The over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions from school.

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THE OVER-REPRESENTATION OF BLACK STUDENTS IN SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS FROM SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study sought to understand the phenomenon of school 'exclusion' with particular reference to the suspension and expulsion of black (male) students in secondary schools. The principles of the 'market' by which schools are expected to operate are widely viewed as responsible, for the rise in the numbers of children expelled from school. However, it is argued that 'market' principles alone cannot explain why black students are over-represented in suspensions and expulsions to such a high degree.

The study was carried out between 1992 and 1996 in three schools. It was ethnographic employing mainly interviews, observation and limited documentary analysis.

The concept of 'orientation' was employed to make sense of the choices headteachers make as well as a means of understanding teachers' relationships with students. It is suggested that schools whose general orientation is towards punishment and not 'education' as an integral part of the school disciplinary culture, will be more likely to expel students than find ways of keeping them in school. However, the ethnic significance of suspensions and expulsions requires a different explanation. It is argued that black communities have historically had a troubled relationship with the education system in Britain and that the high incidence of suspension and expulsion of black students can only be understood within this context. I argue that the human rights implications of expulsions are far reaching given the connection between expulsion and an individual's vulnerability to involvement in the criminal justice system.

CONTENTS

Additional Material

Appendices

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The introduction of market principles into the education system through the 1988

Education Reform Act, once again brought to the surface a subject that had been largely

neglected in the sociology of education - that of the relationship between schooling and the

national economy. In this thesis, I re-visit this theme in the light of growing concern,

particularly in the United States of America, about the relationship between lack of

education, poverty and the use of prison labour to boost national economies and the profits

of multinational companies. Links have been drawn, in the United States, between the

expansion of the prison building programme, the increasing privatisation of prisons, the

growing use of prisons as industrial complexes employing prison labour, and increasingly

stringent policing and powers of arrest to which the poorest in the society are most

vulnerable (Currie, 1998). I acknowledge that this link is as yet tenuous in the British

context, but argue that it is worth signalling the dangers and raising the debate given the

'creeping Americanisation' of so many areas of the British state, including the criminal

justice system.

My main concern here is with subordinate groups - the poor, the dispossessed, the

minorities, thus following an age-old theme in the sociology of education. I highlight in

particular the vulnerability of minority ethnic groups, with particular reference to black

males, and to institutionalised racism within the criminal justice system (MacPherson

Report, 1999). In this way I hope to make clear the responsibilities of schools. But rather

than assume a crude and conspiratorial link between what schools do and the interests of

governments and private business, I explore the manner in which, according to Gramsci and to Foucault, hegemonic interests are realised through schools as institutions and through individuals within them. By exploring the ideological orientation of teachers and headteachers, I highlight the level of agency that is possible within schools and show that, despite the controlling power of macro structures over the activities of schools, it is possible at a micro level to place children at the centre of the school's work and in so doing perform a vital counter-hegemonic role. This discussion about the relationship between education (with particular reference to schools) and the economy forms a background to the main focus of this thesis which is the expulsion of children from school. I link expulsion to the human rights implications of the growing prison industry.

In chapter two I discuss the extent of the problem of school suspensions and expulsions. Although recent statistics show a general fall in the numbers of children 'excluded'[1] (Independent Newspaper, June 14, 1999), the structural problems within education which have exacerbated this problem remain intact and the numbers of children removed from education remain high. This fall in 'exclusions' is recent and does not form part of the discussion of this chapter.

What is highlighted in chapter two, is that research studies so far have focused on acquiring statistics on suspensions and expulsions. With the exception of a study carried out by the Commission for Racial Equality (1997), qualitative studies that focus on the suspension and expulsion from school of black students are yet to be published. Several other organisations such as the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the Advisory Council for Education (ACE) and some Local Education Authorities have conducted their own studies but these have focused on the numbers of black students suspended and expelled

from school. The government too gathered information from schools, then commissioned

a study to look into the matter (Parsons et al. 1995). More recently a government task

group, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), carried out their own survey. The information

from these various sources whether national or local was the same - 'exclusions' had risen

in an unprecedented way during the 1990s, and the problem seemed to be getting worse. A

breakdown of these statistics by gender, ethnicity, social class, special needs, and so on,

provided another interesting dimension to these figures. It was clear that children were

differentially affected by 'exclusions' along these various axes. What is surprising,

however, has been the government's lack of acknowledgement of what has been widely

seen as the cause of this state of affairs, namely, the collective effects of various aspects of

educational change accompanied by a squeeze on resources, the closing down of school

support services in many areas, and the institution of school league tables. Problems are

instead, located in the children themselves and solutions are largely left in the hands of

headteachers.

Less surprising perhaps has been the lack of action, at least until 1999, which focused

specifically on reducing the problem of *over-representation* of black[2] children in

suspensions and expulsions. This is unsurprising because it is a problem that has existed

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[1] The terms suspension and expulsion were replaced by the collective term 'exclusion' by the Education Act (1986)

[2] Although the students in my study who were most overtly affected by 'exclusions' were those of Caribbean descent, I use the term 'black' to refer to peoples of African heritage whether they are of African or Caribbean descent. I use it also to refer to students and teachers of dual (black and white) heritage. This is for the following reasons:

1. During interviews, respondents did not differentiate between these three groups and the term 'black' was the most common descriptor used. As the study investigated perceptions of respondents, it was important to use their categories in interpreting their experiences

2. The numbers of African students in two of the schools was too small to treat as a separate category of analysis, whilst in the third school, and the one where most interviews of students took place, African and Arab students (from North Africa) were also over-represented, whereas white and South Asian students were not.

3. I do not in this context use it to refer to students and teachers of South Asian descent, not because of the contested nature of this usage (see for example Modood, 1992), although I acknowledge this contestation, but because of the manner in which students (and teachers) are ethnically categorised in the British school system.

since the 1960s. It is only in the recent DfEE publication, Circular 10/99, that practical recommendations were made which focused specifically on this problem.

Chapter three presents the substantive human rights arguments that underpin my thesis. It is intentionally broad in its sweep attempting, as it does, to cover the macro structures within which schools operate, the meso or organisational level of school activity and the micro activities of individuals within schools. The discussion centres mainly on illustrating why schools are able to undermine the interests of children (despite their stated aims). I illustrate this by exploring the manner in which children are constructed in public discourses. I focus in particular on how black children have been constructed as problems both intellectually and behaviourally. This is linked to wider racialised discourses which have historically helped to justify the harsher control and policing of black people. It is in this chapter that I introduce theories which link developments in the criminal justice system with economic interests. I argue that if indeed the move in some Western countries is to link profits to the economic redundancy of the poor and the dispossessed, then schools need to be alert to the possible role they play in this process when, by expelling students, they create an underclass of vulnerable young people.

Chapter four presents the research methods of my study and some of the methodological debates surrounding research of controversial issues such as 'race'. I discuss my interest in the topic, how I came to study it, some of the shortcomings in my approach and the factors that influenced my thinking and the development of my analysis.

This is followed by a case study in chapter five, a study through which I argue the need for greater accountability of headteachers on this question of school 'exclusions'. I illustrate the power of a headteacher to determine the educational future of students and explore his understanding of the reasons for the over-representation of black male students in

4

expulsions from his school. I question the validity of expelling children and, by contrasting this headteacher's actions and interpretations with another headteacher who does not expel students, attempt to show that whilst governments have indeed placed severe constraints on schools, there is still room for autonomy and agency in institutions and amongst individuals. It is here that I develop the notion of an individual's ideological orientation, a notion that avoids the rigid and closed implications of racism without, however, denying the reality of racism. Through this concept, it is possible to accept that one's view of the world is the result of a range of varied influences but it also leaves open the possibility of 're-orientation' so that one does not have to be 'locked' into one's social or cultural history. The discussion of my analysis in chapter four illustrates this point.

Chapter six explores the personal perspectives of teachers. I continue the theme of orientation and argue that what happens in schools and in particular what happens to specific groups of children in schools is largely the responsibility of the adults. Drawing on studies carried out in the USA, I argue that teachers whose orientation is outwards towards the children and their families for explanations of failure in discipline are less likely to prevent or stem the tide of expulsions than those who question their own actions and take the responsibility for discipline upon themselves. Where teachers hold a racialised perspective of minority students, they are unlikely to engage with the difficulties faced by these students and this is likely to have an effect on the processes which lead to student 'exclusions'.

Chapters seven and eight re-inforce this point. In chapter seven, black students talk about the kinds of interaction which they have with teachers which affect their experience of schooling in general and 'exclusion' in particular. The main point made here is not that black students do not engage in activities that require sanction. Rather, that they experience this sanction differently from their white peers. The accounts of black student

5

experience are confirmed by teachers (black and white) discussed in chapter six, by parents, and by a wealth of literature on 'race' and education. This experience underlines further the importance of the school culture, which, it is argued, is dependent to a large extent on a headteacher who can listen to, understand and initiate strategies which address the students' problems. In this chapter, the experience of students is juxtaposed against the earlier statements of the headteacher discussed in chapter five.

In chapter eight parents present their views about why black students are over-represented in suspensions and expulsions and talk about their own experience of the education system.. They discuss also their own knowledge of school processes, experienced either personally or vicariously through their children.

Chapter nine summarises the main findings and discussions presented in the thesis. I conclude in this chapter, with recommendations which arise from these findings and discussions. I underline the importance of placing children at the centre of school processes and engaging not only with the age of the students in the school, but with the diversity and complexity of the school environment. These recommendations assume that the official structures instituted by the Education Reform Act will not only remain, but are likely to be expanded or re-inforced. The emphasis then is on schools taking the initiative to create their own cultures of learning which do not bow entirely to these constraints. I do also emphasise the importance of equipping teachers through teacher education and in-service training, to deal with the difficulties and complexities that are thrown up by changes. I argue for inclusion of issues of diversity into the teacher education programme as well as opportunities for teachers in schools to reflect on their own orientation towards children, towards children from diverse backgrounds, towards issues of discipline, and the curriculum and pedagogy.

6

CHAPTER TWO

The Size of the Problem

This study has been carried out at a time in British educational history when the suspension and expulsion of children from school is occurring in greater numbers than it has ever done before. The evidence of this is in the fact that a search of the literature has writers showing little interest, at least until the 1990s, in the *numbers* of children suspended or expelled from school. Most concerns around discipline in the literature focus on reasons for discipline, types of student behaviours, or how teachers deal with disciplinary problems which they face in the classroom (Galloway et al.1982; Lawrence J.1984; Hargreaves et al.1975). These studies of discipline in schools and school policies are also in large part both gender- and 'race'-blind.

The concern with numbers has occurred in the last decade at most. The first official survey was carried out by the Department for Education (DfE) from 1990 to 1992 as I discuss below. The lack of official interest in numbers is interesting because from as early as the 1960s, there has been a high level of concern in black communities about the numbers, and in particular the *over-representation* of black students amongst those suspended and expelled from school. The pamphlet by Bernard Coard (1971) is usually taken as a landmark in raising awareness of discriminatory disciplinary practices in the British educational system. Coard reported on the iniquitous system of placing children into disruptive units or 'sin-bins'. The vast majority of these children in the 1960s and 1970s were black.

Despite this long-standing concern of black communities there is little evidence of systematic and detailed research into the subject of suspension and expulsion of black students from school. Much of the discussion occurs in the context of wider studies which sought to explore the experience of black students generally without looking at the actual numbers of expulsions. Following on from Coard's findings, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) in 1981 and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in 1988 as well as a number of localised studies were carried out (for example, Nottingham County Council 1991), but most of these reported on the numbers without, however, also exploring the causes.

The issue of suspension and expulsion as a matter for officially commissioned research and public debate is therefore a new one, 'exclusions' not having occurred (at least for white children) in numbers sufficiently large to raise alarm. By the 1990s, the numbers of 'exclusions' appeared to be rising so rapidly that the government commissioned Canterbury and Christchurch College to investigate the matter (see Parsons et al, 1995). The study did not, however, deal with the factors of 'race' and ethnicity.

This apparent lack of official interest in the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions is one indicator of the way in which this issue has been racialised. The aim of this chapter is to present the statistics of 'exclusions' in general and 'exclusions' of black students in particular in order to highlight the extent of the problem and to underscore the racialised nature of 'exclusion' processes. This chapter thus forms a background to the findings of this study which examined the perspectives of teachers, students and parents on the issue of 'exclusion'. It also foregrounds the discussion about the kind of leadership and ethos which might be conducive or not to expulsion of students from school. I also introduce the argument carried throughout this thesis but particularly emphasised in the next chapter, that the racialisation of school suspensions and expulsions

8

is connected to wider social, political and economic processes of exclusion. The study thus fills a gap in that in addition to presenting the statistics, it also presents the perspectives of the various actors within the school context and it locates all this within a broader political economy of schools.

Defining the Terms

So far, I have shown a preference for the terms 'suspension' and 'expulsion' and have used the term 'exclusion' in inverted commas. This usage signals my belief that the terms 'suspension' and 'expulsion' more accurately describe the *technical* process of removing a child from a school whilst the term exclusion is more appropriate for describing the ongoing processes which deny certain children equal participation in schooling. In their statement to the government, The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 1993) recommended that the term expulsion be used in place of 'permanent exclusion' in order to underline the severity of this kind of punishment. In my view, the term 'exclusion' when used in the official sense of removing a child from school or from particular lessons as a form of punishment, masks the wider and more complex processes which deny children their rights. Booth et al (1997:338)) for example argue that,

> All schools respond to the diversity of their students with a mixture of including and excluding measures, in terms of who they admit to the school, how students are categorised, grouped and disciplined, how teaching and learning is organised, how resources are used, how students who experience difficulties are supported, and how curricula and teaching are developed so that such difficulties are reduced.

Fine (1991:26) contends that exclusion

> so thoroughly saturates public schooling, at least in low-income urban areas, that it requires no malevolence, no "bad guys", no conspiracy.

She describes forms of exclusion which have been the subject of much research on 'race' and ethnicity in Britain. Wright (1987) for example, wrote about the exclusion of black students from those bands, sets and streams which allow students to meet their educational potential. Black students were, instead, confined to those areas of the curriculum which destroyed motivation and guaranteed lower qualifications or failure (see also Oakes, 1985; Goodlad, 1984). Mac an Ghaill (1988), Gillborn (1990), Mirza (1992), Connolly (1995) amongst others, have all written about the assumptions and practices of teachers which exclude students on the basis of their class, gender or ethnicity. Fine (op.cit.) writing in an American context about the experiences of the students in the school she studied, states,

> Exclusion festered inside the 15 year old institution. A book was introduced by a white teacher to her African American student body with the following apology: "This book is not too good on blacks"- a book in which nobody looked familiar. Exclusion was being held back in grade because you missed classes January through March, nursing your grandmother back to health after coronary surgery. Exclusion was being absent for five days and never being missed or hearing that a diploma will bring you success, but knowing that your mother, uncle and brothers, all graduates, can't find work. (p. 24-25)

Exclusion is also having your voice silenced "whilst others are nurtured throughout their schooling" (Fine op.cit: 25). Wright et al (1998: 81) illustrate how some voices are nurtured and others silenced by teachers. Nicholas, a seventeen year old black student tells them,

10

There's a girl called Margaret, her mum and dad were governors at the school and everyone used to know that she was the cleverest girl in the school....One time the maths teacher asked Margaret, "Margaret, what's the answer? You're gonna get it right, but do you know this?" She [says] "No, why don't you ask Nicholas?" He just looked [at me] and goes, "No, it's alright" and he did it [the answer] on the board.

These are the kinds of exclusions which students talked about or which I personally observed in my study and which have led me to the conclusion that to use the term 'exclusion' to describe a very specific technical form of discipline is to overlook the complexity of school processes and to confuse the issues under discussion.. My aim therefore is to use the terms suspension and expulsion throughout this thesis, and confine the use of the term 'exclusion' to direct quotes, or in describing the work of others who use the term in the official way as defined by the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE).

Official Exclusions

The Education (No) 2 Act 1986 introduced the terms 'fixed', 'indefinite', and 'permanent' to describe the different types of official 'exclusion' that were to be used in schools. Before that, schools tended to refer to 'suspension' to describe a child's removal from the school for a temporary period and 'expulsion' to indicate that the child would be struck off the school register and was therefore not expected to return. The new terms were a way of standardising the many informal ways in which schools imposed discipline on their students. However, these concepts did not, and were not intended to question the basic rationale used in schools for disciplining children in this way. Although the Education

(1993) Act abolished the category of Indefinite exclusion, it was still being used at the time the research was conducted. It is included in the description of how these different categories operated.

Fixed Exclusion - When a pupil's date of return is determined in advance of the exclusion. The 1993 Act set a maximum number of 15 days for students to be suspended in any one term. This was extended in the Education Act of 1997 to 45 days.

Indefinite Exclusion - This is no longer allowed under the law. An indefinite exclusion allowed schools to remove a student without setting a date for his or her return. It was thus open to abuse in so far as schools kept a child on the school register and received the child's financial allocation even though the child was de facto not in school. It was abolished by the 1993 Education Act.

Permanent Exclusion - When a pupil is not allowed to return to the school and is removed from the school's register.

There are also unofficial forms of 'exclusion'. Two in particular are worth mentioning here. The first which appears to be used in primary schools more than in secondary schools is where a child is asked to stand in the corridor outside the classroom, or to go and sit in someone's office (usually the headteacher) whilst the lesson is in progress (CRE, 1997). The second is an informal method which has been nicknamed 'the backdoor' exclusion as it involves parents being 'persuaded' to remove their child from the school and in this way avoid a formal expulsion (Bourne et al, 1994; CRE, op.cit. 1997; SEU, 1998). The advantages are said to be that the student does not have on record that they have been expelled. However, as the headteacher of the receiving school usually requests a report from the previous school, it seems unlikely that the new school would not know of

12

the reason for the student's change of school. It was also found during my study, that students who were waiting for a statement of special needs lost that opportunity if they transferred voluntarily to another school as their transfer became the sole concern of the parents and not of the LEA. An OFSTED report (1996) indicated that there was no provision for funding of students who were 'voluntarily' removed from a school by the parents. In the sections that follow, I outline the extent of the problem of suspensions and expulsions as revealed by a number of individual and official studies and surveys. Some of the information will necessarily be repeated in different sections.

The Numbers.

In February, 1990, the Department for Education and Science (DES), in the light of the Elton Report (1990) 'Discipline in Schools' set up a national system for reporting the expulsion of pupils from schools. All maintained schools were asked *"To report all cases in which a pupil has been permanently excluded from a school by its headteacher"*, the purpose of which was *"to secure a national picture of the number of permanent exclusions, and the reasons for these" (DES, 1990 pp. 1/2).*

The figures collected over a two-year period, 1990-92, led the Department for Education (DFE) to conclude that, *"Too many children are excluded from school, either permanently or temporarily. There is evidence that some exclusions go on too long, and that the alternative educational provision made for many excluded pupils is subject to unacceptable variations in both quality and quantity"* (DFE, 1992, p.1). The DFE's survey of permanent exclusions also found that 13% of 'exclusions' were of primary school children; 12.5% (1990/1), and 15% (1991/2) of those excluded had statements of special needs; boys were four times more likely to be 'excluded' than girls; and whilst African-

Caribbean students constituted less than 2% of students in the school population, 8.5% of 'exclusions' were of African-Caribbean students.

The results of this survey led to changes in the regulations for 'exclusions', including the abolition of Indefinite Exclusion. Other surveys were conducted which presented a grim picture of 'exclusions' of children from school in England and Wales. These are outlined next.

In 1992, The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE), carried out a survey of 78 Local Education Authorities (LEA), in order to compare statistics of exclusions from two time periods: *"between passing the Education (No 2) Act 1986, and its implementation in the majority of schools (1986-87 to 1988-89), and the period from its implementation through to the delegation of school budgets as a result of the Education Reform Act, 1988 (1988-89 to 1990-91)"* (ACE, 1993, p.1).

They found that fixed term exclusions had been increasingly used in all schools but particularly in secondary schools. Indefinite exclusions were said to be used much less frequently than fixed and permanent exclusions, although the trend was upwards. The biggest rise had occurred in the use of permanent exclusion, and although the figures varied from LEA to LEA, the general trend was upwards, especially in the later period. In 1992, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) also conducted a survey of 26 LEAs which showed that both permanent and temporary exclusions had risen by 20% over a period of two years.

In 1993, OFSTED reported that, from an analysis of inspections carried out during 1990 and 1992, it was clear that exclusions were rising in both the secondary and especially the primary sector.

