prospect.

In becoming self-determining, the girls can express pride in their identity and attributes. A growing sense of their value means that each girl considers their own versions of self-hood where their own ambition for the future can come to the fore. These manifestations of resistance remain largely a personal endeavour. But they also go beyond survival as a minimum standard of resistance. They enable some girls to exert more autonomy over their sense of who they are and their prospects, with authenticity and a greater sense of hopefulness.

Racialised girls need to continually develop creative ways of expressing their authentic personhood as they see this, despite surveillance in the white gaze. Individual girls do continually find new and innovative ways of resisting the effects of systemic bias and structural exclusion on their well-being. Fortunately, the girls in this study have personal resource, they are motivated to do well, and can develop strategies and networks to offset the worst impacts of a racial contract based on a conceptual whiteness rooted in nostalgia, white grievance, and a denial of white privilege and the ongoing reality of racism. However, the responsibility for bringing about necessary structural change goes beyond what the girls as individuals can and should be expected to achieve. With very few opportunities to collectivise their resistance, each girl runs the risk of being regarded as oppositional if they make their counter-narratives of their school's failure known. Moreover, recognising that change is necessary and bringing it about cannot rest with individual Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in Years 8-13 in predominantly white secondary schools in England. In Fiona's words, someone else with institutional authority or power 'should have been able to see it', where 'it' might be understood to mean that change remains necessary.

Despite individual girls explaining their situation to people in school, there remains very little meaningful positive change to structures and systems. As they go through the school, many develop a growing sense that there is little point in explaining or highlighting what goes wrong since it will not improve racialised girls' situation in the predominantly white school, either for themselves, or their younger counterparts. There remains a need for further initiatives to ensure that research, including the findings of this thesis, translates into meaningful actions to ensure equal access to a quality educational experience for Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in schools in England.

Ultimately this thesis has highlighted that despite valuable theoretical and empirical research that has been conducted for decades examining inequalities and exclusions, there continues to be limits to the effectiveness of changes that have been made locally in schools in England. Attempts to

address equality meaningfully have not gone nearly far enough within the current English system. There has been complacency, insufficient interrogation of the status quo, and ignorance of the consequences of gendered racialisation and racism. Although listening to individual girls' efforts to explain how they experience school would be a useful start, there needs to be a more systematic effort to collect girls' testimonies and then to institute more routes to implement policies and procedures in which the girls can have confidence. Such measures will need to be seen to foster inclusion, through for example, reviewing the curriculum, and improving teacher education so that teachers are able to better understand racialisation, and deal with racism and sexism effectively and in a timely fashion. Without acting on the information that racialised girls provide and realising the value of their counter-narratives, there will not be sufficient change at an institutional level and the cycle of interest convergence, divergence, retrenchment, and a need for individual and collective resistance to the racial and gender status quo will continue.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Briefing Note and Participant Briefing and Consent Form

Briefing Information given prior to signing Participant Consent Form

Prior to the focus group, and prior to starting the recording, the girls to be informed of the following practical and ethical dimensions of the research:

- the project complies with the ethical guidelines and procedures and followed Nottingham Trent University's code of conduct as well as the British Education Research Association's ethical research framework;
- participants' responses will be kept anonymous;
- although they could share information in the focus group and then the one-to-one interview, the girls were under no obligation to share information about any aspect of their experience;
- only information pertaining to safeguarding would need to be shared with an appropriate authority in school;
- the participants have some responsibility to respect the privacy of their peers who are also taking part in the focus group. Each girl is asked to refrain from sharing information that they learn in the focus group about other people or events;
- importance of trustworthiness inside the group involved in the research in each school;
- password protected audio recording devices would be used to record in full what was said in the focus groups and interviews;
- participants could withdraw from the focus group or interview at any time, without any need to give an explanation;
- participants could ask for their information not to be included in the study for up to one month after the end of their participation in the research. This included any of their contributions to the research: personal information, verbal contributions to the focus group, and both verbal and photographic contributions in the interview.
- participants' personal information – only obtained as a paper copy – would be stored in a locked filing cabinet;
- participants would need a pseudonym in order to secure their privacy and anonymity disassociating their actual identity from the research and their school;
- their permission letter is the only link between their information, including their actual name, and their chosen pseudonym and no electronic copies of this would be held;
- information resulting from focus groups, interviews, and field notes including

- recordings, transcriptions and photographs would be stored on a secure university network where the server met European GDPR requirements and is housed in Europe as opposed to the USA or elsewhere.