14

The most recent and up-to-date report was produced by the Government's Social Exclusions Unit (SEU, May 1998). The report provides a chart of 'exclusions' from 1990 and although implying that the figures for 1994-1997 may be accurate, there is little doubt that these figures would have been beset by the same problems as those collected in earlier years (see Imich, below). An indication that these figures may not represent the true numbers of students who were expelled during this time is the fact that they do not include those students who have been removed through 'informal' channels from schools.

The SEU survey shows that expulsions rose from about 11,000 in 1994/95 to approximately 13,500 in the 1996/97 academic year. In 1993, ACE had recorded that permanent exclusions for that year were 5996, which means that by 1994/95, the numbers had almost doubled, and by 1996/97, they had almost trebled. Summarising the rates of 'exclusion' for different categories of students, the SEU report stated the following:

Most excluded pupils are white, male young teenagers. But a number of groups are disproportionately likely to be excluded:

- Children with special needs are six times more likely than others to be.

- African-Caribbean children are more than six times more likely; and

- children in care are ten times more likely. (section 2.4, p.8-9)

The report also stated that *"83% of excluded pupils are boys. 80% are between 12 and 15, and half are 14 or 15. However, exclusions at primary ages are rising fast -18% in 1995 -96".*(section 2.5, p.9)

In relation to regional variation, it was found that *'exclusions tended to be higher in areas of social deprivation, especially inner and outer London.* (section 2.6, p.9)

It is difficult, as Imich (1994) states, to get a clear picture of 'exclusions'. Some figures represent permanent 'exclusions', others represent all types of 'exclusion' put together. Some LEAs are reluctant to give out figures in case this leads to schools 'opting out' (Blythe and Milner (1994). Ethnic categorisations also differ from school to school or from LEA to LEA. In some schools, for example, 'black' includes students of dual white and black parentage, whilst in others this group is categorised separately as 'mixed race'. In many schools, 'Asian' is used as one homogenous term, making it difficult to separate the figures for the different South Asian groups. In the OFSTED (1996) study, it was found that where South Asian students were categorised according to their different groups, 'exclusions' of Pakistani students were said to be rising. The lack of consistency therefore makes it difficult to get an accurate idea of what is really going on. There is nevertheless consensus that all categories of 'exclusions' continued to rise between 1986 and 1996. What seems also clear is that because of the difficulties of standardising methods of collection, official statistics may be grossly under-representing the real figures. From her study of 'exclusions', Stirling (1992) assessed that what we know may in fact only be the 'tip of the iceberg' as the DFE reports may only reflect the figures that schools and local authorities are willing to provide.

Gender

According to the DFE's 1992 survey of permanent exclusions, boys were four times more likely to be 'excluded' than girls. This was confirmed in the study carried out by Parsons et al. (1995) and by a study carried out by OFSTED (1996). However, Hayden (1997) found that 90% of all exclusions in the primary schools were of boys (see also the Social

16

Exclusion Unit's report above). The OFSTED study noted also that black girls were over-represented in relation to all girls, confirming Gillborn's contention that, *"Such findings suggest that while gender is an important factor, black students (of both sexes) suffer disproportionate levels of exclusion from school"*. Gillborn adds that, *"the numbers (of African Caribbean girls) are less but the relative disadvantage is at least as great as for their brothers"* (Gillborn, 1995b, p.6). A Wolverhampton study also concluded that, *"Afro-Caribbean children in primary schools and Afro-Caribbean girls in secondary are also adversely and disproportionately affected by exclusions"*. (Jelic, 1991, p.13).

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The 1992 DFE report suggested that 12.5% (1990/1), and 15% (1991/2) of those excluded had statements of special needs. Hayden (1997) found that nearly 43% of excluded primary school students were either being assessed or already had statements of special needs, the majority being deemed to have 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD). However, a CRE study quotes several studies which indicate difficulties in obtaining a clear picture of the relationship between 'special needs' and exclusion. One difficulty has to do with the problem of identifying students who have, according to the terms and categories used in schools, 'special educational needs' (Osler and Hill, 1999). Osler (1997), for the CRE, cites Charlton and David (1993) as suggesting that some students whose 'special needs' are not recognised may be excluded but that they would not show up in the statistics as having SEN. Cooper et al (1991) found evidence that black students are more likely to be categorised as having EBD than 'learning difficulties'. The OFSTED (1996) study confirmed that excluded black students presented a very different 'needs' profile from their white counterparts. This is discussed further in the next section.

The Racial/Ethnic Dimension

The 1992 DFE survey and the SEU (1998) survey were the only national surveys which contained an ethnic breakdown of suspensions and expulsions. The 1992 survey found that 8.5% of 'exclusions' were of African-Caribbean students who constitute less than 2% of the school population. Osler (1997:23), quoting the DfEE figures for 1994/5, states that *"Although 'black Caribbean' pupils account for only 1.1% of the school population they form 7.3% of those permanently excluded - they are about seven times more likely to be excluded than white pupils"*. Interestingly, the largest (DFE) survey of exclusions carried out by Parsons at al.(1995), contained no discussion of ethnicity at all. The Social Exclusion Unit's (1998) survey declared that *"16 per cent of permanently excluded children are of ethnic minority origin; and nearly half of those are African-Caribbean. Yet African-Caribbean children make up only a little over 1 per cent of the school population"* (p.11). It is not, however, clear from the SEU's figures whether children of both black and white parentage ('mixed race') are included in the figures for 'African-Caribbean' children. Some schools have a separate category for these children whereas others include them in a broader category of 'black'. It is possible also that these dual heritage children may be categorised by their parents as 'Other', complicating the statistics further. It is also unclear whether African-Caribbean includes African children. The real picture then may even be more grim than the latest official figures show.

There have been several local and regional studies over the years which reveal an unchanging pattern in relation to the over-representation of black children in disciplinary measures in schools. In 1988, the Runnymede Trust reported that in the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), children of African-Caribbean origin constituted 14% of students but represented 30% of suspensions and expulsions. In 1989, a study by Nottinghamshire County Council revealed that there were 6.7% of black students in secondary schools in the County, but that black students made up 24.8 % of those excluded

18

(Nottinghamshire County Council, 1991). A statistical study of 'exclusions' from Wolverhampton schools between 1986 and 1990 carried out by the Wolverhampton Race Equality Council stated *that "Afro-Caribbean pupils are massively over-represented in the exclusion figures by nearly 100% which effectively means that for every Afro-Caribbean child in school the chance of being excluded is almost twice that of any other child* (Jelic,op.cit.p.5). A CRE study of Midlands schools found that African-Caribbean students formed 28% of excluded students but just 8% of the school age population (Osler, 1997; see also Mayet 1992). Similarly in Lewisham, black students were said to constitute 20% of the school population but 50% of 'exclusions' (Lewisham Race Equality Council, 1993). The study carried out by Carol Hayden (1997), showed that over half (52%) of all primary school 'exclusions' in one LEA were from black and minority ethnic groups, whereas they made up less than a third (29.7%) of the primary school population in that LEA. She also stated that primary school African-Caribbean children were excluded *"to the tune of nearly four times their number in the population" (p.*42). She adds that when one considers the fact that the majority (90%) of these children are boys, *"their over-representation in exclusion statistics is really between seven and eight times their number in the school population"* (p.42).

In an analysis of data from the London Borough of Croydon covering a five year period (Gillborn, 1995b) found that,

> Black students were over-represented in every one of the five years for which data are available.
>
> In 1993/94 black primary school students were more than six times as likely to be excluded than would be predicted, all things being equal. Their counterparts in secondary school were excluded more than three times the predicted level. (p.8)

From this study, Gillborn concluded that,

> The over-representation of black students is significant, consistent, and possibly
>
> increasing. In practice, exclusion from school is operating in a racialised and racist
>
> manner, exclusion disproportionately affects black youth and denies even basic
>
> access to education. (1995b:8)

Reasons for Exclusion

The main reasons for exclusions in general were said by the DFE and confirmed by the

NUT survey, to be for physical aggression against other students (physical aggression

against teachers and other school staff was said to be rare); and disobedience (namely,

refusing to obey instructions, verbal abuse or insolence to teachers) (see also Osler and

Hill, 1999). The study carried out by Osler and Hill showed that in Birmingham, 'African-

Caribbean' and 'Asian' students were more likely than white students to be 'excluded' for

violence or fighting. As both black and Asian students are involved, this seems to point to

the possibility (raised by both the CRE and The Runnymede Trust) of racial harassment

and abuse playing a part in the experiences of 'exclusion' of these students. This is

especially so as we are talking about students of all ages, ethnic and class backgrounds,

and from different parts of the country and with as much diversity within as between

groups. The one factor that is likely to unite such diverse groups and to lead to their

greater involvement in violence (assuming that the categorisation of 'violence' was

objectively done and all such offences committed by white students were also collated)

would be the need to defend themselves against racism (CRE, 1992).

Hayden's conclusion to the high levels of suspensions and expulsions is that many, and

perhaps the majority of primary school children are 'needy' rather than 'naughty'. By this

she means that the childrens' family backgrounds were a source of need. This contrasts

with a study carried out by OFSTED (1996) which found a clear difference between excluded black students and their counterparts from other ethnic groups. The report states

> The case histories of most of the Caribbean children differed markedly from those of others studied for this survey. For example, most of them were of average or above average ability but had been assessed by the schools as underachieving. Although many of them had been excluded many times, their disruptive behaviour did not usually date from early in their school career, nor was it so obviously associated with deep-seated trauma as with many white children.(OFSTED, 1996, p.11)

The OFSTED study does not therefore support the view that black children in the primary schools were in general either 'needy' or 'naughty'. The study was of secondary schools and implies that these students became disruptive when they reached secondary school and that a cause of their disruptive behaviour may have been that they were not being stretched and were therefore 'underachieving'. It is also unclear what Hayden means when she says that, 'The inclusion of race as one of the factors in these sets of variables (namely class and gender) is emotive' (p.114). She does not say for whom is it emotive and why it should be any more emotive than any other variable. She is of course correct to state that there are other variables present (besides 'race') in cases where black children are 'excluded' from school, variables which are shared in common with white children who are 'excluded'. There is, however, a danger of either ignoring or denying the issue of 'race' as a variable because it does not affect white children negatively, and of concluding that all children are affected 'the same'.

The Impact of 'Exclusions'

The survey carried out by the DFE between 1990 and 1992 indicated that less than 30% of students who had been excluded permanently from school went back to mainstream education. Another survey carried out in 1993/94 by Canterbury Christchurch College and commissioned by the DFE, stated that *"The return to mainstream school appears to be accomplished for 27% of primary pupils but for only 15% of secondary pupils. This understates the numbers considerably (possibly by as much as 25%)"* (Parsons et al. 1995, para. 5.3). The impact of an expulsion on a child and on the child's family is therefore considerable (Cohen et al, 1994). It can, for those who never return to mainstream education, not only reduce their participation 'in the cultures, curricula and communities of local mainstream schools' (Booth et al., op.cit:337), but it can seriously affect their future life chances, especially as the peak age of expulsion in the secondary sector is 15 years (Parsons et al, op.cit). Another effect on children, and in particular adolescents, being out of school is their vulnerability to involvement in criminal behaviour (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO, 1998) or becoming targets of police harassment (Blair, 1994a).

The Law

According to the Education (No 2) 1986 Act, only the headteacher can exclude a student. Parents must be informed of the reasons for the exclusion and be advised that they may make representation about the exclusion to the governing body and the LEA. However, exclusion, and expulsion in particular should be seen as a last resort. According to the DFE, *"exclusion of a pupil constitutes the most stringent response available to schools when faced with a serious breach of their disciplinary code"* (DFE, 1992). The law lays down the various responsibilities of the headteacher, the school governing body, and the LEA. The main role of the governing body, for example, is to inform the LEA of the

22

'exclusion' and also to decide whether to support the head's decision to 'exclude' or to direct the head to re-instate the student. Parents are able to appeal to the LEA against the governing body's decision to exclude and the LEA can order the school to re-instate the student after an appeal hearing and consideration of the case presented by the governing body and the parents.

State Action on Exclusions

In 1992, the DFE put out a discussion paper on exclusions and requested responses which would help to inform changes in the law. A number of official organisations such as the Commission for Racial Equality, the Runnymede Trust, the Elton Committee, OFSTED and various individuals, sent in their comments. Both the CRE and the Runnymede Trust stressed the aspect of race and ethnicity, the CRE suggesting that ethnic monitoring be extended to fixed term exclusions as well as to the system of placing children in corridors and 'withdrawal rooms', a form of punishment which affects so many primary school children from minority ethnic communities . The CRE provided evidence from its own study conducted in 1980 which showed that discipline was disproportionately applied to minority group students and in particular to boys of African-Caribbean origin. They further suggested that all schools should

> be required to add race equality objectives to their school development plans, and take account of the CRE's 'Code of Practice for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Education' (and) in doing so, all schools should be required to have a clear published policy on dealing with racial harassment as part of a wider public policy on harassment (1992)

The recommendation from OFSTED (1993) was that there was a case

for using the term 'expulsion' in place of 'permanent exclusion' in order to underline the severity of this sanction in the minds of all those involved in the decision – making (p.1).

They also suggested that *"a carefully planned scheme of in-service training would help teachers to enhance their skills in classroom management"* (p.3).

There was clear recognition here that schools themselves as institutions needed to carry some of the responsibility for the rise in 'exclusions' of students. The emphasis from those who sent in their recommendations was on reducing the numbers of 'exclusions' as well as on making the system fairer.

In 1994, the response of the DfE to these recommendations was to produce a series of circulars dealing with 'Pupils with Problems'. The presentation of the issues in this way which focused on the pupil and not on the institutions themselves set the very terms of the debate, and of any action to be taken. The circulars, which became known as 'The Six Pack', provided guidance to headteachers about their responsibilities in relation to provision for certain categories of students such as 'Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties', 'Sick children', 'Children being looked after by the Local Authorities', 'Children who are out of School', and on Exclusions. The latter category, contained in Circular 10/94, gave guidance on the two remaining legal categories of exclusions, namely, Fixed-term and Permanent exclusions.

Circular 10/94 on Exclusions stated clearly that, *"Exclusion should be used sparingly in response to serious breaches of school law or policy"* (p.3). It went on to claim that

"There is some evidence that exclusion rates differ considerably between schools, even where the population is of similar socio-economic background" (p.6).

The Circular then lists those behaviours or circumstances for which an exclusion is not appropriate, such as excluding students who are unable to comply with school rules for reason of religion or culture. However, the definition of terms like 'disruption' which defined the behaviour for which a student could be suspended or expelled, were left to the discretion of the schools whilst the nature of an excludable offence, in particular an offence for which a student would be expelled, was left to the discretion of headteachers. Also, despite the various entreaties from groups such as the CRE and the Runnymede Trust, there is only one short paragraph on minority ethnic groups. Paragraph 32, p.13 states,

> There is continuing evidence, most recently in the OFSTED report, 'Education for Disaffected Pupils (1993), that pupils of African/African-Caribbean origin, especially boys, are disproportionately excluded. Headteachers need to take particular care that they apply disciplinary procedures objectively and consistently across all cultural groups. Failure to do so could constitute unlawful racial discrimination under the Race Relations Act 1976. The school ethos and style should confer equal value on all cultures and avoid stereotypes.

The focus of Circular 10/94 on the behaviour of students, and the assumption that schools are justified in taking action against a child, relies on the idea of the school as operating in isolation from its social and political context, on the school's 'innocence' in relation to the behaviour of its students, and on the notion that if a child is 'excluded', she or he must be guilty of something. Parsons (1995, p.16) wrote,

25

Excluded pupils are defined as culprits rather than victims. The Pupils with Problems circulars are explicitly locating the problem with the young individuals. A press release from Gillian Shepherd refers to 'disruptive pupils', 'unacceptable for a minority of pupils to undermine....', 'before problems run out of control' and 'ill-behaved pupils' (DfEE, 1995a). The conventional sense of this view is clear and Lane's (1990) 'The Impossible Child' unintentionally gives it further credence. However, it obscures the foundations of the problem and narrows our options for dealing with it. Currently the tendency is to 'reject the rejector' and take a punitive line towards the excludee who is not seen as a deserving case - particularly if he is 15 or 16 (and it usually is 'he').

The behaviour of students is therefore not seen by the DfEE as symptomatic of deeper structural problems. This applies in particular, for the purposes of this thesis, to the assumptions about the behaviour of black students. Even Parson's quotation above assumes that the child who is excluded from school has 'rejected' school. Black students do not necessarily reject school (see OFSTED, 1996, and SEU, 1998), despite the existence of what has been seen by many, including this study, to be processes which cause alienation and disaffection amongst black students (Gillborn, 1990; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Wright, 1987).

In relation to the assumptions which informed the 10/94 guidelines, the appeal to headteachers to be 'reasonable' [meaning, according to Bramhall (1995,p.22) *consider all the factors, ignore irrelevant factors, don't be perverse*], in their use of 'exclusion' as a disciplinary measure, and the absence of *legal* measures to ensure stronger accountability of headteachers, points either to an unwillingness to challenge headteachers directly, or to an assumption that the very fact of being a headteacher should make it possible to **be** reasonable. It assumes that the deployment of the term alone is enough to produce the

26

many of the recommendations made to the DfE by the different organisations were taken into account in drawing up Circular 10/94, on the question of racism, the DfE remained silent. In their suggestions for the 1992 Discussion Paper, the CRE summarised some of the Elton Report's recommendations for developing good behaviour with particular reference to race and ethnicity. These included that *"LEAs and governing bodies should regard racial harassment of pupils or colleagues as a disciplinary offence"*. The CRE added that they had

> considerable evidence to suggest that various forms of racial harassment, ranging from consistent name-calling, to serious assault, may sometimes give rise to retaliatory behaviour that results in exclusion (p.4)

and recommended that schools record whether racial harassment was reported as being a cause of a particular incident.

The actual guidelines from the DfE were however, no more than an appeal to 'reasonableness'.. Although the SEU's (1998) report stated that

> The Government will ensure that equal opportunities issues, as well as behaviour management, are adequately incorporated in the requirements for initial teacher training, and in-service training (Recommendation 13, p.30),

Nothing was said about racism or racial harassment. This has since been corrected in a more recent document (DfEE Circular 10/99) in which the issue of black student exclusion is addressed more directly. In this document, suggestions made for addressing the problem are stated thus:

Rates of exclusion among Black-Caribbean pupils, especially boys, are significantly higher than those of other pupils. Governing bodies and head teachers should monitor the use of sanction against pupils of ethnic minority background and reassure themselves that the school's behaviour policy against racial prejudice and harassment is being fully enforced. Where there is unjustified over-representation of Black Caribbean pupils, a strategy should be implemented to address this. Staff need to take particular care if there is a possibility that an incident was provoked by racial harassment. Teachers also need to ensure that they avoid any risk of stereotyping and that they are alert to cultural differences in manner and demeanour. Good connections between schools and community groups can be helpful in this process (DfEE, p. 13).

The Recommendations in general mark a significant step forward in attempts to prevent disaffection and exclusion amongst all categories of students. They finally recognise the role of teachers in reducing the levels of suspensions and expulsion including acknowledging the problem of stereotyping of minority ethnic group students by teachers as the above quotation shows. They also outline the responsibilities of schools and LEAs and provide useful suggestions with regard to different ways of working with students, their parents and their communities. Schools are also exhorted to "record all racial incidents, and parents and governors should be informed of such incidents and action taken to deal with them" (p.25), an issue which was not dealt with in previous government guidelines.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the statistical studies which reveal the size of the problem of school suspensions and expulsions. The various studies cited show a sharp rise in the numbers of students who have been either temporarily or permanently removed from school during the last decade. I point out that despite this recent interest on the part of government and other official bodies in the issue of 'exclusion', it is an issue that has, since the late sixties and early seventies, been of particular concern to black communities. Black students have, since this time, been over-represented amongst those suspended and expelled from school. Government action has not, until very recently, been aimed at stemming this trend. Rather, the emphasis has been on managing 'deviants' and not on addressing the context or causes of student behaviour. For example, no action was taken in relation to the CRE's recommendation that something be done about racial harassment in schools until the publication of Circular 10/99. It seems to me that this lack of action is part of a wider process of exclusion of subordinate groups. This point is discussed further in the next chapter in which I look at the role of discourse in the production and representation of social groups and the consequences for these groups of such representation. I also discuss various themes related to why 'race' appears to have such a strong influence on teachers' perspectives and pedagogical practices, why this seems to apply in such powerful ways to black male youth, and how this has been seen to play an important if not central role in the level of suspension and expulsion of black students. I look at the conditions of teachers' work which, it is argued, contributes to the rise in suspensions and expulsions, and finally I explore the relationship between social exclusion, expulsion from school and the criminal justice system.

CHAPTER THREE

Schools, National Economies and the Racialised Punishment Industry

In the last chapter, I alluded to the scarcity of qualitative literature on the suspension and expulsion of children from school . The subject, as I suggested, has only recently stimulated the interest of government and official bodies such as the NUT and OFSTED. Although the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions has been of long-standing concern to black communities, the literature to draw on in relation to this specific issue is sparse. However, there is quite a large literature in the USA which discusses the problem of early student drop-out from school. This literature is relevant for providing some of the theoretical background to this subject especially in relation to secondary school. Early student drop-out refers to students who, for one reason or another, are not able to continue their education in a mainstream school. Students who 'drop out' have not necessarily been expelled, indeed for the older student aged sixteen to eighteen the decision to leave school is treated as a 'voluntary' choice, though it seems that schools do little to try to encourage students to stay on in school and the process is sometimes tantamount to 'expelling' them from school (Fine, 1991). Minority ethnic group students (namely African-American and Hispanic students) are vastly over-represented amongst those who drop out. These students are also over-represented amongst suspensions and expulsions (Edelman, 1994), though it seems that the figures for suspensions and expulsions are often buried in the figures for early school drop-outs (Fine, 1991 op.cit.). 'Exclusions' in Britain now occur in sufficient numbers to make it an issue, not just of interest to researchers, but of alarm to the general public. In Britain, children as young as nursery age have been expelled from their schools (Young, 1991; Berliner, 1992), a phenomenon which was viewed with some horror by the fourteen academics and

teachers with whom I spoke in the USA. This was something which none of them had heard about or witnessed in America.

My aim in this chapter is to discuss some of the theories about the wider role of the school in shaping the futures of students in general. My theoretical framework is unequivocally anti-exclusion in both its wider sense and in the sense of suspension and expulsion. I therefore explore the human rights implications of 'exclusion', especially the long-term effects of expulsion from school. I did not, in carrying out this study, seek to find out whether expelling children was or was not necessary. I sought instead to find out the ideological reasons for expelling children, with particular reference to black secondary school students. I was interested also in exploring the extent to which schools took seriously the DfEE recommendation that children be expelled only 'as a last resort' (DfE, 1993).

The literature I discuss in this chapter offers an insight into the wider social processes of exclusion which are replicated in schools, and to the wider ideological and economic underpinnings of exclusion.

I begin by exploring the question of why schools take the seemingly contradictory position in which some children are seen as 'a problem someone else should have to deal with' (Haberman, 1995) and relate this question to the specific education of black children. I examine the manner in which children in general are represented in public discourses today, but argue that the racial dimension of exclusion can only be understood within its historical context. I discuss briefly, the work of some of the phenomenological and symbolic interactionist researchers who have focused on the micro-politics of schooling and highlighted forms of inequality by exploring the day to day practices and interactions of teachers and students. These studies have been invaluable in giving us a picture of the

kinds of relationships which produce conflict and which lay the foundations for suspension and expulsion of students, especially black students. I then discuss the Marxist and neo-Marxist theories that posit a relationship between the micro-politics of the school and the macro-politics of society. I discuss in particular the work of the critical theorists working from within a neo-Marxist paradigm, and from this perspective, explore the possibility of a connection between schools, exclusion and the economics of the state. I explore this theme by highlighting the connection between suspension and expulsion and the criminal justice system. I link this to the human rights implications of the prison industrial complex which, in the USA is increasingly being regarded as an alternative to foreign markets in the imagined urgency to find cheaper and more profitable means of production in over-industrialised countries.

Discipline, Hegemony and the 'Punishment Industry'

Wolpe (1988:19), following Foucault, states that

> disciplinary control is at the very nub of school organisation and creates the
> conditions in which the pedagogic purposes of the school may be realised.

According to Foucault (1979), the point of discipline in the school is to 'normalise', to produce "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies" (p.138). Punishment is an important mechanism in this process. But if the art of punishing is to be supported and effective, it must, Foucault argues, rest on a whole 'technology of representation'. What 'technologies of representation' surround us which allow schools to either disrupt or deprive so many thousands of children of an education, thereby not only removing their human rights as enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Osler and Starkey, 1996) but also quite possibly seriously affecting their chances in life? In the

32

discussion that follows, I illustrate some of the ways in which public consensus around particular issues is reached, in this case over the question of school 'exclusion'. I focus in particular on the role of the media, politicians and the teacher unions in helping to build such consensus.

Schools and Consensus Building

> A dean explained: These kids need to be out . It's unfair to the rest. My job is like a pilot on a hijacked plane. My job is to throw the hijacker overboard" (Fine, 1991, p.50)

From her study of high school drop outs in the United States, Fine (op.cit) concluded that the 70% drop out of students who were in their final year in the school she studied was not the result of a conspiracy on the part of the teachers and the school administrators. She states,

> Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and aides need only operate as dictated by the state, by history, by tradition, and by the demands of 'efficiency'. As long as they do, often with good intentions and with what they presume to be in the best interests of students, we will continue to witness unequal educational outcomes that correspond, by no means arbitrarily, to the contours of social class, race/ethnicity, gender and disability (p.26).

What is it, however, which makes teachers and others operate according to the dictates of the state, of history, tradition and 'efficiency' even though this is likely to produce the inequality that teachers claim to work against? The description used by the dean (above) of the 'deviant' (Becker, 1963) as a 'hijacker' provides an important clue. Becker states

that 'deviance' is a socially attributed label whose application depends on context and on the values of the particular group that defines the behaviour. The 'hijacker' in British schools today is the student who obstructs teachers' attempts to fulfil the new set of criteria as established by the 1988 Education Reform Act, and the demands of the National Curriculum. The infraction of some school rules now not only carries a higher penalty (expulsion) but requires language that justifies the imposition of a tougher penalty. It is language that attempts to produce consensus on the sanction that is applied. The student who breaks a rule is now like a hijacker, someone who threatens the safety of others and seeks to destroy their chance to acquire an education and therefore 'get to their destination'. This kind of language appeals to new understandings of what education is about, the parameters of which are set by the state, and which teachers are obliged to follow.

The media has played an important role in producing an image of children who are suspended and expelled from school as 'hijackers' and who therefore do not conform to normative understandings of what a child should be. Such children, sometimes no older than nine or ten years old are presented as 'yobs' (The Times, 25 October, 1994; Daily Mail, 28 August, 1996) and 'thugs' (Daily Mirror, 23 April, 1996), as 'horrors' and 'louts' (The Sun, 28 August, 1996) and images of *'four year olds'* who bite and kick and punch and who *'the teacher is unable to control'* (The Times, February 15, 1991) violate the public's sense of childhood innocence. Headlines such as 'Is this the worst child in Britain?' (Guardian, 23 April, 1996) help to mould public thinking into the view that society is faced with a new breed of child whose roots lie in the 'evil' that was manifested by the 'freaks of nature' (Daily Mirror, 25 November, 1993), meaning the eleven-year-old children who killed the two-year-old James Bulger.

34

The authoritative and apparently neutral voice of the so-called 'quality' newspapers, by accepting these designations, serve to re-inforce these images. An Independent newspaper report, for example, saw nothing wrong with a headteacher who admitted that she behaved 'like an ogre' and 'terrified' a four-year-old child in order to teach her to conform (Independent, June 15, 1995). The headteacher declared that she, 'was an only child *who had never been to playgroup or had any kind of preschool experience and she had not learned to share'*. She described the behaviour of the child's mother as *"effing and blinding and threatening"*, and felt able to tell the mother that she was not surprised that the child was not able to control her temper, *"if this was the behaviour she saw at home"*, (my emphasis). The seemingly neutral presentation of this event and the absence of any sign of disapproval on the part of the reporter would seem to indicate that not only was she in agreement with the headteacher, but she was expecting us, the middle class readers of the Independent newspaper, to identify instinctively with Jan Paul the headteacher, against the mother whom we know, *instinctively* to be working class. That we might instead be horrified that a headteacher should find it necessary to 'terrorise' a four year old child is inconceivable in a context where 'they' pose such a threat to the education and well being of 'our' children.

Politicians too, like Gillian Shepherd who, through the competitive electoral rhetorics about being 'tough on crime', and who talk out of context (see Parsons, 1995) about 'troublesome pupils', add to public concerns about a degenerating social fabric. The concern to blame parents for this 'new breed of deviant' reverberates in the discourses of 'exclusion' in schools. This process of blaming the parents is by no means new, nor is it confined to Britain (see Haberman, op.cit., and Fine, op.cit. re the USA). The Scarman Report (1981) which came out after the urban disturbances of the 1980's, was quick to point to parental neglect as a causal factor in the 'moral decadence' of children, whilst the concerns of working class young people (black and white) increasingly finding themselves

pushed further and further onto the margins of mainstream society were largely overshadowed (Solomos,1988). The single parent in particular (usually the mother) is presented in official discourses as the 'demon parent' and invoked to explain many of the ills of society (Ball, 1987). The single parent and the unemployed are represented in such discourses as scroungers and juxtaposed against the rest of 'us' who are hard-working , tax-paying and therefore responsible citizens. They come to symbolise, not the caring society cushioning the most vulnerable, but the 'nanny state' allowing the rest of 'us' to be exploited by 'them'. Populist discourses on single parents are used to re-inforce the notion that it is the dysfunctional family which victimises students who become morally and socially uncontrollable and therefore undeserving of education.

This theme is evident in statements which come from the teaching unions and which have a powerful influence on the public perception of students. For example, Nigel de Gruchy, the general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) presented an image of a beleaguered profession at war with a rising tide of violence in schools. He stated that

> There is an emerging second generation of violent disrupters whose parents are at
> the root of the problem" (Independent, October 11, 1996).

In another example, the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) called 'for the withdrawal of child benefit from parents who miss Parents' Evenings or fail to ensure that their children attend school' (Searle, 1997:15). Thus, the problem of suspensions and expulsions is defined as a failure of parenting and elides the failure of schools and of the political re-structuring of the education system (Apple, 1990; Ball, 1987; Fine, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

36

These examples highlight some of the ways in which the media, the teaching unions and the politicians all help to mobilise a view of children which 'normalises' public belief in a new generation of 'unchildlike' children who require greater surveillance and greater control for the survival of the society. Through these 'truths' about children both teachers and public appear to lose the instinct for understanding that when a four year old child behaves in a particular way, he or she may be trying to communicate a need which cannot be verbally articulated. Studies which contend that a child's future path is set from an early age help to confirm 'our' inability to help 'such' children and influence the disciplinary decisions taken by headteachers in some schools, as I discuss in chapter 4 below. This popular determinist view of children seems therefore to inhibit the ability of adults to think creatively about the needs of little children. As Currie (1998:101) states,

By itself, the fact that a child's early problems often persist into adolescence may tell us only that no one has seriously tried to deal with them.

Through the 'cultural technologies' of media, unions and politicians, a consensus is able to be built around the disciplinary actions of schools. Mass expulsion of children from school becomes a symbol of 'youth in crisis' and of a general moral degeneration in society which justifies teachers' refusal to teach the 'troublemakers' (Searle, op.cit.). The notion that if the conditions of teachers' lives and work have been made difficult and teachers feel de-skilled and disempowered then this must of necessity impact on students' experiences of school, is conveniently buried under the new priorities of the 'punishment culture'.

In the next part I discuss how 'technologies of representation' have been applied to the control of black people with particular reference to black youth, and how these images in turn are harnessed within schools to 'feed' the exclusion process. I argue that 'normality' in British schools is also a racialised normality.

37

'Race' and Ethnicity in Schools

A number of studies have attempted to explain the disadvantaged position of black students in the education system in both Britain and the United States of America. Researchers have sought explanations for lower performance rates of black students in schools and answers have included lower IQ (Herrnstein and Murray, 1994; Eysenck, 1971; Jensen, 1969), differences of culture (Ogbu, 1978; Driver, 1977), low self esteem (Milner, 1980), poorer behaviour of black students (Foster, 1990; Hurrell, 1995), resistant youth and peer cultures (Sewell, 1997; Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 1988) and the experience of racism and discrimination amongst teachers and fellow students (Rampton Report 1981; Swann Report, 1985; Eggleston et al; 1987; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Brandt, 1990; Wright, 1987, 1992 a/b; Gillborn 1990 and 1995a; Mirza, 1992; Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Troyna 1993; Gillborn and Gipps 1996).

The issue of suspension and expulsion as a matter of interest for researchers and public debate is a new one, although it has, as I have already indicated, always been on the agenda for black communities. In discussions of this problem over the years, it was clear to black communities the extent to which the 'image' of the black child had influenced teachers and how this impacted on black students. An undated submission by the Camden Community Relations Council (CCRC), (now the Camden Race Equality Council) to the Rampton Committee whose report was made public in 1981, stated the following:

> Another practice that is the cause of anxiety and resentment to many West Indian parents and children is that of suspension. It is widely believed that suspension is a device which is too readily used in many schools as a means of dealing with a child who has been labelled "difficult" or "disruptive" and that West Indian children are

disproportionately represented amongst those to whom the measure is applied. In our view, the hasty categorisation of children as "difficult" or " disruptive" often calls in question the capacity of the school staff to understand and provide for the needs of those children. We ask the Rampton Committee to investigate this matter, and to call for an enquiry into the different methods of suspending children used by different authorities and into the "unofficial" suspensions which occur. The enquiry should elicit information about the numbers of children of different ethnic groups who are suspended. (Para. 8.8)

In 1980, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), following the findings by Bernard Coard (1971) which showed that black children were disproportionately represented in 'disruptive units' or 'sin-bins', conducted its own survey of 'disruptive units'. They found that there was an over-representation of minority ethnic group children in all but one of the ILEA divisions (Issues in Education, 1981). A study in a West Midlands local authority in 1981 found that teachers' explanations for the disproportionate numbers of minority ethnic group children in 'disruptive units' included a range of pathological explanations such as that black children were 'quick to fly off the handle', or that they were 'more difficult to handle' or that 'West Indian children are lively (sic) and their liveliness gets them into trouble because teachers fear liveliness and schools like silence' (Educational Issues,1981:11). The concentration of so many black children in these units and their designation as emotionally and behaviourally difficult at this time set the tone for future relations between teachers and black students and clearly signalled black children as a problem for teachers and for the education system.

The suspension and expulsion of black children from school remained a constant theme at conferences and meetings organised by black communities and in black teachers' associations. The nature of the problem and the level of concern amongst black

communities has, moreover, not abated. To talk about the issue of suspension and expulsion in school as if it were a recent 'crisis' therefore, as so many media reports have done, is to de-racialise the discussion and to distort the facts as they affect a significant number of British students. At least 15 years have passed since the submission by CCRC was made, and twenty-seven years since Coard produced his findings. Unlike crises which pass, there seems little reason to believe that any strategies taken to deal with the problem of students who are deprived of school will 'cure' the problem of routine exclusion of black and minority children from equal participation in mainstream education. This is a problem which requires a greater understanding of the historical processes which have not only traditionally, but continue to affect the education of black and other minority children in school.

The issue of suspension and expulsion has been seen by writers and researchers in the field of 'race' and education, as part of the wider process of exclusion of black children and not as a separate and aberrant feature of the 1988 Education Act. Several writers, for example, have argued that black students in both primary and secondary phases of education are disproportionately criticised and apprehended by teachers (Connolly, 1995; Wright, 1992 a/b; Gillborn, 1995a/b; 1990; Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Tizard et al. 1988; Mortimore et al. 1988; Eggleston et al. 1987; Green, 1982, cited in Troyna, B. 1993).

The relationship between white teachers and black students seems, according to Gillborn (1990), to be largely marked by antagonism which is frequently generated by teachers. Writing about his study of City College Gillborn stated that,

> perhaps even more significant than the frequency of criticism and controlling statements which Afro-Caribbean pupils received, was the fact that they were often

singled out for criticism even though several pupils of different ethnic origins were engaged in the same behaviour.....In sum, Afro-Caribbean pupils were not only criticised more often than their white peers, but the same behaviour in a white pupil might not bring about criticism at all.

Gillborn demonstrated the manner in which this school applied the rules differently to different groups of students. He divided the rules of the school into those which were 'routine' or commonly understood, and those which were 'interpretive'. The interpretive rules are those which were not clearly defined but 'related to less explicit expectations of acceptable behaviour'. He wrote

> In comparison to white and Asian pupils therefore, a greater proportion of detentions given to Afro-Caribbean pupils appear to have been based upon offences whose identification rested primarily in the *teacher's interpretation* (my emphasis) of pupil attitude or intention (p.40).

Given this situation it is perhaps unsurprising that so many studies have pointed to conflict between teachers and black students, and to this being a major cause leading up to suspensions and expulsions (Wright et al., 1998; Sewell, 1997; Stirling, 1992). Wright, (1987) discussing her own study of the experiences of black students, says in support of Gillborn's statement above, that

> ...students were inevitably forced into highly significant face-winning, face-retaining and face-losing contests between themselves and the teachers (p.111).

Others have not only pointed to the differential treatment of black students within British schools but to the often inadequate or inappropriate and sometimes reluctant policy responses to these experiences (Troyna, 1992; Troyna 1993; Gillborn, 1995b).

Two studies have offered a different perspective on the issue of differential treatment of black students in British schools. A study by Peter Foster (1990) and one by Phillippa Hurrell (1995) saw no unfairness in the way that teachers responded to or interacted with black students. Foster concluded that the over-representation of black students in lower sets and streams in his study was not based on racial discrimination but that black students behaved worse than white students and were therefore deserving of their placements. He also dismissed black students' reports of racism on the grounds that their interpretation of racism was different from his own. Apart from the fact that this analysis is based on the idea that children's rights to a proper education are dependent on their ability to conform, it also seemed to depend on a simplistic analysis of racism as manifest only in the overt actions of teachers. Another serious weakness in the study was that Foster denied black students the opportunity to speak for themselves thereby reproducing the very hegemonic practices which he denied existed in the school. Hall (1980), for example, stated that one cannot engage with what one does not hear and by the act of 'silencing', one creates an atmosphere where 'common sense' racism can express itself. Conversely, Foster did not allow for the possibility that school organisation and curriculum are also structured around what Giroux (1989, p.100) terms 'silences and omissions'. He puts it succinctly,

We are left with (an analysis) of schooling that lack(s) a sufficient critical understanding of the ways in which power has been used to favour select groups of students over others.....Furthermore, we are given little understanding of how the hidden curriculum in school works in a subtly discriminating way to discredit the

dreams, experiences and knowledge associated with students from specific class, racial, and gender groupings (p.182)

It is this perspective as so clearly set out by Giroux, that informs my own understanding of the processes which lead to the expulsion of students from school. The question is whether teachers, as political/ideological beings, reflect on the nature of the conformity which they expect from students, and whether *they*, as the adults with the power to define the ethos or culture of the school, make it possible for diverse and complex student identities to conform to these expectations. My critique of Foster is not only that the whole notion of placing students in bands and sets which he takes for granted should be closely interrogated, but that black students should be expected to conform to structures from which they feel alienated and where the reasons for this alienation are silenced and therefore remain unexplored.