Minority experience of predominantly white secondary schools

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Please read this information on what this will involve. Please ask me if you have any questions. My name is Amirkaur Aujla-Jones (amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk) and I am a PhD student at School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham, NG1 5LT. My work is supervised by Professor Carrie Paechter. She can be contacted at: carrie.paechter@ntu.ac.uk or 0115 848 2412.

What is the purpose of the research?

The study aims to find out about your everyday experience of school. This will help me to understand what school life is like for you.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are the best placed person to talk about your experience. Your experience will help answer the research questions. These are:

- How do you experience life in school?
- What would improve your school life?

What will happen if I take part?

- Firstly you will take part in a focus group. This is a small group where we will discuss what it is like in your school. The focus group will be with 5-7 other girls from your school and will take just under an hour;
- The (NAMED) Head will give you permission to take five photographs of your school life;
- Then you can talk with me about your photographs in an interview which could last between 30 minutes and an hour.
- I will anonymise what you say so it can help inform my research without identifying you.

Do I have to take part?

You need to decide whether you would like to take part. Next, if you decide to take part, you will need to sign a consent form.

If at any time you would like to leave either the focus group or interview, you can - you do not need to give any reason. You will just return to your normal lesson.

You can change your mind about contributing to the research during or after you have taken part.

Interview data can be removed one month after you sign the consent form if you email me (amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk).

Will my data be confidential?

Your personal information is strictly confidential. It will treated as such, stored in a locked filing cabinet or on a password protected laptop. What you say in the focus group or interview will be anonymised. Anything which identifies either you or your school will be omitted. I take data protection very seriously.

Your privacy is very important to me. Please help protect your privacy by avoiding discussions of who said what with people who were not in the focus group or interview. I have to protect you or any other young person, so if you say something which worries me in terms of safeguarding, I will need to let the right person know.

How can I choose to take part?

Please sign the consent form. I will also sign the form and give you a copy for you to keep. I will keep my copy in a locked filing cabinet. All data from the study will be kept securely in accordance with Data Protection Regulations.

CONSENT FORM: Minority experience of predominantly white secondary schools

Researcher: Amirkaur Aujla-Jones (amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk)

PLEASE TICK BOX

☐ I have read and understood the participant information sheet including information on the purpose of the research and what taking part will involve.

☐ I know I can ask questions at any point in the research process.

☐ I know my personal information will remain confidential.

☐ I agree to my data being recorded and transcribed and kept securely.

☐ I agree to the use of anonymous quotes being used within the research findings.

☐ I understand my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I understand I can withdraw my personal and interview data up to one month after signing this consent form by contacting the Researcher (Amirkaur Aujla Jones, email: amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk).

☐ I can also contact Professor Carrie Paechter (0115 848 4836) or by email on carrie.paechter@ntu.ac.uk if I would prefer to discuss this research with her.

I have signed below to show I voluntarily agree to take part in the study of minority experience of predominantly white secondary schools:

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: SIGNATURE:

DATE:

To keep my data anonymous, I would like my pseudonym to be:

NAME OF RESEARCHER: SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Appendix 2: Semi-structured Focus group Schedule

FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH.

Welcome and introduction - ensure understanding of:

- Participant consent;
- They have chosen to be participants of their own free will. They are not compelled to take part;
- Their guaranteed right to withdraw. Should they withdraw, they need to return to their normal timetable. They will receive the debrief sheet at their point of departure;
- There will not be any negative consequence should participants decide to withdraw;
- Right to anonymity and privacy;
- Safeguarding caveat.