Hurrell's was a quantitative study which sort to examine 'race', class and gender factors in teachers' responses to their students. Unfortunately, as qualitative researchers have long argued, it is not possible from a quantitative analysis, to understand the subtle and nuanced elements in the relationships between teachers and students. Secondly, by categorising all 'non-white' students as 'black', it was not possible to distinguish between students of South Asian origin and students of African decent, falling into the common trap of assuming that all minority ethnic group students have the same experiences of education. There is also a danger in Hurrell's analysis of assuming that the absence of discrimination against one minority group disproves discrimination against another (Blair et al, 1999). Despite Hurrell's conclusion that she found no evidence of differential teacher treatment of minority ethnic group students, and that the results provided some convincing evidence for a behavioural interpretation of teachers' typifications and reactions, she does not, despite her declared methodology, discuss her own observations at all. She depends instead on the

43

statements of teachers, the very group who have been found by other research studies to be biased in their interpretation of student behaviour. To use Jock Young's (1997:38) analogy, it was rather like 'travelling to Saudi Arabia to learn about women's rights'. Both studies also overlook the historical relationship that black students have had with the educational system in Britain. The system of 'bussing' which was instituted by Sir Edward Boyle, Education Minister in the 1960's, and the placing of black children into 'sin-bins' as reported by Coard in 1971, were examples of the problematic relationship which was being established between black children and the education system. The notion of the 'self-fulfilling prophecy' should at the very least have been considered. These examples of 'bussing' and of 'sin bins' were early examples of official treatment of black children and reflected overt institutional practices at a time when public awareness of the effects of racial discrimination in education was still in its infancy. Later studies of 'race' and education have indicated that much of the racism operating in schools is not deliberate or overt, but takes place at an unconscious level (Gillborn, 1995; Mac an Ghaill,1990; King, 1998), or is part of the taken-for-granted, 'common sense', everyday ways in which (white) teachers make sense of the world (Sleeter, 1996; Essed,1990). It is the failure of both Foster and Hurrell to engage with the different ways in which 'race' operates as a discursive category, not only in schools but in the British culture, that prohibits a clearer understanding of the experience of black students. Leading analysts have written about the prevalence of 'race' in nearly all aspects of life in Britain. In the words of Stuart Hall (1992:)

One has to remember that the issue of race provides one of the most important ways of understanding how society actually works and how it has arrived where it is. It is one of the most important keys, not in the margins of society, but right into its dynamic centre (See also P.Gilroy, 1992).

Whilst the overwhelming evidence for low educational performance and for higher rates of suspensions and expulsions of black children points to institutional racism and discrimination, there have in recent years been criticisms of what has been termed a 'reductionist' view of black people's experience and the experience of black students. The argument has been that experience cannot be reduced to racism alone and that all experiences are the result of complex institutional processes, personal interactions and identifications. A focus on racism, it is argued, overlooks the important roles of gender and class as well as the role of identity and how these interact with issues of race in any individual's experience (McCarthy, 1990; Rattansi, 1992b; Cohen, 1992).

This last argument seems to be particularly salient in relation to suspensions and expulsions from school. It is now well documented that the overwhelming majority of students who are either suspended or expelled are from working class homes or poor homes, are living in care or involved with the social services in some way (SEU, 1998; Hayden, 1997; OFSTED, 1996; Cohen et al. 1994; Bourne et al. 1994; DFE, 1992). Some, however, argue that Black students *generally* but do not *necessarily* fit these categories, which seems to indicate that racism also has its own powerful dynamic that leads to such different outcomes for students even when controlling for gender and class (Gillborn, 1995b, OFSTED, 1996). It is difficult otherwise to explain why black working class boys/girls should receive more criticism and punishment than white working class boys/girls who commit the same 'offences' (cf Gillborn 1990).

In order to understand the nature and form of 'commonsense' racism, it is necessary to understand the ways in which 'race' has been constructed in Britain. I present an overview of literature which helps to clarify the salience of 'race' and racialised processes and procedures in the British educational context.

Racialising Education

Foucault (1979) refers to 'regimes of truth' which are constructions of 'reality' in ways which the public can assimilate and accept. The creation of such 'regimes of truth' around 'race' is by no means a new phenomenon. From early representations of white Europeans as 'normal', it was an easy step to the construction of black people as the 'abnormal Other' (Delgado, R and Stefanic, J. (eds). 1997; Rattansi and Donald, 1992; Curtin, 1976; Jordan, 1968; Fanon, 1970). Rattansi and Donald describe an historical link between the British encounter with black people and the position of 'the lower classes' within Britain itself, arguing that there was always a relationship between 'race' and class in this encounter with the 'Other'. The presence of these 'Others' in visible numbers in British schools presented a particular threat which led in the 1960s and 1970s to the system of dispersal (bussing) of minority group children in order to ensure that they constituted less than 30% in any one school. On the one hand, there was the historical legacy of an education system which utilised a deficit model of working class children and the children of the poor in determining the kind of education to provide for the 'masses'. On the other hand, there was the racist legacy of a former colonial government which feared that standards in the schools would be lowered and the education of white children would be affected. This view of black children, mainly of Caribbean origin, led to many of them being placed in 'disruptive units' or 'sin-bins' in numbers disproportionate to their presence in schools (Coard, op.cit. 1971). This centuries-old image of black people as educationally inferior and behaviourally dangerous continues moreover, to be reproduced through the educational discourses of 'under-achievement' (Troyna, 1988), and now through 'exclusions'. Troyna (op.cit.) argued that rather than provoking questions about the education of black children, 'underachievement' has become part of the received wisdom about the essential ineducability of black students, and the stereotype of the hardworking Asian student has often, as Tomlinson (1984) says, been used as 'a stick with which to beat the West Indian'. In other words, in addition to the image that 'blackness' itself conjures

46

up, terms such as 'underachievement' and 'disruptive' have helped to 'normalise' teachers' perception of black students.

The Problem of Black Youth

It is, however, adolescents, and more precisely 'black male youth', that seem to represent 'the enemy within' around whom 'moral panics' have been constructed in the everyday discourses of schools. Hall et al.(1978:16) define a moral panic as

> when the official reaction to a person, groups of persons or series of events is out of all proportion to the actual threat posed.

To judge from the over-representation of black students amongst those expelled from school, black young people and in particular, black males, must indeed be seen to pose an overwhelming threat to the order of schools. This image, however, must not be allowed to obscure the difficulties and problems faced by black girls in the education system (Noguera, 1998; Mirza, 1992; Mac an Ghaill, 1990; Brah and Minhas, 1983; Fuller, 1984). Mirza, for example, describes the subtle and not so subtle ways in which black girls were marginalized and excluded in the school she studied; whilst Noguera, describing the African-American experience, warns against a singular focus on black males which can lead to absolutist solutions. These not only ignore the needs and concerns of black females, but are themselves in danger of re-enforcing the idea that black males are fundamentally deficient in some way. Black women have been the subject of different kinds of representation which have assisted different forms of oppression both in the wider society (Gilman, 1992) and in the private or domestic sphere (Pajeckcowska and Young, 1992). Without therefore losing sight of the 'invisible hand' that controls black girls and of the multivalence of the 'black experience', it is nevertheless necessary to trace the

genealogy of black males in Britain in order to understand the contribution that a racialised, classed and gendered framework might have on the disproportionate numbers of black male children amongst those suspended and expelled from school.

Negative representations of black youth (read male) as a group that threatened the social order of Britain began in the 1970s when the first substantial number of young black people born in Britain began to assert themselves and refused to accept the assimilationist tendencies of their parents. These representations, however, had their roots deeper in history as discussed above (Rattansi and Donald, 1992). Whilst the image of black children as disruptive began when the 70's generation was in the primary school (via their mass allocation to 'sin-bins'), the urban disturbances of the 1980s in particular, seemed to fix in the minds of white society the image of young black males as representing trouble. The 'race' riots of white people which took place over the years in Liverpool, London and Nottingham in the 1950s, were themselves presented as a problem of 'an alien presence' destroying the British 'idyll' (Solomos, 1988). It was an easy shift in the 1980s to the construction of black young people as representative of a lawless culture which was both 'un-British' and threatening. The public belief that Britain is 'naturally' a peaceful and law-abiding country projected an image of crime and disorder as being an 'alien' or 'foreign' disease, and males as particular carriers of the more violent manifestation of this disease (Pearson, 1983). In the 1970s and 1980s, a *black Youth* identity was being constructed via media discourses of 'blacks' whose 'unpredictable' and 'volatile' nature was apt to erupt into 'race riots' (Solomos, 1988); as 'muggers' (Hall et. al, 1978, op.cit), preying, as Enoch Powell saw it, on helpless old ladies; re-inforced in academic studies as having 'a penchant for violence' (cf.Cashmore and Troyna, 1982) and realised through police harassment which became part of the routine experience, especially of black males, into the 1990s (CRE, 1997; Gordon, 1988; Gilroy, 1987). This overwhelming assault on the identities of black young people was met with different kinds of resistance not least of
48

which was that black young people turned to religion in the form of the Rastafarian faith. Stuart Hall declared in a television interview that, 'that generation (of the 1970s) would have committed a social collective suicide if they had not had that kind of black identity'. Lee Jasper, of the Society of Black Lawyers stated, during the same television programme, that education during that time was something on which he looked back with anger, 'It was a waste of a whole community', he said (BBC2, Empire Windrush Series, 13 June, 1998).

The 1990s saw no release from this kind of assault on young black people when in 1995, the image of the 'black Mugger', was revived by Sir Paul Condon (the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police). Thus the essential *'criminality'* of black people and of black males was being reproduced and re-inforced in the social psyche. The representation of black males as having 'particular tendencies', or drives and inclinations, as possessing 'dangerous proclivities' has thus justified their closer surveillance by the police and in school; their expulsion from school and their constant presence before the criminal justice system (Scraton et al, 1991). It is not therefore the crime, but the criminality that has been the focus of attention (see for example chapter 7, Students' Perspectives). It helped create a belief in teachers in what Gillborn has described as 'the myth of the Afro-Caribbean challenge', which was the widespread belief that

> both as individuals and as a group, Afro Caribbean pupils were especially prone to threatening teachers' authority (1990:57).

The myth operated in such a way that, as Gillborn continues,

> any offence by an Afro-Caribbean pupil could be interpreted as indicative of a more general 'attitude' (an inner drive). (op.cit. p.59).

However, the concern to represent black youth as a criminal element and a threat is not only a racialised discourse, but articulates with a wider ideological project to represent 'truths' about the poor, the homeless and the dispossessed as objects to be feared, despised, and locked away (Goldberg and Evans, 1998; Currie, 1998, Stern, 1998; Worrall, 1997; Cavadino and Dignan, 1997)..

So far I have outlined the contradictory position of schools in relation to the suspension and expulsion of students. I focused on forms of representation of children which help to justify such action. I also argued that black children and their communities have a particular relationship with the education system and it is only in understanding the historical development of this relationship that we can understand the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. The general rise in 'exclusions' however, needs another explanation as I discuss in the next section.

The School and the Wider Society

At a macro level, Marxists such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) posit the class-based theory that schools are part of a wider political and economic plan to 'filter' students for their role in the production of capital. This, they argue, is evident in the structures and practices of schools in certain types of capitalist economies such as those in Britain and the USA. Neo-Marxists support this view that the economic systems of both Britain and the USA are organised in such a way that in order to generate high profit levels, it is necessary for a certain amount of unemployment to be maintained in the society. Apple (1990:36) for example, says, it is an economic system,

> which is primarily concerned with the maximisation of the production of profit and only secondarily concerned with the distribution of resources and employment.

50

The role of the school in such economies is to 'allocate people to the positions "required" by the economic sector of society'(Apple. op.cit.p.43). Whilst not dismissing the class argument, neo-Marxists, however, consider this view insufficient to explain the persistence of inequality of some groups. (Giroux, 1989; Apple, 1986, 1990, 1996; Sharp and Green, 1975; Ball, 1987). It is an argument, they contend, which subsumes factors such as 'race' and gender to class and ignores the cultural dimension of social inequality. Whilst the Marxist view has been very important in our understanding of why and how schools reproduce inequality, neo-Marxists argue that it is not sufficient to explain the reasons why these inequalities should persist in the way and along the specific lines in which they do. They see schools as instruments through which dominant groups maintain their control over less powerful groups not because of a conspiracy on the part of a group of powerful people, but through a system of cultural hegemony. By this they mean that the structures and curriculum of schools reflect and reproduce the cultural interests of dominant groups. However, the very cultural nature of this control means that schools become 'sites of struggle' (Hall, 1985) where students do not necessarily passively accept dominant views but struggle to keep their own cultural identities. Drawing on the social reconstructionist teachings of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) add that Marxist education theory provides no possibility for counter hegemonic struggle within schools. They argue that schools as sites of struggle are places where

> particular forms of knowledge, social relations and values can be taught in order to
>
> educate students to take their place in society from a position of empowerment
>
> rather than from a position of ideological and economic subordination (Giroux,
>
> 1989, p. 115).

There are, however, two problems facing schools in this respect. Firstly, teachers are not given adequate preparation through teacher education, which helps them support and encourage students to develop their individual identities - a factor which is particularly important in a multi-ethnic, multicultural society (Osler and Starkey, 1996). Secondly, prescriptive government directives reduce the opportunities for teachers to create environments which are empowering to students. Bottery (1999:116) argues that

> ..if educationalists have felt over the last few decades that the management, curriculum and ultimate objectives of the system have been drawn more and more into an overarching economic agenda, the signs are that such subordination will intensify. The disappearance of child-centred rhetoric from official publications is plain to see...

Taking this as a framework for understanding the rise in suspensions and expulsions in British schools, one can see the way that changes brought about by the 1988 Education Reform Act not only determine the activities of schools, but ensure that schools reproduce the inequalities so necessary for maximising economic profitability.

A brief discussion of these educational changes follows.

Education in the Market Place

The 1988 Education Reform Act has been viewed as a *"process of breaking up the unified education system originally established under the Education Act 1944"* (Bridges, 1994 :6). The 1944 Act was, it is argued, an attempt to equalise educational opportunity for all children from all classes by placing the responsibility for and supervision of schools within the control of a regional authority. The 1988 Act set about systematically removing this

52

control from the local authority and placing it in the schools themselves. By making

funding dependent on schools' abilities to attract students who no longer have to attend

schools within their 'catchment area', and by introducing 'league tables' for examination

results, the Act introduced a system of competition which undermined the principles of the

Education Act 1944 (Bourne et al.1994). Giving schools the responsibility for managing

their own financial affairs is also seen as introducing a disincentive to schools to buy in

specialist services for children who experience difficulties and therefore encouraging them

to 'exclude' rather than help children (Blythe and Milner, 1994). Financial services to

schools in general have been reduced as have the educational resources that schools

traditionally depended upon such as education welfare and psychology services, and

specialist learning units.(NUT, 1992; Sterling, 1992). In addition, a National Curriculum

was introduced with inadequate consultation with teachers and their unions, and which

now takes up the bulk of teaching time, "currently estimated at around 80%". (Gillborn,

1997: 68). It is the examination league tables in particular which are said to have made

schools reluctant to admit or retain students who might be seen by schools as having a

detrimental effect on their image in relation to both behaviour and performance (Blythe

and Milner 1994 op.cit; Blair, 1994b). The pressure to produce good 'league table' results

and the system of teacher appraisal upon which teachers' jobs depend have led to increased

pressure on teachers which places them in a contradictory relation to their responsibilities

to students. Hargreaves, citing Apple, (1989) contends that the intensification of teachers'

work had led to a

> reduction of time and opportunity for (elementary) teachers to show care and
>
> connectedness to their students because of their scheduled preoccupation with
>
> administration and assessment tasks (Hargreaves, 1994:119).

Wexler (1992) agrees, arguing that the relationship between the teacher and the student is 'the quintessential social relation'', and that for this relationship to work, there must be 'emotional commitment and caring'. However, 'state-mandated rationalisation of curriculum' has placed strains on this important relationship. In Britain, this 'rationalisation of curriculum' has, through the institution of school league tables, undermined the 'holistic' approach to students' lives that was found to be an important feature of the identities of British teachers (Broadfoot et al, 1988; Nias, 1985). According to Stephen Ball (1987), fundamental changes in education have been achieved by means of 'discourses of derision' through which teachers and schools have been presented as not only responsible for the ills of society, but failing in relation to preparing young people to take up responsible roles in the future. This squeeze on schools which has taken place during a time of recession and attempts to regenerate the economy, has worked alongside a more general trend begun by the Conservatives and increasingly realised by the Labour government, to reduce other social services and to create what Elliot Currie (1998) has referred to as 'the new social Darwinism'. The Blair Government's rhetorics of 'social inclusion' are clearly at odds with these trends, raising the Foucauldian question about 'technologies' of knowledge and power used by the State to control or gain the consent of its citizens..

Could the expulsion of children from school be part of the contribution that schools are expected to make to economic regeneration and in what way?

In the following section I look at the relationship between 'exclusion' and the criminal justice system. The selective and subjective manner in which punishment is meted out is an important aspect of this relationship and fits with current theories emanating from the USA that increased incarceration is in keeping with current and future demands of Western

national economies and that it is the poor and the minorities that are and will continue to pay the price of economic growth.

The School and the Prison

Foucault's theory about the manner in which different organizations operate similar systems of control is vividly demonstrated in studies of schools and prisons. Writing about Peterhead, a prison in Scotland, Scraton et al(1991) list eighteen offences for which prisoners could be punished. The OFSTED report on 'Exclusions from Secondary Schools' (1996) summarise six reasons for 'exclusion', some of which cover a broader range of offences covering those listed by Scraton et.al. The OFSTED Report listed only 'the most common' reasons for 'exclusion'.

Scraton et al.	OFSTED
uses abusive, insolent, threatening, language	verbal abuse to staff
disobeys any lawful order,	persistent failure to obey rules
commits any assault	violence to other pupils
(unauthorised possession) of any article	theft
possession of prohibited article	carrying a weapon
offends against good order and discipline	disruption

Whilst the punishment in the prison is to keep the inmate longer, the punishment in school is to throw them out of school and potentially into prison. Whilst imprisonment is seen as a means to an end, namely, to rehabilitate the offender, expulsion from school is an end in itself. It is the 'giving-up on' an individual as being beyond rehabilitation, at least in the school. That this attitude to students is not necessarily based on the belief that the student

is incapable of rehabilitation or that the student was not remorseful will be shown in the discussion of the case study in chapter four.

What is interesting, however, is not the similarity in the *rules* which it would be argued are necessary for the welfare and order of the wider school (and prison) community (but which Foucault would argue is what makes these institutions effective systems of control), but in the way that the rules are applied. Scraton et al. write,

> Many of these rules were based on *subjective and discretionary* (my emphasis) decisions made by individual officers. The notion of committing 'any nuisance' or making 'repeated and groundless complaints' gave officers the ability 'to term anything and everything which irks and irritates, an offence against good order. It is not simply that the rules invite *abuse* but that *use* gives wider and arbitrary powers to staff whether they wish it or not' (original italics) (p.81).

I discussed earlier Gillborn's (1990) study of City Road, in which he divided the rules of the school into those which were 'routine', and those which were 'interpretive'. Gillborn wrote,

> In comparison to white and Asian pupils, therefore, a greater proportion of detentions given to Afro-Caribbean pupils appear to have been based upon offences whose identification rested primarily in the *teacher's interpretation* (my emphasis) of pupil attitude or intention.(p.40).

Why does the operation of the criminal justice system have relevance for schools?

Research and experience have long suggested that those who fare badly at school are more at risk of becoming offenders than those who do well (NACRO 1998, p.3)

The U.S Department of Justice National Institute of Corrections Centre in Washington D.C gives information about a survey of inmates carried out in Illinois prisons which asked prisoners about their educational background. They found that 72% of inmates interviewed were high school dropouts (Jones and Myrant, 1991).

In a discussion on National Public Radio on the 13th October, 1998, John Cole, the Vice-President of the American Association of Teachers declared that, "*92%* of those in Texan jails are high-school dropouts, and *all* those on Death Row are high school dropouts". He added that, "It is well established that there is a link between high rates of incarceration and school dropout".

These statistics connecting low education with offending are replicated in the British criminal justice system. In their report, Children; Schools and Crime (1998), NACRO reported the following:

According to the 1991 National Prison Survey, almost half of prisoners said that they had left school before the age of 16, compared to 11% of the general population. 1% of prisoners said that they had never been to school and almost half had problems with literacy and numeracy. More recent studies of young people in young offender institutions (YOIs) have found very high rates of educational failure. The Chief Inspector of Prison's 1997 review of 'Young Prisoners' found that most 'had been failed by the education system'. More recently, the Basic Skills Agency conducted in-depth interviews with 500 offenders aged 17-20 serving custodial sentences and found that 21% could not write their name and

address without error, half had difficulty telling the time and the days of the week in the right order, and fewer than a third could fill in a job application form satisfactorily (p.3).

NACRO established four key links between schooling and crime. These were anti-social and criminal behaviour within schools, low achievement, absenteeism and suspensions and expulsions. They wrote,

..there appears to be an even stronger link between children who are suspended, expelled or excluded from school and their propensity to offend. In the Home Office Study, a high proportion of those who had been temporarily excluded were offenders. As for children who had been permanently excluded, though absolute numbers in the study were small, the link was very strong. All 11 of the permanently excluded boys were offenders. The Audit Commission's report, 'Misspent Youth', found that almost two-thirds of children appearing in court had also been excluded from school or were regular truants (p.5).

How does all this connect with the economic priorities of governments?

The literature which looks at the changing needs of the economy in the USA provides an interesting perspective. It is a perspective which can only, at present, be applied speculatively to the British context. However, Britain's need to compete economically in the world markets is no less than that of the USA, whilst the tendency for British policies to follow those of the USA in many different spheres should be a warning of possible dangers. The implications for human rights are profound as are the lessons for schools.

The Prison Industrial Complex

A number of commentators, re-iterating earlier Marxist perspectives, view the globalization of the world's markets, and the shift of the manufacturing centres of production from the industrialised countries to the poorer countries, as fulfilling industry's insatiable hunger for cheaper production costs and higher profits. Increasingly, a link is now being made between this need for cheap centres of production and the growth of the prison industry in the USA. Goldberg and Evans (1998) see this growth as intimately linked to the use of *prison labour* in a rapidly changing global economy. With prison labour, the already cheap costs of production in the 'Third World' can be made even cheaper whilst at the same time cutting down on distance and communication difficulties.

> For private business, prison labour is like a pot of gold. No strikes, no union organising. No unemployment insurance or workers' compensation to pay. No language problems in a foreign country. New leviathan prisons are being built with thousand of eerie acres of factories inside the walls. Prisoners do data entry for chevron, make telephone reservations for TWA, raise hogs, shovel manure, make circuit boards, limousines, waterbeds, and lingerie....All at a fraction of the cost of "free labour" (Goldberg and Evans, p.11)

The only way, however, that the prison industry can be sustained is by having more and more prisoners. Prisoners become an economic necessity. Goldberg and Evans see the introduction of 'three strikes' and of mandatory minimum sentences as a cynical ploy to ensure that the prison population will continue to grow. Without making reference to prison industries, David Nyhan, writing for the Boston Globe, believes that the policy of giving prisoners longer sentences, instituted during Reagan's time as President, is largely responsible for a bizarre trend in which "crime rates fall while the prison population rises" (Nyhan, The Boston Globe, August 8, 1998).

Beckett, (1997) sees the expansion of the prison industry as linked not only to a desire for cheaper markets, but as serving the economy in other ways.

> The expansion of the penal apparatus - and of prisons in particular...... ensures a market for private vendors of a wide array of goods and services. These companies range from financial firms competing for the opportunity to underwrite prison construction to private companies providing consulting, personnel management, architecture and building design, drug detection, medical, transportation, security, fine collection, bounty hunting, and food services. Defence companies are also jumping in on the action, aggressively marketing law-enforcement equipment and other crime control devices.......

There seems little doubt that Britain is increasingly modelling its prison system on that of the Americans with attempts to introduce greater privatisation, harsher treatment of juveniles, and the 'zero tolerance' policy of '3 strikes and you're out'. It is worth recording that under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, commercial sponsorship of the police was permitted, the possible consequences of which were described by Dr Gary Slapper, Director of the OpenUniversity Law Programme, as "chilling". He stated that, "At least two forces have accepted sponsorship from drinks concerns (a chain of off-licences, and a major brewer) (The Independent, Thursday, May 6, 1999). At the same time, the restructuring of the welfare system threatens to produce a 'new social Darwinism' into British society. Osler and Starkey (1996:52) quote a Rowntree 1995 inquiry into income and wealth which

> ..shows that since 1979 there is no industrialised country in the world, other than New Zealand, where economic disparities have grown faster or greater than Britain.

60

The number of people living in relative poverty, as internationally defined, has increased from 10 per cent to 25 per cent over this period and includes a third of all children. Absolute poverty has also increased. A third of all black and ethnic minority people are to be found amongst the poorest 20 per cent of the population....

Sir Stephen Tumim (1997) suggests that as the poor get poorer, and more people become poor, there will also be more crime and greater need to find ways of containing it. According to Scraton et al (1991), the UK is second only to Luxemburg in relation to rates of incarceration in Europe, and this has been supported by a rapid expansion of the prison building programme. Sir Steven Tumim (op.cit.) agrees, stating that the rate of imprisonment in Britain is higher than almost anywhere else in Western Europe. He nevertheless expresses a hope for an expansion of the industrial prison in Britain.

Given the findings of the Rowntree inquiry, the implications for minority ethnic groups raise particular concerns. Whilst Sir Steven's hope for an expansion of the industrial prison is based on a liberal desire to improve the sense of usefulness of the prisoner, as well as the ability to prepare prisoners for life outside, it is also based on a fundamental belief in the justice of the British penal system. Sir Stephen could hardly have failed to notice the over-representation of black men and women in British prisons during his round of inspections. His belief that the poor commit more crime because they are poor is not a sufficient explanation for this over-representation. 'African-Caribbean' people, who account for just over 1% of the population, comprise, according to Cavadino and Dignan (1997), 11% of the male and 20% of the female prison population. Despite the startling figures for black women, few writers provide an explanation. Cavadino and Dignan state that,

it is estimated that on current (British) trends, nearly one in 10 young black men will have received a custodial sentence before his 21st birthday, double the proportion of their white peers (p.274)

They also add that there is no evidence that black people commit more crime than other groups, whereas there is abundant evidence that black people experience differential treatment within the criminal justice system (see also Worral, 1997, and Scraton et al, 1998). Similarly in the United States, the prison industry has been described as

one of the twenty fastest growing industries, only slightly behind data processing and computer software (Beckett, 1997, p.101).

Tonry (1995) records that incarceration rates in the USA are seven times higher for black people than they are for whites. It is estimated that

At the current rate of incarceration, by 2010, the majority of all African-American men between the ages of 18 and 40 will be in prison" Hanrahan, (1998:33).

The California Department of Corrections noted that "More than 60% of the women in California prisons are Women of Color (including 34% who are African American and 23% who are Latina)" (CA Department of Corrections, October, 1995, taken from an information leaflet of the Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC), S. Francisco, October, 1998). The LSPC leaflet also states that,

"California's 'Three Strikes' law will mean that....the number of children whose primary parent is in prison will grow to a factor of *six to ten times* in the next

decade (My emphasis). It is estimated that there will be a quarter of a million parents with dependent children in California prisons by the end of the century".

Worrall (op.cit.) cites Gardiner (1995) as arguing that the 1991 Criminal Justice Act in Britain targets the 'underclass' , that is, whole communities, rather than individuals. Currie (1998 op.cit.), writing about the USA, contends that it is *political and fiscal* (my emphasis) concerns that inform myths about crime as being based on individual and moral choices rather than on social and economic conditions. These myths justify the harsher treatment of offenders including juveniles in order to achieve what he describes as 'a larger vision of society'. He states,

> America's punitive and reactive response to crime is an integral part of the new
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> social Darwinism, the criminal justice counterpart of an increasingly harsh attack
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> on living standards and social supports, especially for the poor, often justified in the
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> name of "personal responsibility" and "free market" (p.7)

This lengthy discussion about the connection between suspensions and expulsion, the criminal justice system, and the prison industrial complex does not imply that teachers and schools are part of a conspiracy. Critical theorists, whether social reformists or radical reconstructionists agree that schools reproduce such inequalities because they are organised in such a way as to perform the function of sorting and selecting students in keeping with the economic requirements of society (Apple, 1989, 1990). Fine (1991) for example makes the point that

> Those very structures, policies and practices that reproduce unjust educational
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> outcomes are usually implemented by well-meaning, underpaid, often quite caring
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> women and men.....That these educators and personnel are well-intentioned, caring,

63

and at moments subversive for the students' sake, does not undo the damage brought by structures, policies and practices that they implement. The reproduction of social inequality persists easily without malintent.(pg.182-183)

(see also Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Gillborn, 1990)

This point underscore the importance of the neo-Marxist position that the relationship between the organisational structures of schools and the requirements of the economy is not a straightforward one-to-one relationship. It is mediated by the cultural concerns of dominant groups. This relationship is not, therefore, the result of a deliberate conspiracy on the part of those in power. Instead, dominant groups are able to maintain their power through *consensus*, and schools function in a manner which reproduces inequality because of a consensus on what schools are about, what teachers should do, and what constitutes effectiveness. Hall (1984), drawing on the concept of hegemony as developed by Antonio Gramsci, states that the powerful are able to ensure that they continue to rule with the consent of the majority if their own interests are closely allied to the interest of the majority. As an illustration of the veracity of this point by Hall and in order to underline the human rights implications of this argument, I have included an Appendix (1) which demonstrates how the consensus of the majority on the issue of imprisonment can be shaped so that it squares with the will of the powerful and of particular (class) interests.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed theories about the role of schools in society. I discussed those studies that have focused on the micro-politics of schools and examined the experience of black students at that level. Racism was seen to be an important variable in the micro-politics of schools, and in influencing relationships which in turn affect disciplinary measures which are taken. It was argued that 'race' was thus an important variable in the

routine exclusion as well as in the suspension and expulsion of children from school. It was, however, found to be necessary to examine the development of racial thinking as a background to interactions in school and to the experience of black students. It was suggested that the over-representation of black students amongst those who are suspended and expelled is not the result of a linear racial explanation but reflects broader political, economic and social factors in the late twentieth century. I went on to discuss the theories of the Marxists and neo-Marxists who, whilst not dismissing the importance of studies which look at the day to day operation of schools, underline the importance of viewing the place of schools within the wider social and economic context.

Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, I explored these theories in relation to the suspension and expulsion of students from school at a time when Britain is following the USA in relation to the rapid expansion of prisons as industrial complexes. However, it was suggested that whilst it was important to view schools in terms of their relation to the wider social, political and economic culture, it was also important that schools be held accountable for their own failings, which included high levels of suspension and expulsion of students. It has been made clear for example, that not all schools 'exclude' children or 'exclude' at the same rate, even controlling for socio-economic status and percentage of minority ethnic group children in the school (DFE, 1993 op.cit; SEU 1998; Blair and Bourne, 1998). We cannot, therefore, as Ball (1987) argues, look to external constraints alone to explain failings or shortfalls within schools, but need also to examine the ideological underpinnings of what goes on within schools, the kind of leadership provided, and the social interactions within the organisation. Teachers in general are clearly not deliberately expelling black students out of a desire to harm them or out of malice. However, a failure to examine the historical processes which have led to the over-representation of black students in the 'punishment culture', and to act upon this

knowledge, could implicate schools in the racialised, classed and gendered dimensions of the increasingly voracious prison industry.

I return to this point in the chapters below where I show how the different disciplinary approaches taken by schools have different philosophical underpinnings in relation to 'race' and equal opportunities, resulting in differential experiences of schooling for black students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methods and Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the processes by which I came to study this topic and my choice of research design. In the first section I describe the source of my interest in the subject, my sample of both schools and participants, how I gained entry into the schools and access to participants and also my choice of research instruments. I discuss what I consider to be some of the methodological limitations of my study, including the restrictions that I faced. Finally, I discuss the overall replicability and applicability of my study. In the second section I discuss the methodological issues and debates which surround qualitative methods of social research with particular reference to researching sensitive issues such as 'race'.

Deciding the Research Topic

During 1990, I carried out a brief study of the experience of black students in one city where these students were in a small minority. The purpose of that investigation was to inform the work of the Multicultural Centre in the Shire County where I worked whose brief was to provide in-service education for teachers in relation to the educational needs of minority ethnic groups in that County. In the course of this study, as well as in the routine work of the Multicultural Centre, it became clear to us that black students were disproportionately affected by the disciplinary processes and procedures in the schools in this city. Black students were clearly experiencing higher levels of suspension and expulsion from school than their numbers in the population seemed to warrant. Because of

my work in the Multicultural Centre, I had become acutely aware of institutional[3] as well as individual practice, which worked to the disadvantage of students of minority ethnic group origin. It would have been easy under these circumstances to come to the conclusion that the over-representation of black students amongst those who were suspended and expelled was the direct result of racially discriminatory practices pure and simple. However, the headteacher of one of the schools had a strong interest in issues of 'race' and equality, she ensured that staff in her school received in-service training on issues of equality of opportunity, and she took more advantage of the services offered by the Multicultural Centre than any other school in the area. Yet black students in this school (3% of the student population), fared no better than students in other schools where little if any interest was taken in these issues. Suspensions and expulsions of black students represented 25% of all 'exclusions' in the school. This led me to ponder what else could be going on in schools which led to this situation, and in the autumn of 1990 I registered for a research degree with the University of Warwick. It was not long after, however, that I obtained a position with the Open University and because of my new responsibilities, decided to postpone the research until 1992. By this time I had spent a year in the Shire school, but I felt that on its own, it was an inadequate, and in the context of Britain where most minority ethnic group children attend inner city schools, an un-representative sample for investigating what was a national phenomenon.

Starting Again

In 1992, I re-registered for a part-time doctoral research degree with the Open University. Having already spent a year in the school mentioned above, I felt that I would get a better

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[3] By institutional (racism or discrimination) I mean practices which can be deliberate but are largely covert, indirect or unintentional but which have unequal effects on some groups (see also MacPherson Report, 1999). The term is at best illusive because of these very characteristics, but I hope that the kinds of practices which are discussed in the thesis will help to make its meaning clear.

picture of what was going on if I could also study a school with a higher percentage of black students, and one with some black teachers. It was at this time that I was approached by the headteacher of an inner city school with a black (Caribbean) student population of 15% (at the start of the study), and a Head of Year from another inner city school with a black student population of 40%. Both of them had heard, via the 'Multicultural Education grapevine' that I had given talks on the subject of 'race' and school discipline. They were concerned about the high 'exclusion' rates of black students in their schools and were keen to have the phenomenon studied. For my part, I was pleased to be able to have in my study three schools which provided quite different contexts but which were experiencing similar problems. This, I felt, would give a basis for comparison and by highlighting the differences and similarities within each research context, would illuminate the problem under investigation. The headteacher of one of the schools, Central City School[4], arranged for me to present myself and my research proposal to the staff at his school in the autumn of 1992, and I was able to make contact with teachers who were interested in being interviewed or who could help with my research in any other way such as arranging for me to interview students. It took a little longer for the Head of Year of the other school, North City, to negotiate entry for me with the headteacher of his school. I finally visited the school in the spring term of 1993 and was able to introduce myself to the teaching staff and explain the purpose of my study. The problems of finding suitable research subjects and of negotiating entry were thus removed and I was able to move on to the next phase of the study which was to explore the best methods for investigating the problem.

Deciding on Methods

By 1992, the phenomenon of school 'exclusions' had hit the newspaper headlines with something of a vengeance. The DfE had made public the fact of the rise in numbers of

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[4] All the names of individuals and schools have been changed to preserve their anonymity

'exclusions' nationally, and of the over-representation of black students, in particular boys, in 'exclusions' (DfE, 1992). The schools which agreed to participate in the study had also established before I began my study, that black boys were over-represented amongst those suspended and expelled from their schools (see for example the Case Study in chapter four). It was unnecessary therefore to establish the fact of over-representation as quantitative data was already available in relation to percentages of students suspended and expelled. The particular focus of my interest was to get the perceptions of the various actors within the schools as to why black students should be over-represented in 'exclusion' when other ethnic groups were not. Interviews seemed to be the best method of eliciting from teachers and students their perspectives on this issue. It also seemed important for me to conduct my own observations of interactions in the schools in order to see whether what I observed contradicted or confirmed some of the perceptions of teachers and students (Woods, 1996). I did not believe that there was a simple truth 'out there' just waiting to reveal itself (Silverman, 1993, Harding 1991). Rather that practices in the school were the product of a range of complex interactions and relationships which were not only context bound, but were subject to influences which were both internal and external to each school. Through the interview method, I hoped to understand the world views of teachers and of students in relation to these complex interactions and relationships in order to 'ground my inquiry in the empirical world under study' (Woods, 1996, p.37).

During my year at Shire School, I had conducted extensive observations of classroom and playground interactions. The lessons to be observed were decided by shadowing the students rather than their teachers. This allowed for a random selection of lessons to be observed, which had the additional benefit of seeing the selected students in a range of classroom and lesson contexts. I shadowed three boys and two girls whom the Head recommended as suitable subjects. All were in the Fifth Year, and all were of Caribbean origin. I met with the three boys and two girls separately and explained my work at the

70

Multicultural Centre and my concern to ensure that the Centre was providing appropriate support for minority ethnic group students in the City. This non-threatening approach in which I assured them that they were not themselves the object of study, but that shadowing them would provide me with the opportunity to observe the context in which they were experiencing school, helped me to gain their support and co-operation. Although my reasons for conducting the study were indeed as I explained to the students, it was clear to me that the school selected these particular students because they were seen as presenting the greatest challenges to staff. As far as the school was concerned therefore, I was observing the students and not the teachers or the different relationships and interactions within the classroom. The headteacher was, moreover, quite open about the fact that she wanted to know why these students 'played up' in some lessons and not in others. The result was that I found myself shadowing the students in order also to observe their interactions in the various lessons which they attended.

The three boys were friends who spent all their school breaks together, two of them were also cousins. These two (Gavin and Joseph) were in low bands for the three core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science and so were observed together on most occasions except when one of them (Gavin) was suspended. Sam, the third boy, was in the high bands, but not the top sets for most of his subjects. Gavin had been recommended as a suitable subject for observation because he was said to get into more trouble than any other boy in the school. The two girls (Glenda and Isobel) were also friends and cousins. Glenda was Gavin's sister. These girls tended to be in the middle bands for nearly all their subjects. All the students were shadowed in English, Mathematics and Science lessons. In addition, the three boys all took art together and were followed to an art class. Gavin led me to a history lesson (Joseph had not opted for this subject), they were both seen in a textiles lesson and Sam in a French class. Shadowing of the girls was limited to the three core subjects. The reason for this was that Isobel was a persistent absentee (the education

71

welfare officer was involved in her case), and Glenda was said to have changed so totally from her behaviour in her fourth year, that after shadowing her in her core subject lessons, I decided that her relations with her teachers and fellow students were 'normal' and provided little information for investigating the issue of behaviour. The weakness in this assumption is discussed below.

A total of 15 teachers (no black teachers) and 10 students were interviewed at Shire School. Two of these students (Gavin and Isobel) were expelled in the course of my study. The interviews with each of the teachers took between 30 minutes to one hour and took place in their classrooms during non-contact time, at lunch time or after school. Interviews with students took between one hour and two hours and included students from other ethnic groups such as Iranian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Most of the interviews with students were with pairs. The three boys mentioned above were interviewed individually as well as in a group. The individual interviews with all the 'shadowed' students were conducted before the group interview to enable the students to speak freely about their perceptions without having formed a prior group view of their experiences of schooling. All the interviews with students took place in either their homes or in my home and were tape-recorded. The interviews at this school were unstructured. Students thus spoke freely about their experiences, but as the information was intended to inform the work of the Multicultural Centre, it was necessary to direct respondents to clearer explanations of concepts such as 'racism' and to understand the nature of their grievances so that they could be incorporated into our in-service programmes. The focus on suspensions and expulsions was an outcome of this study. There were therefore a number of questions that were asked which bore no relation to 'exclusions' per se.

At Central City School, (inner city London, approx. 600 students in the Lower School where the study was conducted, 13% black students) I combined limited observation with

72

extensive interviews and some documentary analysis. The observations were limited, not only because of restrictions on my time which had to be divided between both Central City and North City schools, but because in my introductory meeting with teachers I had left it up to teachers to invite me to observe their lessons. In a later discussion with the deputy headteacher of Central City, she recommended that I confine my observations to those lessons which were attended by those black students who were perceived by some staff as being the worst behaved, and that I should approach the teachers directly to ask that I sit in on their lessons. In the event only four lessons were observed, two of them attended by one boy who was said to have 'major behavioural problems', and two separate observations of lessons attended by two other boys. The focus on boys was discussed in chapter three.