1. Take a few moments to jot down, what makes you, you? We won't discuss what you write but I would like you to write down what comes into your head initially, and then to consider what you might add or take away (as though you were going to share your thoughts).

2. Please tell me about school?

3. What advice you might give to a new girl coming to your school?

PROMPT: Why would you say this?

4. What, if any, changes would you like to see in your school? FOLLOW-UP: Please explain how that would improve your life in school.

One more request – before I see you next time - could you take five photos that detail your school life? Then we can talk about these next time you see me. Give each participant a copy of permission slip for taking 5 photographs.

Thank you very much for your time and thoughts today and thank you for taking the photos. See you on (DATE approximately one to two weeks later, time and location for each student in their school diary/organizer).

PERMISSION SLIP FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC TASK

I have been asked by a PhD researcher Amirkaur Aujla Jones (amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk) from Nottingham Trent University to take photos on my phone of my school life.

I have been given permission by HEAD to use my phone to take these photos between (DATES).

HEAD NAME & SIGNATURE, DATE

Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Hello again. Re-state Welcome and introduction - ensure understanding of:

- Participant consent;
- They have chosen to be participants of their own free will. They are not compelled to take part;
- Their guaranteed right to withdraw. Should they withdraw, they need to return to their normal timetable. They will receive the debrief sheet at their point of departure;
- There will not be any negative consequence should participants decide to withdraw;
- Right to anonymity and privacy;
- Safeguarding caveat.

And thank you for being here with your photos.

1. What is this photo of?

2. Why did you take this photo?

3. Why is this photo important to you?

4. If you were able to change your school, can you describe the things you might like to change?

    > PROMPTS: Why would you change this?
    > Why would this be your priority?
    > Are there any further changes you would like to see?

5. I am going to do some more research in another school. Would you suggest I change the process, or the questions I ask, or any of the activities?
    PROMPT: please explain.

6. Have you any questions related to this research that you would like me to answer?

Thank you once again for your time and thoughts today, and thank you for taking the photos. Please take a participant debrief sheet and also I hope you'll be able to attend the informal preliminary analysis research debrief in school on (DATE).

Appendix 4: Participant Debrief

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH

I hope you have enjoyed being a participant in this research. Your contribution has been really valuable.

Your personal data will be treated as strictly confidential. It will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998), General Data Protection Regulations (2018) and the Ethical Guidelines set out by Nottingham Trent University and the British Educational Research Association. The data that you have contributed during the focus group and interview will be anonymised throughout the project including the transcription, the analysis and resulting research thesis and future publications. In this anonymised form, your data will be stored on a password protected laptop. If you need to ask me anything about your data or the research, please contact me, Amirkaur Aujla Jones: amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk

This is a list of useful organisations in case you would like to follow up any of our discussions:

Bullying UK (http://www.bullying.co.uk/, tel: 0808 800 2222) offers advice and support.

Beatbullying (http://www.beatbullying.org/) is "all about young people helping and supporting each other online." Mentors who are trained young people offer to listen and support.

Childline (http://www.childline.org.uk, tel: 0800 1111) offers help and advice to young people about a range of issues.

Nottingham Women's Centre (0115 941 1475) "is run by women for women". They would like to reach out to younger women and girls. Instead of coming with their mums, they would like to see younger women choosing to access the Women's Centre safe spaces and services independently.

Youth2youth (http://www.youth2youth.org.uk/helpline/) is run by young people who offer support for all problems.

If you have comments or complaints about how the research was conducted remember you can also contact Professor Carrie Paechter (0115 848 2412 or carrie.paechter@ntu.ac.uk)

If you would like to know more about the findings from this research, I will be returning to (NAMED school) to hold a debriefing meeting on (DATE). You will not be identified in the findings any way.

Once again, thank you for your time and contributions to this research.

Amirkaur Aujla Jones (amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk).