24 teachers were interviewed at Central City School. With the exception of two teachers, the interviews took between 30 minutes and one hour and took place in their classrooms during lunch, non-contact teaching time or after school. Interviews with two of the teachers (one white and one black) took place in their homes because they found this to be more convenient and lasted two to two and a half hours. All interviews were unstructured, (see appendix 2 and 3 for examples of interviews) again to allow individuals to speak freely about what they saw as important. I often pressed a respondent on a particular point if I felt it was particularly relevant to my study. I conducted four interviews with the headteacher. Two of the interviews were carried out in restaurants, one in a wine bar, and one in his office. The main reason for these venues was that the headteacher felt that the only way to talk without being disturbed was to leave the school premises, and lunch time was an opportune time which enabled him to 'kill two birds with one stone', namely, eat and talk. The major disadvantage to this was that it was very difficult to hear the taped discussions because of excessive background noise, whilst note-taking was almost an impossibility because of restricted space on the table. After the first of these restaurant

meetings, I spent some time making notes of the interview in order to try and capture the essence of the discussions. I refer to these as discussions because of the interactive nature of these interviews. The headteacher spent as much time asking me questions or asking me for advice in my capacity as a former Adviser for Multicultural Education and my current role as lecturer on issues of 'race' and education. Most of the after school appointments which I had made with him had to be cancelled because of unforeseen events. There were times when I met him in the corridor of the school and he would stop to ask how I was getting on. I often used these moments to ask him questions and then would find a place to sit down and scribble his answer, or lean against a wall in the school and jot down his remarks or responses. On one occasion I caught up with him as he was leaving at the end of the day and I walked with him to the train station. As he was about to enter the train, he made a remark which at the time I found quite interesting and quickly jotted the key word on my ticket (see Woods, op.cit.1996). However, we did eventually meet one afternoon in his office and were able to talk for an hour.

19 of the students interviewed had been expelled from Central City. These were students who had been expelled during a period of two years, two of them just before I began my study. One of the 19 boys was of Bangladeshi origin. An attempt was made to interview one white student who had been expelled, and his parents, but the family declined to take part and did not allow their son to be interviewed.

Three white students (non-'excluded') were part of a group interview of boys. One other was interviewed separately. All interviews were tape-recorded though not all were transcribed. Shortage of time and resources meant that I had to confine transcriptions to individual and not to group interviews. The interviews were open ended. However, each interview began with an explanation of official government statistics as well as the statistics from the school which showed that black students with particular reference to

74

black boys, were over-represented in those suspended and expelled from school. Each interviewee was then asked if s/he had any views on what had led to this situation.

I was given access to student files, expulsion reports and suspension and expulsion statistics in this school. I was also invited to sit in on two expulsion 'hearings', and was shown copies of documents relating to the individual expulsions. During one week, I performed the role of Withdrawal Room supervisor, enabling me to discuss with a range of students from all ethnic groups, their perceptions of discipline and disciplinary measures taken in the school. The Withdrawal Room was where students were sent to spend the rest of the lesson by the classroom teacher if they misbehaved.

At North City School, the interview was the main research instrument though I did sit in on three expulsion 'hearings', all of which took place on the same day. Two of these boys were white. My research in this school was cut short (after just two terms) for reasons which will be discussed below. However, I had by then already observed the expulsion meetings and interviewed 12 teachers and 7 students, including the three whose expulsion meetings I observed. Three other students were interviewed as a group, and one on his own. I interviewed one white boy as part of this group of three (non-excluded) boys. The interviews with the three boys who had been expelled took one half hour each. The parents of the two white boys were interviewed together at the school on the day of the 'hearing'. This took one half hour. The mother of the black boy was interviewed separately in her home, and this took one hour. The interviews with parents were unstructured, the purpose here was not to get views about the over-representtion of black students, but to hear about their experience of the expulsion process . The curtailment of the study in this school was a clear illustration of the difficulties and problems that beset researchers who research sensitive issues such as 'race'. A brief description of the events that led to the ending of the study in this school follows.

Woods (1996) in describing the conflicting perspectives that can occur between the researcher and the researched, talks about how the researched may not always like certain elements of their behaviour which they prefer to remain hidden being made public. The example at North City was a graphic illustration of this. The headteacher had been very keen that I sit in on the expulsion 'hearings' of these three boys, and briefed me about the reasons for their expulsion. The boys were being expelled because of a fight they had had with a Kurdish boy whom they had beaten quite badly. The black student was said to have been the main culprit and to have been the one most involved in the fight but all three were being expelled because it was not the fight per se which was the problem but the *racial* nature of the fight. The headteacher presented the event as one of racism and his expulsion of the three students was to show to the whole school community that racism was not tolerated and would be given the most severe sanction.

However, during the hearing, the mother of the black student asked the headteacher why he had said that the boys were not being permanently excluded for fighting but for a *racial* attack on the Kurdish boy, whereas for a long time black families (including herself) had been complaining about racial harassment of their children in school and nothing had ever been done about it. Also that the fight with the Kurdish student had been provoked by him and was part of a long-running feud between the three boys and a group of Kurdish students in the school to which the headteacher had not paid any attention until then. The Kurdish student moreover, was not being expelled. At this point the headteacher denied that racism was the main reason for the expulsion, but that it was the fact that the Kurdish boy had suffered concussion that had led the school to expel them. As soon as the headteacher had said this, he looked up at me and looked very embarrassed because he had been so strenuous in his proclamation to me that the expulsion was about racism and not merely about a fight. A few days after the hearing, I received a letter from him asking me

76

to stop my study in the school. His reasons were that I had advised the mother of the black student to get a mentor for her son and this in his view, amounted to taking sides with the mother against the school. He had in fact misunderstood and thought that what I had advised the mother to do was to get someone to advocate for her at an 'exclusion' hearing, but although this was made clear to him, he nevertheless chose to end the research. Although this was the most extreme example of the sensitive nature of 'race' in research, 'race' was an ever present factor in my interactions with people and the assumptions which they held about my study (see for example, Blair 1995; Mirza, 1995). Henceforth I had to tread much more carefully. As Woods (op.cit.) states, it was a question of 'learning on the job' (p.51).

Triangulation

Research theorists generally agree about the importance of triangulation in order to get as accurate an interpretation of events as possible (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). I entered the research arena without any preconceptions about the likely responses I would receive from parents. I was aware, however, of the importance of trying to get different perspectives in order to understand better the phenomenon under study. I was keen therefore to get the perspectives of parents, and tried with each of the expelled students, to interview one or both of their parents. I succeeded in interviewing 7 mothers and both of the parents of one of the boys.

Most of the interviewees volunteered to take part in the study, and only those who held senior management positions, or were departmental heads, or Heads of Years, but had not volunteered were personally asked to take part in an interview.

There were other students too, black and white from these schools who had not been expelled but were interviewed in pairs or larger groups and totalled between 60 to 80 students altogether. Teachers were overwhelmingly concerned to discuss black boys as the group most affected and this is the primary focus here. This is not, however, to underplay the experiences of black girls *as girls,* a topic which would have to be the focus of another study (see also Mirza, 1992). The focus on boys in this study was, as I explained, determined by the focus on permanent expulsion.

The question of 'exclusion' and black students was thus viewed from a number of different angles. Teachers (both black and white) who taught different subject areas and with different levels of responsibility, gave their perspectives on this issue. A range of students, some who had been expelled, some under threat of expulsion, some academically successful students who were in their sixth form, and other less academically successful students who teachers described as 'underachieving' and who spent a lot of time in 'withdrawal', were all asked for their views. Hammersley and Atkinson (op.cit. p.232) warn that

> One should not (therefore) adopt a naively 'optimistic' view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture.

Whilst this is true, there was a great deal of consistency in many of the accounts. At no point did I initiate a discussion about racism, so that it must be assumed that this was an important issue for those who talked about it as it was raised on many occasions. My role was to probe what individuals meant by this and how they felt it affected their lives and work. I did not want to impose my own definition of respondent accounts of racism as I wanted to ground my analysis in their own accounts.

78

In total then, I have drawn on interviews with 51 teachers, 25 students who had been *permanently* expelled from the three schools and 8 sets of parents (9 people). Of the 51 teachers, there were 10 black teachers interviewed for the study. There were two girls out of those expelled, one from Shire School, one from Central City. Unfortunately, it was impossible to make contact with the girl from Central City as the family had moved from the address held in the school.

The Analysis

During the data gathering period, I had begun to formulate some opinions about the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In this way I was engaged in 'grounded theorising' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in which theory 'is generated out of data analysis' (Hammersley and Atkinson, op.cit.). However, my theoretical development was not a linear process in which theory was only informed by the data collected. My interviews with students and parents confirmed pre-existing knowledge, gained from personal as well as experience in my previous work as an advisory teacher, and from my reading - that there was institutional racism in schools. As a black person I could not escape this knowledge. Woods (op.cit.1996, p. 53), for example, declares that

> ..the researcher is a finely tuned instrument with considerable skills, but is a person no less, with values, beliefs and a self. The researcher's own background, interests and values will be influential in selecting a topic for research.

This was certainly true in my case. But I was equally concerned that my experience of being black in Britain and of racism in schools should not obscure other factors that might

affect the education of black students. To do so would be to miss the opportunity to find solutions to the problems faced by black students and would be a betrayal of these children and of the communities that had struggled for so long to secure positive educational experiences for their children. Furthermore, my interactions with the headteacher at Central City and with many teachers in the schools had revealed to me the high level of caring and concern shown for students of all ethnicities by these professionals. Many white teachers were popular with black students, yet I could not point the finger of blame entirely at black students as a 'racial' group because my own observations of diversity amongst black students and the different settings in which the study was carried out as well as the accounts of students, their parents and of teachers, contradicted this. Something else was happening which did not relate only to racism even though racism as per the MacPherson definition seemed to be such a siginificant part of student experience. As I reflected on these issues, and in my attempt to focus more progressively on the data I had produced, I returned to the field and wasted a great deal of time collecting yet more interviews which seemed to provide me with no more ideas than I already had.

Three events occurred which helped me to clarify my thinking and to develop a framework for analysis.

The first occurred during my experience as a school governor. I had been appointed to the governing body's disciplinary committee, and therefore the committee that presided over school expulsions. During the 'exclusion hearing' of one white working class student, I witnessed institutional 'classism' in action. All six members of the panel (including myself) were middle class professionals. It was clear to me, as members summed up their views as to what should happen to the student, that none of my colleagues had heard the student's explanation of extenuating circumstances and his pleas to be given another chance. The headteacher had first of all declared, during his presentation of the case against the student, that teachers would find it very difficult to work with that student if he

80

were re-instated in the school. This, I felt, placed the governors in a difficult position and was likely to prejudice the decision which they made. However, during the private panel discussion, the language used by the governors to describe the boy (language which I did not write down at the time) left me with the pervasive feeling that they felt that he did not fit into their predominantly middle class school. I felt angry and was compelled to argue the student's case. Although the eventual decision made was in the student's favour, this incident brought home to me the importance of 'cultural capital' and the fact that decisions which harm children's futures were not necessarily made by uncaring, bad people. Their worldview had prevented them from seeing the issues from the student's point of view but they were also prepared to revise their view when it was brought to their attention, in spite of what the headteacher had said.

The second event occurred in 1997 during a study commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The aim of this study was to investigate 'good practice' in multi-ethnic schools. We investigated practice which made it possible for minority ethnic group students who, as a group, were 'underachieving' in the school system (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996), to achieve as well as their peers from more successful groups. During this study, we were struck by the important role of the headteacher in providing a lead on issues of social justice. This meant actively listening to what students had to say and being sensitive to their and their families' experience. The headteacher was a crucial agent in establishing such an ethos or culture in the school (Troman, 1997). Schools where the headteacher 'owned' the problems of his or her students, for example by ensuring that teachers received in-service training in conflict resolution, or where teachers and students together drew up a Code of Practice which applied to staff as well as to students, or students and parents were consulted and involved in important decisions, such schools had few problems of discipline and did not expel students. In such schools, staff looked to their own practice to ensure a positive learning environment for the students.

81

The orientation of the headteacher was towards creating an environment in which children from all ethnic groups felt safe because they were protected as far as possible from discrimination and abuse. It was clear that their outlook or perspective on the needs of students differed from schools where minority ethnic group students 'underachieved' or there were high levels of suspension and expulsion. I would not, for example, have described the headteacher of Central City School as 'racist', yet black students who constituted 13% of the school population, were over-represented in suspensions and expulsions in his school. There were no expulsions in one of the schools in the DfEE study, an inner city school with nearly 30% black students and receiving students from one of the most economically and socially needy areas of the country.

The third event was a six month visiting scholarship to the United States. Not only did I become acquainted during this visit with the theories about the relationship between prisons and the economy as I have already described, but I was introduced to the literature relating to successful teachers of minority ethnic group students (Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). I also read literature which exposed poor practice whose effects were disproportionately felt by minority students (Fine, 1991). This literature complemented the findings of the DfEE study and provided me with a perspective for analysing the interviews and observations of my study. The inter-connections of 'race' and class, as well as the personal skills and ideological orientations of individuals in charge of students which these writers talk about, made the most sense in terms of what was happening to black students in British schools. The frameworks of these experienced researchers helped me not only

'make the data intelligible but to do so in an *analytical* way that (provided) a novel perspective on the phenomena (I was) concerned with...'(Hammersley and Atkinson op.cit. p.209).

82

Shortcomings of the study

The three different schools provide much material for an understanding of the phenomenon of 'exclusion' and of the over-representation of black students. The range of methods and the large number and diversity of people interviewed provide material for viewing the problem from different angles and understanding how different actors are affected by the 'exclusion' of a child from school. There is, however, one major shortcoming, and that is the absence of a proper focus on the exclusion of girls. The main reason for this is my focus on *permanent* expulsion and the absence of girls has to do with the lower incidence of expulsion amongst girls. Although it is a good thing that girls do not get expelled in such large numbers, a detailed study of at least one girl might have shed light on the different ways in which girls are involved in the 'exclusion' process. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that black girls are now being expelled in much higher numbers and that their reactions or responses to unfair or unjust treatment which is based on 'race' or ethnicity is no longer that different from the reactions of black males in schools. An opportunity to observe girls in the context of everyday activities in school was missed at Shire School because of my assumption that girls had to overtly display their resistance in order to provide interesting material for observation. But as Silverman (1993) states, sometimes it is the 'absences', the silent gaps that one needs to focus on. At Central City School I was invited to interview two girls who were said to be 'going down the road to exclusion'. Unfortunately, due to constraints on time, and also to my allowing my focus to be dictated by the teachers and hence to be on boys, I interviewed the girls but did not observe them in classroom interactions. In the event these two girls were not expelled and I did not pursue another interview with them. I did, however, gather some interesting general perspectives from girls during the study.

It might be argued that one cannot properly understand how educational issues such as suspension and expulsion affect one ethnic group without also having a 'control' group from another ethnic group. Although I succeeded in interviewing two white students who had been expelled and their parents, my attempts to include more white students failed. I do not, however, consider this a failing of the study. My examination of expulsion records at Central City School (which confirmed the OFSTED findings that 'excluded' black students were less likely to have emotional and family problems than white students as discussed earlier) were sufficient in my view to highlight any ethnic differences where they occurred. I should, however, with hindsight, have interviewed more Bangladeshi students (only one was interviewed) who constituted about 30% of students at Central City School.

Methodology: A brief look at the paradigm wars.

My study was theoretically driven by the assumption, to use Silverman's words, "that social phenomena derive their meaning from how they are defined by participants" (1993, 14). The ethnographic method was therefore considered to be the most appropriate for investigating suspensions and expulsions of black students from schools. My aim was to attempt to develop an empathetic relationship with my respondents (May, 1993), and by regular observation and engagement with them, to attempt to understand how they saw the issues under investigation. Through these different perspectives I hoped to answer the following questions: To what extent does the 'culture' of each school inform and help to shape *what* teachers regard as important and *how* they interpret the behaviours of students? Equally, how do black students see school and to what extent does the school 'culture' determine the nature of student participation? What are the social and political frameworks which the different groups within the school use to make sense of their experiences? How does all this help to illuminate or explain the problem of 'exclusion'?

84

In order to answer these questions effectively, it seemed to me necessary to escape the trap posed by debates which polarise methods between the qualitative and the quantitative.

Research, both in its theoretical as well as it practical assumptions, is contested terrain. There is no method that is more 'correct' than another (Woods, 1996,). Each method is determined by the particular research problem under investigation (Jayaranti and Stewart, 1992).

As Van Mannen, (1979) states

Qualitative and quantitative methodology are not mutually exclusive. Differences between the two approaches are located in form, focus and emphasis of study. (cited in May, op.cit.p.114).

As I explained above, I did not reject a quantitative model of data collection but I did prioritise qualitative factors. Statistics would have been necessary had I needed to establish whether or not black students really were over-represented in suspensions and expulsions. These facts had already been established by both the DfEE in the national context, and in each of the schools in my study.

Positivists might argue that the statistics speak for themselves, that black students broke more rules than their peers and hence their over-representation in 'exclusions' (see for example Foster, 1990). In his study, Foster found that black students were disproportionately allocated to lower examination sets and that black students' 'poorer behaviour' was the justification for this. My observations as well as my analysis of documents relating to one school's disciplinary procedures did not confirm this. Moreover, a simple count, for example, of the number of times certain students were 'withdrawn' from classrooms would have missed the quality and 'texture' of relationships

and interactions which may have led to the student's withdrawal. In her concern to let the statistics 'speak for themselves', Hurrell (1995) misses both context and texture of relationships within schools. Foster on the other hand, questions the cultures of students (it is never clear whether what he questions are students' ethnic or youth cultures - ethnic cultures appear to be subsumed into racial/biological ones), but is unwilling to equally question teacher 'cultures' in relation to their definitions of behaviour, or the assumptions which they might hold in relation to different groups of students. On the one hand he is critical of 'partisanship' in research, (see Foster et al. 1996), whilst at the same time being openly partisan in relation to teachers. Neither Foster nor Hurrell question the power relationship that exists between teachers and students and the right of teachers to use their power to negatively affect the future prospects of their students, nor do they question whether the teacher might, through incompetence or inability to control a classroom, be responsible for the poor behaviour of students. To accept the allocation of students to non-academic streams or their suspension and expulsion without reflecting on these points seems to me to miss some valuable explanations about the 'underachievement' or the supposed 'poorer behaviour' of black students.

I argue, with feminists such as Sandra Harding (1991) and Patricia Hill-Collins (1990), that statistics often mask the racist, sexist and class assumptions that underpin the production of those same statistics. Indeed, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the study carried out by Gillborn, (1990) showed how teachers at City Road interpreted the behaviours of students on the basis of their perceived 'race'. To have merely counted the numbers who were excluded or referred, and to have drawn conclusions on the basis of these numbers, would have been to miss the subtle and nuanced ways in which discriminatory practices operated against black students.

86

Feminists have argued in similar vein. Some feminists would reject altogether the objectification of research respondents (Stanley and Wise, 1990). They argue that the notion of 'objectivity' is itself proscribed within dominant male paradigms. They stand by the view that feminist research, for example, is about women, for the benefit of women and must avoid the androcentric frameworks which characterise dominant forms of research. To operate within paradigms which are male-centred and therefore exclude women or which impose a male interpretation of social phenomena, is to collude with the very structures which are oppressive to women. These arguments can be similarly applied to questions of 'race' and ethnicity. By rejecting black students' definitions and experiences of racism, it can be argued that Foster not only imposes his own hegemonic and white male interpretations of black students' experiences, thereby giving priority to (white) teachers and silencing the voices of black students, but in so doing, colludes with the very structures which exclude and oppress black students/people. Harding (1991 op.cit.) goes further to suggest that for research on subordinated groups to be truly 'objective', the researcher would need to adopt the standpoint of these groups, thereby avoiding the bias that arises from a researcher imposed perspective. Women, she argues, have a privileged perspective into the social realities of women and have a standpoint on women's experiences which is denied to men (but can presumably be acquired as it is not a biological given). bel hooks declares that,

> only one type of theory is seen as valuable in the academy, that which is Eurocentric, linguistically convoluted, and rooted in Western white male sexist and racially biased philosophical frameworks" (cited in McDowell, 1995).

Patricia Hill-Collins (1986) describes the effects that this has had on academic disciplines such as sociology. The dominant voices within sociology, she says, have been traditionally those of white men. They have defined what sociology is and imposed their

own interpretations of the social world, thereby denying the many diverse voices whose experiences tell of a different reality. The result, she argues, has been to produce a narrow and stultifying sociology. Hill-Collins (1986:5) adds that,

> As outsiders within, Black feminist scholars may be one of many distinct groups of marginal intellectuals whose standpoints promise to enrich contemporary social discourse. Bringing this group, as well as others who share an outsider-within status vis-a-vis sociology - into the centre of the analysis may reveal aspects of reality obscured by more orthodox approaches.

What these feminists argue for is the importance of recognising the social situatedness and the embodied nature of research. These are arguments which have been promoted and supported by researchers researching issues of 'race'. This is what I turn to next.

Race-ing Research

It is not my wish here to revise the arguments around ethnic and 'race' matching and who is or is not best qualified to carry out research on issues of 'race'. A more detailed discussion of this can be found in Troyna (1998). My own view supports that of Connolly (1994) who contends that issues of social justice are issues of concern for all of us, but that the researcher needs to reflect on her/his own social and political positioning and the likely influence this will have on the research. He takes his starting point from the position, well rehearsed by feminists and other researchers with an interest in social justice issues, that no research is value-neutral (May, 1993; Blair, 1998). Connolly's contribution forms part of a vigorous debate which has taken place between sociologists in the UK about the validity of studies by anti-racist researchers. Troyna described the opposing positions in this way,

On the one hand, there are those who are openly committed to antiracist education, a commitment which transcends all aspects of their research. In contrast stand their critics who I have called 'methodological purists' (MPs). The MPs maintain that antiracist researchers are more concerned with manipulating data to portray teachers and the education system as racist than with providing 'authentic social scientific evidence' to support their claims.(Unpublished statement, Institute of Education, University of Warwick).

The culmination of the 'MPs' critique of the 'critical theorists' or those who privileged ethnographic methods in their studies, and took an antiracist stance in their work, was published in 1996 (Foster, Gomm and Hammersley). I have in my study, clearly aligned myself with the critical theorists. My critique of Foster's work (Blair 1998) makes my position clear. My own stance is that I am just as concerned about unfair or discriminatory practices against white children where they occur, as I am about such practices where they relate to 'visible' minority ethnic group children. This is a position which I make clear in the study of 'effective multi-ethnic schools' which was funded by the DfEE and which I mentioned above. In this study, I was as concerned to address institutional racism and discriminatory practices as well as individual racism against white Gypsy Traveller children regardless of whether the perpetrator was black or white. Equally, I was keen to highlight schools which were cognizant of the possible institutional neglect of children from dominant white groups where these children were in a minority in the school (see for example the McDonald Report, 1989). I have every reason to believe that that is the essence of antiracism and that 'critical theorists' who find and reveal such practices are working with this philosophy and are not motivated by a desire to ' get at white teachers'. Rather, their aim is 'to understand the logic of teachers' work' (Silverman, 1993:17), in order to improve education for all concerned, including the working conditions of teachers (see Blair and Bourne, 1998). An inevitable consequence of such studies is a possible

criticism of teachers. But schools should be no more immune to criticism of poor practice when it occurs than any other social institution whose raison d'etre is to serve the public. Furthermore, the history of the education of black children in Britain has not been marked by success and it seems important that researchers continue to research the causes and to highlight problems until such problems are addressed more widely than at the level of the individual school.

Partisanship and its critics

The main thrust of the critique of critical theory has been its supposed partisanship which, it is argued, introduces bias into the research (Foster, Gomm and Hammersley (1996, Tooley and Darby, 1998). This critique arises from two assumptions, 1. that there is value-free and neutral research and 2. that unless one is apolitical (ie non-partisan) one will inevitably 'manipulate' one's findings to fit in with one's politics.

The first point has been widely viewed within the research community as untenable. It is now more generally accepted that there is a relationship between scientific practice and social beliefs and that this affects research practice (Young,1992; May,1993) Indeed, the report produced by James Tooley and Doug Darby which set out to highlight ways in which research can be partisan in terms of methodology, presentation and interpretation is itself a prime example of partisanship, as I shall discuss below. May (op.cit.) outlines some of the ways in which values inevitably enter into the research process, from the design of the research through to the uses to which it is put. Besides, one's personal values are also affected by factors such as culture, context, and funding. He declares that,

If we assume that we can neutrally observe the social world, we shall simply

reproduce the assumptions and stereotypes of everyday actions and conversations

which are buried within society. (p.22).

Some feminist epistemologists have questioned whether neutrality is desirable at all even if

it were possible to achieve it. They see the relationship of the researcher with her

respondents as one which is structured by power and this knowledge needs to form part of

the research agenda, (Oakley, 1981).

It is the second assumption by 'methodological purists' that is more serious. Hammersley

(1998) contends that not only is partisan research vulnerable to bias, but that it is a

'contradiction in terms'. To illustrate this point, he examines a study by Mac an Ghaill

published in a book entitled 'Young, Gifted and Black' (1990), which Hammersley claims

subjects teachers and black students' accounts to different types of analysis. I do not wish

to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this critique of Mac an Ghaill's book, other than

to draw attention to Hammersley's conclusion which I believe highlights some of the

problems inherent in this exchange between 'critical theorists' (including myself), and

'methodological purists'. He states:

I do not believe that the failings I have identified derive from incompetence on Mac

an Ghaill's part, or even from the constraints under which he was working as a

teacher/researcher. Rather, they reflect his acceptance of a partisan or 'critical'

approach to research. And of course, from that point of view, these 'failings'

appear in a different light. For example, his asymmetrical treatment of the accounts

of black students and white teachers can be seen as following directly from

standpoint epistemology, a central element in the critical research tradition.

What this seems to me to illustrate is the problem of critiquing one paradigm from within the assumptions and frameworks of another. It is clear that Hammersley considers that standpoint epistemology is simply 'wrong' or misguided, a perspective which standpoint epistemologists have themselves criticised! The two sides, it seems to me, are not speaking from the same starting point and therefore 'miss' each other in trying to convey their meanings. It is simply like trying to convince each other that green is blue and vice versa. As Gillborn (1998) argues, the concept of racism is understood and deployed very differently by the two sides. Indeed, Hammersley criticises Mac an Ghaill's analysis of the teacher's description *of 'the West Indians who come here'* saying that

> While there is no obvious reason why Afro-Caribbean students coming to the college would have exaggerated views of their own abilities compared to Asians and whites, *it is not so implausible* that it can be dismissed outright" (op.cit. p.28. my emphasis).

Antiracist 'critical theorists' would argue that Hammersley misses two points. The first has to do with the manner in which racism is produced and sustained by, for example, treating 'Afro-Caribbean students' as one homogenous category (Essed, 1990). This is similar to teachers' fatalistic and classist attitudes to working class (including white) children by referring to them as 'these kinds of children' the effect of which is to reproduce stereotypes of working class children. The second point which Hammersley misses is that the aim of the critical theorist is not to judge and condemn, but to bring to our attention that,

> even where well-intentioned teachers are conscientious and committed to equality of opportunity as an ideal, *they may nevertheless act* (original emphasis) in ways

that unwittingly reproduce familiar racial stereotypes.....and perpetuate existing inequalities of opportunity and achievement. (Gillborn, 1998, p.35).

In their survey of journal articles for OFSTED, James Tooley and Doug Darby disagreed in their interpretation of an article by Paul Connolly. Despite their sharp criticism of partisanship in the interpretation of research, their own disagreement is an indication that different interpretations of the same article (and therefore different analyses of research findings?) are possible, and this does not make one interpretation more partisan than another. It is also revealing that although they are critical of studies which do not present 'both sides of the story', we are, in their report, only given Tooley's perspective which was critical of Connolly, and not Darby's which was more supportive of Connolly. Given that they describe themselves politically as 'new right' and 'leftist' respectively, the presentation of both perspectives would surely have been important in order to avoid a one-sided presentation of information. Another interesting aspect of the criticism of partisanship in this report was in the examples of research that they considered to be non-partisan. Power et al (1994) are cited as non-partisan because their conclusions do not support their own ideological leanings. Had their conclusions, based on the same rigorously and objectively conducted study nevertheless supported their political beliefs, would this have made their study partisan and therefore invalid? The conclusion would seem to be that if one's research findings are in line with one's political or ideological perspective (especially if they support powerless or subordinate groups) then one should not publish - a position which would probably be considered untenable by the research community. If there is one agreement between 'critical theorists' and 'methodological purists' it is this, that for the sake of methodological rigour *"all research must be open to critical scrutiny, but so too must the critiques themselves"* (Gillborn, op.cit. p.34).

The starting point for my research is that racism exists in many complex forms in Britain, that it exists in schools as much as anywhere else in society and must therefore be taken into consideration in analysing the experiences of black students and the systemic practices of schools. I believe, with Sandra Harding (1993:68), that a democratic research project requires,

> learning to listen attentively to marginalised people; it requires educating oneself about their histories, achievements, preferred social relations, and hopes for the future; it requires putting one's body on the line for "their" causes until they feel like "our" causes; it requires critical examination of the dominant institutional beliefs and practices that systematically disadvantages them; it requires critical self-examination to discover how one unwittingly participates in generating disadvantage to them ....and more".

For Sandra Harding, for feminists, and for me, by systematically learning the social situatedness of subjects, one is better able to be objective.

Reliability and Replicability of the study

The two issues of reliability and replicability have also been sources of debate in relation to methods employed by researchers. Hammersley (1992:67) defines reliability as

> the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions.

It is odd, given the consistency of research reports by different observers and indeed by the same observers on different occasions, that for methodological purists, racism still remains the default explanation in the experience of black students.

According to Silverman (1993), qualitative researchers are less concerned with reliability and more concerned with 'authenticity' of subjects' lives. However, there is a problem with notions of authenticity especially in relation to interview data as the context of the interview, the time, the reliance at times on the memory of the subject all pose problems for 'authenticity'. It also supposes that as each subject is an individual, one cannot generalise from any one experience and this has implications for the replicability or generalisability of a study. This has also been a criticism of life history studies. In my own study there was a high level of consistency in what students and their parents said in relation to the over-representation of black students in expulsion from school. Teachers were more divided about this issue although the division was between only two types of responses - those who thought that students were to blame for their 'exclusion' and those who put the blame on the teachers and on institutional factors.

I believe that it is possible to generalise from my study although other writers (see Connolly, 1998) have argued that it is not necessary for a study to be generalisable. My study shows the consistency of parental concerns, the consistency of student concerns, the kinds of institutional practices which existed in a school which over-'excluded' black students and the contrast with one which did not. As these patterns of responses (from parents, students and teachers) occurred in so many different contexts, situations, and within very different research agendas, I believe that the conclusions drawn can be said to reflect a general picture and to shed a reliable light on the complexities of 'race' and school exclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

'Exclusions' and School Leadership

The case study presented here is intended to illustrate both the institutional and individual (headteacher) factors which operate in the 'exclusion' process. Institutionally, I show firstly, that whilst statistics on suspensions and expulsions are useful, they cannot be relied upon as an accurate picture of the problem until all types of 'exclusion' have been acknowledged by government and officially standardised. Secondly, that the manner in which student misdemeanours are defined and categorised and the sanctions applied may not reflect the actual severity of the offences committed. Caution needs, therefore, to be exercised in reading survey results which reveal that black or other minority students were most likely to be 'excluded' for violence (see Osler and Hill, 1999). This case study indicates that face value reading of statistics obscures the differential manner in which student misdemeanours are interpreted, categorised and sanctioned.

In relation to the individual headteacher, I explore his general orientation on the issue of discipline. From my discussions with the headteacher and my observation of an 'exclusion hearing', I examine the headteacher's 'ways of seeing' and explore the consequences of this for students. The main point underlined here is that decisions taken can be arbitrary and follow the headteacher's personal inclination which can be damaging to a student's life chances.

There have been many studies which have investigated the issue of leadership in schools and have invariably concluded that the role of the headteacher is significant in influencing the type of culture or ethos of the school (Jones, 1987; Blase and Anderson, 1995; Grace,

1995) and in helping to shape the experiences of both learners and teachers (Blase 1994; Troman, 1997). Studies have also noted the demanding and the conflicting role of the headteacher as she or he is made accountable 'for a complex, ill-defined and unbiddable set of variables, each of which may appear to make equal and opposite demands' (Jones, 1987:6). The headteacher's role is made particularly difficult during times of radical educational change, particularly change that is imposed from 'above' with little if any consultation with those upon whom these new demands are made (Grace, 1995). Grace (1995:41) asserts that the 'market' priorities imposed on schools have had profound implications for school leadership as

Moral relations and professional relations are giving ground before the rise of market relations in education.

Grace views this displacement of the moral and interpersonal caring aspects of schooling as placing headteachers in a particularly difficult dilemma in relation to school 'exclusions'. He observes that in his study,

Headteachers found themselves attempting to balance the individual care and welfare of particular pupils with considerations of the general welfare of the majority of the pupils. This dilemma was compounded by the headteachers' understanding that their classroom teachers expected 'strong leadership' about, and 'protection' from disruptive and challenging pupils. At an implicit level, headteachers were aware that their colleagues expected them 'to deal with', 'get rid of' or otherwise resolve problems related to disruptive pupils (p.152).

Jones, (1987:7), on the other hand, believes that

Very few Heads have been selected for their qualities of leadership in troubled times, their ability to resolve conflict or to straddle uncomfortable polarities, nor, by and large, have they been trained in these skills, even though training is possible.

The example given in the previous chapter of the headteacher of North City School who cut short my investigation of 'exclusions' in his school, gives some flavour of the difficult decisions which face headteachers. But importantly, it is an example of the absence of training for headteachers to lead in an educational context which has become much more complex with the incorporation in British schools of so many different cultures, religions and languages. It is not only that headteachers in multi-ethnic contexts are expected to steer their schools up the ladder of academic success as measured by their position in the school league tables, but they are also expected to resolve religious, political and ethnic conflicts which even politicians might find difficult to understand let alone resolve.

Despite this important caveat, however, the general thrust of this chapter is to argue that individual headteachers can nevertheless make choices (however limited and however constrained) which can make the difference between destroying a student's future and confining that student to the ranks of the unemployable and giving that student a chance to become an accepted and productive citizen. I therefore look at the 'ideological orientation' of the headteacher in relation to whether she or he takes a traditional 'punishment' view of disciplining students, or whether s/he is able to adopt a more personal approach which takes education of the offending student as its starting point.

It is recognised that the challenge for a headteacher in a multi-ethnic school is great given the theories about 'race' and education discussed in chapter three. In other words, such a headteacher may well face greater pressure from teachers to 'exclude' black students

largely on the basis of stereotypes and assumptions about 'race' and ethnicity. It could be argued that headteachers in such schools require greater courage than other headteachers in order to pursue policies and practices that might not get the support of many teachers in the school (Blair, 1999a/b). The type of leadership offered by the headteacher, and the kind of 'culture' or 'ethos' which prevails is therefore crucial to the 'fate' of students in that school. I suggest that this culture or ethos depends in large part on the headteacher's own values and beliefs, and on their orientation towards or away from 'punishment' as the means for solving student misdemeanours.

The school I have used for my case study is Central City School. Most of the research materials were gathered in this school. I had detailed interviews with the headteacher (Mr Friend), access to 'exclusion' reports for analysis, as well as the opportunity to attend an 'exclusion hearing' thus providing richer material for analysis than the other schools. I begin by discussing the statistical evidence of suspensions and expulsions at Central City in order to show the extent of over-representation of black students. I follow this with a discussion of an 'exclusion' hearing which I attended and where the ideological orientation of the headteacher was observed in a context in which not just abstract theory, but the whole future of a student was being discussed. Finally, I contrast this headteacher's approach with that of another headteacher (Ms C. - taken from the DfEE study, Blair et. al, 1998) who did not expel students but took what can be described as a libertarian approach to student misdemeanours. I draw on this study only in order to contrast the different ideological and philosophical beliefs of the headteachers in order to illustrate the extent of personal choice available to the headteacher when deciding on an expulsion.

Suspensions and Expulsions at Central City Comprehensive

Central City Comprehensive is a split site comprehensive. The focus here is on the Lower School (600 students) for which there was sufficient data covering the period 1990 to 1995. Between 1990 and 1992, black (Caribbean, Bengali and white students were the three largest ethnic groups in the school. Statistics in the school showed that during this period black (Caribbean) students were the only group out of the three which was over-represented in suspensions and expulsions. They constituted 13% of the school population and 45% of permanent, indefinite and fixed term 'exclusions'.

By 1995, the figures showed that Arab and African students were now also over-represented, whilst white students were not over-represented but their numbers had risen from 18% to 29%. There was a drop in the figures for Bangladeshi and black Caribbean students with the latter showing a dramatic reduction from 45% in 1992 to 23% in 1995. It would be heartening to believe that this drop represented a change in the factors which had previously led to the over-representation of black Caribbean students in 'exclusions'. However, I was informed by the Deputy headteacher in the school that four Caribbean students had been 'excluded' via informal channels during one term alone whereby the parents were 'persuaded' to remove their children from the school. I was unable to obtain figures (despite several requests) for the total number of students removed from the school in this way. This issue raised questions for me about the processes of 'exclusion' and does cast doubt on the accuracy of 'exclusion' data and the possibility, as Stirling (1993) has stated, of official figures only showing the 'tip of the iceberg'. When I looked at *recorded* expulsions alone over the two year period (1993 -1995), the picture looked very different. Out of 34 permanent expulsions, 15, (44%) were black Caribbean students (see discussion below).

100

Three girls altogether were expelled between 1993 and 1995, two of them were black. I was unable to ascertain whether any girls were removed through informal channels. According to the deputy headteacher, boys were 5/6 times more likely to be expelled than girls were.

Thirty-four students of all ethnicities were permanently expelled between 1993 and 1995[4]. The expulsion reports for these students were scrutinised. An analysis of these reports shows that there were four main categories of students who were expelled.

1. There were students who were deemed to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties whose 'needs' were said to have fallen victim to resource cuts, and the school was therefore unable to cater for their specific requirements. These students either had statements of special needs, were having statements prepared, or it was explicitly stated in the student's report that they would be better catered for in a specialised school. These have been labelled SEC (Special Educational Circumstances) in the Table below.

2. There were students who were school refusers and the school was said to have exhausted its efforts to motivate and help them. They seldom came to school and were said to be 'a corrosive' influence on others when they did attend. These are labelled SR (School Refuser) below

3. There were students who were said to behave badly and to have accumulated several referrals and/or suspensions but were neither school refusers, nor were they said to experience emotional or learning problems. I have labelled these NSC (No Special Circumstances).

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[4] By 1993, the category 'indefinite exclusion' had been abolished.

4. Finally there were those who were not school refusers, did not have learning or behavioural problems, and did not have an accumulation of suspensions or referrals. They had committed a one-off offence considered sufficiently serious to merit expulsion. I have labelled these 'One-off' in the Table below.

Table 1.0 shows the distribution by ethnic group of students in each of the four categories .

	SEC	NSC	SR	ONE-OFF	TOTAL
African	2	0	0	0	2
Caribbea	7	6	0	2	15
Arab	2	1	0	0	3
Banglade	4	2	0	0	6
Other	1	0	0	0	1
White/Eu	5	0	2	0	7
Total	**21**	**9**	**2**	**2**	**34**

Table 1.0

Special Educational Circumstances (SEC)

Table 1.0 shows that most of the students who were expelled from the school during this period were said to have 'special' needs for which the school claimed to be unable to cater. The suspension and expulsion of students who are defined as having learning or emotional 'needs' has been the subject of heated debate. Writers have questioned the moral and ethical underpinnings of expelling such children as well as drawing attention to the

102

difficulties and constraints which resource cuts have placed on schools and teachers to support the more vulnerable children in schools.

School Refusers

The two SR listed are both white. These students not only truanted to a high level, they were also deemed to have rejected school altogether. One of the students was said to have a job in his uncle's motor mechanics shop and did not see the relevance of school. The other, whose family was visited by the headteacher, was described as 'a bit of a jack the lad' whose father encouraged his rebellion because 'he did not himself see the relevance of school'.

One- Off

The two one-off offenders were both black (Caribbean) males. Although these two students had on occasion been sent to the Withdrawal Room during their time at the school, they had not, according to their records, truanted, or generally disrupted the learning of others, nor had they been suspended at any time. They were both said by teachers to be academically able and one of them was in the sixth form. Both students were also said to have deeply regretted what they had done and to have shown remorse.

In one case, the student (Alan) had been threatened many times by a group of ex-students (themselves recruited and encouraged by a rival of Alan's in the school). In an interview, Alan said that he had reported the threats to a member of staff but had not received support. He finally decided to bring a meat cleaver into school in order to defend himself from the group who waited for him at the school gate and had threatened to beat him up after school. In the fight that ensued between Alan and his group of attackers, the meat cleaver fell to the ground without his having used it, and he was beaten badly enough to

103

have suffered concussion and had to be taken to hospital. He was expelled on the basis that he had brought a weapon into school against strict school rules.