Appendix 5: Letter to parents/carer/guardian

Dear PARENT

I am Amirkaur Aujla Jones (amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk) a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University trying to find out what it is like to be a minority ethnic girl in a mainly white school. I hope it will be an interesting and enjoyable experience to take part in this research. The research will take place during [INSERT DATE].

There are several key aspects of the research I would like you to know:

- participation in the research is entirely voluntary;
- personal information will be confidential and safely stored in a locked filing cabinet;
- contributions will kept anonymous and stored electronically on a password protected laptop;
- disruption to normal lessons will be minimal;
- the research has been approved by the University Ethics Committee and NAMED School
- withdrawal from research discussions will be possible at any time. No reason will need to be given;
- debriefing will include an information handout with useful contacts, and then (DATE later that term), an informal presentation of preliminary analysis of fully anonymised findings. You are welcome to attend the presentation;
- if you have any questions I can be contacted by email: amirkaur.aujla-jones2017@my.ntu.ac.uk
- my PhD is supervised by Professor Carrie Paechter, the Director of the Nottingham Centre for Children, Young People and Families at Nottingham Trent University. She can be contacted: Professor Paechter, Chaucer Building, Nottingham Trent University, Goldsmith Street, Nottingham, NG1 5LT; email: carrie.paechter@ntu.ac.uk telephone number: 0115 848 2412.

Thank you for reading this letter and your interest in the research. Please return the consent form if you would like your child to take part.

Yours sincerely

Amirkaur Aujla Jones (N0739353@ntu.ac.uk)

CONSENT FORM: PLEASE TICK AND RETURN TO SCHOOL OFFICE (by DATE)

☐ I give consent for my child to take part in the research on minority experiences of a predominantly white school.

NAME OF CHILD: CLASS:

Parent/Carer/Guardian NAME: SIGNATURE:
DATE:

Appendix 6: Headteacher Information Briefing Sheet

'What is the lived experience of Black, Asian and Mixed-race girls in predominantly white secondary schools?' In this communication, I specified that:

- No participant, or their school will be identified in the research output;
- Information about the research will be given to both prospective participants and their parents/guardian to inform them of the research aims and what they can expect if they take part;
- Prospective participants and their parents/guardians can decide whether or not to take part. If they decide to take part, their consent will be recorded on the consent form;
- Participants will have a signed copy to keep, and I will keep a signed copy along with the signed parental/carer/guardian consent form;
- Participants' personal data and all consent forms will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet;
- Audio taping of focus groups and interviews will occur only with participants' permission, and on a password protected recording device;
- Participants' responses will be anonymized, transcribed and then stored on a password protected laptop;
- Participants can withdraw from the research process at any time, without giving a reason;
- The fieldwork will involve focus groups and then interviews, each of which will take no more than an hour. Ideally, the focus groups will have 6-8 Y8-12 girls in each;
- At the end of the focus group, I will ask each participant to take five photographs on their phones to represent aspects of their school experience. These photographs will then be discussed in the interview.
- The interview will take place with a minimum of one and a maximum of three participants. Their photographs will act as a focus for discussion within a pre-prepared semi-structured interview schedule;
- When a participant leaves a focus group or interview, they will return to their normal timetabled activity;
- Participants will be given a debriefing sheet with useful contact numbers;
- The research protocol and all of the research tools have been approved by the University Ethics Committee;
- With your agreement on a suitable time and place, I will offer an informal debriefing with fully anonymised preliminary findings.

Appendix 7: Research participants and a brief overview of their schools

Hawthorn School, mainly white working-class inner city school	Hope	Year 8
	Kahmia	Year 9
	Sarah	Year 9
	Kimora	Year 10
	Naomi	Year 10
	Olivia	Year 10
Ash School, mainly white mixed working- and middle-class suburban school	Barbra	Year 8
	Ophelia	Year 8
	Zoe	Year 8
	Bob	Year 9
	Gail	Year 9
	Cookie	Year 10
	Yasmine	Year 10
	Queen	Year 11
	Mo	Year 11
	Sheila	Year 11
Oak School, mainly white middle-class small town school	Robin	Year 13
	Fiona	Year 13