The second case concerned a fight between two students. The student who was expelled (Daniel) 'viciously' attacked another student during a quarrel. The other student fell and hit his head and had to be hospitalised. David had had, until then, a relatively clean discipline record. He apologised, was willing to make amends and visited the victim in hospital. According to the records, this was not the only recorded 'vicious' attack by one student on another. The penalties were, however, differentially applied, as I discuss further below.

No Special Circumstances

The most interesting feature about Table 1.0 is that most of the students in the NSC category, namely those who were expelled for bad behaviour without the extenuating circumstances of 'special needs', are black Caribbean. It is worth noting that it is within the NSC category that there is least room for objective judgement to be made regarding student behaviour and therefore most room for arbitrary and inconsistent application of the rules. It is in this category that teachers are most likely to make 'interpretive' rather than 'routine' judgements of student behaviour (Gillborn, 1990). Gillborn's observations of how and why students were disciplined at City Road Comprehensive were that there were clear differences between teachers' assessments of the behaviours of black Caribbean students and students from other groups. White students were more likely to be disciplined for routine (i.e. generally understood) rule breaking (more consistent with children who experience emotional or learning difficulties?), whereas judgements about whether black Caribbean students had broken rules tended to be based on the teacher's subjective interpretation of what the student had done.

104

An examination of the reasons why students had been suspended for a fixed term during the period 1993 - 1995 revealed some of the discrepancies in the manner in which rules were applied. In his explanation of why Alan (above) had been expelled, Mr Friend, the headteacher, insisted that all students who brought weapons or drugs to school were expelled without exception. About this he said that he was uncompromising. However, the list below giving the reasons for the suspension of students during this period for drug or weapon-related offences indicates otherwise. Only those offences which included weapons or drugs are listed here.

Bangladeshi- possession of a knife-   3 days

White   - possession of a knife-   3 days

Pakistani   - possession of offensive weapon   9 days

African   - possession of catapult-   3 days

Arab   - possession of an axe -   9 days

Arab   - possession of a gun -   4 days

Caribbean   - possession of a *replica* gun -   3 days

White   - possession of a stanley knife -   2 days

As none of these students were expelled for these offences, it is difficult under these circumstances to understand why Alan was permanently expelled given his good record of achievement and behaviour, and the fact that he had appealed to a teacher for help on account of the threats he had been receiving. Anecdotal evidence from two teachers suggested that the headteacher was sometimes caught between the demands of different (rival) ethnic groups. The local housing estate was troubled by conflict between black and Bangladeshi young people. It was their view that because the fight had occurred between a black student and young Bangladeshis from the Estate, the headteacher wanted to demonstrate that he would be tough on ethnic conflict where it spilled into the school. As

105

the Bangladeshi group involved were no longer in the school, Alan was used as an example. Although the teachers' views regarding the headteacher's reason's for expelling Alan were indeed anecdotal, it is worth noting that similar reasons were given by teachers at North City School in relation to the expulsion of three students (one black and two white) for a fight with a group of Kurdish students. The school, as I recounted in chapter four, served a large and established Turkish community. With the recent arrival of Kurdish refugees into the area and the school, the headteacher was said by one teacher to be anxious to re-assure them of their safety and was keen to build a similar relationship with this community as he had so far done with the Turkish community. The expulsion of the two white and one black student, but not of the Kurdish students, was said to be one way of reassuring this community of the headteacher's support.

At Central City School, there were discrepancies in relation to illegal substances similar to those relating to weapons. A black Caribbean student was permanently expelled for *suspicion* of selling illegal substances, yet other offences listed were:

Bangladeshi - *possession* of **illegal** substance   - 5 days

Caribbean   - possession of **unknown** substance   - 9 days

White   - **Continued evidence of substance abuse**   - 6 days

It is notable that both Caribbean students were given harsher penalties than their white or Bangladeshi counterparts and yet there is no evidence that they did indeed either sell or possess illegal substances. For one student, the report states *suspicion* and for the second it seems that once again there was mere suspicion as the nature of the substance in question was unknown. This was unlike the other students for whom the evidence seems indisputable.

The analysis of which groups were expelled and for what demonstrates that although the facts presented do not prove beyond a reasonable doubt (Foster et al 1996) that black Caribbean students are treated unequally within the disciplinary mechanisms of the school, they do not show that *they are treated equally*. They indeed point more in the direction of unequal treatment than in the direction of fairness.

In a context in which there is little flexibility for teachers to develop the human and humane elements of their jobs (Grace, 1995), and where pastoral skills are increasingly sacrificed to technical competencies, vulnerable groups, namely those whose learning requirements demand a little more time and imagination from the teacher, the combined efforts of different service providers, or who have been historically subject to different forms of stereotyping, are more likely to be viewed as children 'who should not be in 'our' school' (Haberman, 1995). Black students are particularly vulnerable to this kind of assessment as discussed in chapter three and this may help to explain the racialised nature of these decisions.

As far as headteachers are concerned, it has already been noted that they are often placed in a difficult position because of the many factors which may have to be taken into account when a student is considered for expulsion. I have already indicated that headteachers in multi-ethnic schools in particular may find themselves caught between ethnic or political differences between groups which have their origin outside British boundaries (cf the Turkish and Kurdish political context). Parents or communities may regard a particular decision as evidence of a school's bias in favour of one group or another when in fact a range of other factors come into play in such decision-making. This, however, does not detract from the central questions which I ask, namely, whether schools need to expel students at all, and if so, why should some groups be over-represented so much more than others?

This brings me to the second purpose of the analysis of data on expulsions, which is to lay the ground for an examination of the type of leadership given by the headteacher. Such leadership is dictated by a complex combination of factors, not least of which relates to the personal beliefs and values of the headteacher as a person with both a personal history and a professional existence. The question here is, could any of the above expulsions have been avoided? My argument is that the political context of education might place severe constraints on schools, but it is not a sufficient reason for depriving children of, or disrupting their education and that there is an ideological approach which can ensure that each child's education is given highest priority without sacrificing the collective academic image of the school in a competitive market environment. The lead given by the headteacher in these matters is crucial. It is my contention from the evidence gathered for this study and illustrated in the account of the 'hearing' below, that a headteacher who believes in expelling students or who succumbs to pressure from staff to expel students in the interests of 'efficiency' is less likely to use expulsion as 'a last resort' and more likely to use it as a convenience for the teachers, a sop to parents, and for reducing the pressure of administration. A headteacher who believes that it is the role of the school to educate students about drugs, or the resolution of conflict is less likely to expel a student because they are aware that young people, out of boredom, are likely to 'hang out' on the streets where they are made even more vulnerable to drug-related activity or to 'street-wise' ways of solving problems. Such a headteacher is more likely to find ways of supporting students who are vulnerable to these factors.

In the next section, I describe and analyse an 'exclusion hearing' which I attended and which I hope will illustrate more vividly what I mean by the headteacher's 'ideological orientation' and which also helps to underline some of the above arguments. Although the student concerned was not of African descent, the purpose of using this example is not to

108

discuss the racialisation of 'exclusion' processes, although this cannot be ruled out in the example given, but to underline this issue of 'orientation' regardless of the ethnicity of the student. It also raises questions about expulsion being used as a last resort for headteachers and reveals that, notwithstanding the role of the governing body to veto the headteacher's decision, he or she is powerfully placed, by sheer dint of position and cultural capital, to influence the direction that the proceedings will take. I follow this with an analysis of an interview which I had with the headteacher in which his personal perspective is made more explicit and compare and contrast this with the headteacher from the DfEE study whose policy was to retain students and not to expel them.

The Hearing

My attendance at this meeting was cleared with the student and his mother and with the school governors. Present at the meeting were the student, his mother, the headteacher, school administrator, five governors and a representatives from the LEA. The 'hearing' took place in the headteacher's office. I was allowed to take notes but not to tape-record the meeting. I was, however, able to take detailed notes of the proceedings as I was not allowed to say anything and did not have to interact with the participants.

The boy, Luigi, was of part Italian and part Bangladeshi origin. He was fourteen years old and in his third year. He was being expelled for bringing an airgun to school and compounding his offence by loading it and handing it to another boy. He therefore created a dangerous situation not only for himself, but for other students. Luigi's explanation was that he had found the gun and had decided to take it in order to protect himself against threats by white youth on his council estate who often followed him shouting racial abuse and who had threatened to 'cut his face'. He had taken it out of his bag in the toilets to show another boy. He admitted that it had been a 'stupid thing to do' and was sorry. Mr

109

Friend, however, revealed that not only had Luigi taken the gun out of his bag, he had also threatened to 'beat up' another boy if he told anyone that he had witnessed Luigi's actions. After Mr Friend had outlined the case against the student and Luigi had explained his actions to the panel, the meeting proceeded as follows:

Mr Friend: We are not trying to be punitive but protective. Luigi needs help. He has experienced traumas in his life which have not necessarily led to the event but may have contributed to it. He has problems which are not of his own making. He has been having trouble with the Drew Street gang. The Asians are being picked on and they are beginning to fight back. But we cannot allow sympathy for the boy to overrule the bigger issue of the welfare of the students.

Chair of Governors: But is this incident sufficient? He has not been excluded before.

Mr Friend: What it does is give an indication of how his mind works. He is dangerous. He brought an airgun to school knowing its danger, he loaded it, and he handed it to someone else. It is the conscious, pre-meditated nature of the action.

Governor: How did his threats to the other boy come to light?

Mr Friend: There is a rule that children have to report anything dangerous. It was the boy who was threatened with violence who told. But Luigi knew how the gun worked with precision, and yet he still brought it into school against the strongest prohibition. Luigi is too dangerous to have in the school. He has risked the lives of others.

Mother: But he disagrees with what you say happened. He is not dangerous. This is the first time that something like this has happened. He has never been dangerous. There have been no complaints about violence. He is being judged wrongly. There are two gangs on the estate. He needs protection.

110

Mr Friend: I am shocked about the gangs. I've asked the police and they have confirmed that there is a lot of aggression of young people on the estate. But my task as the Head is not to put moral blame. Luigi needs help to be able to handle such situations with discussion. He needs **official** help (my emphasis).

Mother: But he was not given the opportunity to explain himself.

Chair of Governors: What were you intending to do with the gun?

Luigi: Only to threaten (the racist gangs), not to use it. I wouldn't have the bottle to use it. I loaded it because Scot wanted to know how it's done. I only told Eric that I would boot him because I was reacting to his provocation. I didn't say that I would beat him up. Its not the first time that he has annoyed me around the school.

Chair of Governors (addressing the Head): Is it your wish that he be excluded for the rest of the year and rejoin in September?

Mother: He could go to counselling until September. I could work at him while he is being counselled.

Mr Friend: According to the 1944 Act, Mrs M. has a duty to educate her child in the best way she can. There is no specific need for this to be an exclusion, but whether he would have the right to return in September would depend on whether or not he has been judged to be dangerous.

Governor: If Luigi were excluded, Mrs M. would still have the right to re-apply in September.

LEA officer: As he is a resident of this borough, the LEA would have to take responsibility....

After some discussion of the mechanisms for allowing the boy back into the school after a temporary period out, Mr Friend, Mrs M. (Luigi's mother), Luigi and I leave the room while the governors make their decision. When we are called back in, it is to hear the following verdict.

111

Chair of Governors: We have decided to uphold Mr Friend's decision to exclude permanently. We cannot allow gang warfare in the school. We have a responsibility to the other students. We believe that Luigi has contravened the school rules to an unacceptable extent......

Throughout the proceedings, I was forcibly struck by one fact - the unequal power relations of that situation. The meeting was held in Mr Friend's office, and not in a neutral space. Mr Friend sat upright, presenting his case against the child in an articulate, and confident manner. He dominated the whole discussion invoking his professional duty to all his students whilst also quoting his responsibilities under the law. He was addressing his peers in a language with which they were not only able to engage, but which held their attention and commanded respect. Mrs M. on the other hand, sat with her body hunched forward, and her fingers constantly twisting the strap of her handbag which lay on her lap. She seemed nervous and spoke hesitatingly with a strong London accent. She said very little throughout. Luigi was more articulate than his mother, but apart from his initial explanation and the one question addressed to him, he and his mother were not given the same opportunity to present their case to the panel. There was no follow up of her insistence that the 'facts' may not have been as presented by the headteacher.

It was also interesting to see how the Governors interpreted the events. Their conclusion was that what Luigi had done was to introduce 'gang warfare' into the school, whereas the only 'gang warfare' alluded to in the case was that between different ethnic groups on the council estate and not in the school. Luigi had taken the gun in order to protect himself from racist groups who taunted him on the way to school but were not themselves students of the school. His actual offence was to bring the gun into school and to demonstrate to a friend how it was loaded. As the list above relating to suspensions shows, Luigi was not the first student to bring a gun into school. I later wrote in my diary that 'The mother

112

didn't stand a chance. There were eight white authority figures in judgement of the boy. It was like a court case in which there were several prosecutors and no-one for the defence'.

It is not my aim to condone such dangerous activities by students. It is right and proper that schools should have rules which protect all members of the institution and something needs to be done where students breach these rules. The choice the headteacher had in this case was either to interpret the student's action as a deep-seated psychological problem, or, despite the dangerous nature of the incident, to interpret it as a childish prank which, with proper education and counselling, would not be repeated, or as a genuine desire to use threats to protect himself against a racial attack. One of the governors questions the severity of the headteacher's decision given that the student has not done anything of this nature before. For Mr Friend, it is the apparent pre-meditated nature of the action that points to a psychological inclination to dangerous behaviour on the part of the student. However, pleas by the mother that her son be given time out of school in order to receive counselling is met without a response. When it is suggested that the student could return again in the new academic year, Mr Friend's response is to invoke the 1944 Education Act which places responsibility on the parent and not on the school, to ensure that the child receives an education. This seems to indicate that Mr Friend had decided not to have the student in his school, whatever the arguments. It is difficult to see how, in this case, the headteacher could have argued that expulsion was, for him, 'a last resort'.

Interviews with the Head of Central City Comprehensive

In an interview with Mr Friend organised shortly after Luigi's expulsion, he asked me what I had thought about the 'hearing'. I expressed my concern at the differential power relations that were so obvious to me during the proceedings. He was genuinely concerned about this and told me that he would take this concern to the next meeting of Governors. I

was later informed that parents were free to bring someone to support or represent them to such meetings. However, he also observed that the meeting had been fair and that he 'felt proud to enable the governing body to work so well'. He did not seem conscious of the contradiction between his perception of the hearing being fair, and the unfair context in which he accepted that the 'defendants' were positioned.

Grace (1995) states that

> Moral leadership (also) presents many contradictory elements for contemporary
> headteachers. While 'mission' statements are being constructed for English state
> schools, it is being increasingly understood that the 'mission' which counts is
> success in a competitive market....School survival and job survival depends upon
> being successful in the market....Contemporary headteachers are therefore expected
> to 'market the school', to 'deliver the curriculum' and to 'satisfy the
> consumers'....The moral economy of schooling is in danger of losing other
> commitments (where they existed) to community, collegiality, social justice and the
> public good. None of these considerations is thought to be measurably productive
> of success in the education market place as currently constituted. Headteachers
> who take such values seriously as part of the educational process seem likely to
> face much sharper dilemmas in trying to resolve the contradictions.

Whilst Grace's remarks capture accurately the complex position of headteachers in this market oriented educational environment, he places too much emphasis on external constraints and plays down the extent to which a headteacher might herself or himself subscribe to the image of 'the monster child' discussed in chapter three who, because he or she does not conform to normative notions of 'the ideal child' (Becker, 1963) is therefore assumed to be less deserving of an education than those who fulfil conservative adult expectations . In an impromptu discussion which I was not able to tape-record although I

114

wrote notes soon after, it became clear that, notwithstanding the pressures of the market as described by Grace above, Mr Friend's personal views inclined him towards the expulsion of students, although clearly the market would have placed greater pressure on him to do so than usual. He explained, for example, that Luigi suffered from 'emotional problems' as a result of having witnessed his grandfather being murdered by an uncle, an account which explained why he had told the panel at the 'hearing' that Luigi needed official help. I found his views which he repeated on subsequent occasions, quite striking. He provided me with a paper which had been summarised by a teacher in his school who had studied psychology, setting out the source of his theories. He believed that children's futures were already determined by the time they were aged two or three and there was little society could do to change that.. He also held that it was possible to tell a young person who was destined for a life of crime by the attitude they had towards authority and the manner in which they comported themselves. In relation to this last point, he illustrated his meaning by describing some of the students who were sent to see him for misdemeanours. Some of these students, he said, slouched when they stood before him, or kept their hands in their pockets, or chewed gum or simply seemed unaware of why what they had done should be considered worthy of sanction. He was sure that if one were to look into the backgrounds of these children, one could trace the source of their 'problems' to pre-school days and drew on studies by psychologists from the United States and Britain to confirm his beliefs.

Mr Friend's beliefs were firmly based on a pathological view of social class. Yet he did not come across as an uncaring man. On the contrary, he was popular with staff who talked about him and was gentle and benevolent in his dealings with students in the corridors and playground. He was anxious to learn all he could about 'race' and ethnicity and our interviews often dissolved into interviews of me as he tried to increase his understanding of issues which affected his students. His middle class world view was not a contradiction but underlined his benevolent approach.

115

In a subsequent, taped, discussion with him, I was anxious to find out whether 'race' might also be a determinant of future behaviour and destiny, given that black students were so much more likely to be expelled from his school than other groups. The full text of the interview is presented here.

MB: You mentioned in our last discussion that children's futures were set from a very early age and that background had a lot to do with it. Do you think that this is a universal situation, in other words, regardless of where in the world you are born and raised?

Mr Friend: As you know, the studies I told you about were done in the West, here in the UK and in America. However, there is an unhappy reciprocity potentiating between London working-class life and certain aspects of Afro-Caribbean style that produce a different future for boys. They spend a large amount of time, if not much of their childhood, in groups. They seem to spend much less time in their homes in the evenings, and this is the same as the white working class. These groups establish a street culture which totally dominates them and they have to act up to that style.

MB: Does that have an impact on school exclusion?

Mr Friend: What happens is what I call "unmodulated discipline". When you are in this group, you might behave yourself, but then I don't know what it is you are up to. The dominant ones in these groups lead the others and the bigger ones are cast into playing the part of the masculine macho type. There develops a style of language which is unsubtle and is not suited to expressing subtleties.

MB: So what is it that gives African-Caribbean youth this particular perspective which is different from other ethnic groups?

Mr. Friend: It is similar to the white working class but is overlaid by a particular Afro-Caribbean flavour which I can't quite analyse. They are just not allowed to admit to any kind of worry. It masculinizes them and thus is continued in school. Bangladeshis are becoming a problem. They are beginning to cause problems across London. But there are some observable differences. The Afro-Caribbeans are similar to the white working -class, but the package is different. Colour is part of it because there is evidence of prejudice. They are also brought up from an early age to believe that the world is against them and that they have to be against the world.

MB: So you think the fault lies in the families?

Mr. Friend: I don't think it's anything to do with single parenting: I'm inclined to hold exactly the opposite view and say that those who don't have the male role model at home might do slightly better than those with a male example.

MB: Black males then, from your point of view, are a negative influence?

Mr. Friend: Girls you see are closer to their mothers than boys are to any parent. Girls are encouraged from an early age to show their feelings but boys are encouraged not to have feelings. Girls learn how to express themselves better. Those families where Caribbean grammar is spoken speak quite a different language and they don't get the sympathy that a Bosnian refugee would get. You have to capture the nuances. Language plays a bigger part than has been admitted and schools have not been helpful to the Afro-Caribbean child. The middle-class Caribbean child speaks perfect English but teachers are afraid to tell the working-class Caribbean child that that is not the way to say it so children don't develop a repertoire of ways of getting about. Consequently when in difficulties they don't have the 'social graces' or styles to get them out of it. Caribbean boys have a self-protective aura around them which leads them to conclude that whenever they are

criticised it's because they are black. You won't get that from the middle class Caribbean or African child.

MB: But why, if the white working classes have similar experiences which presumably also affects them at school, should black students be over-represented in exclusions to the extent that they are?

Mr Friend: Afro-Caribbeans have a two-way attitude to authority. On the one hand, it is quite subservient, and on the other it is belligerent. In a funny way, I think that boys are more subservient yet more likely to knock against authority as opposed to using negotiation. These boys actually assign more power to certain people than those people actually have, and then they knock against it. They knock against it because they elevate this authority to be more powerful than it is.

This discussion seems to me to signal a genuine attempt by Mr. Friend to understand the 'Other' in all their complexity rather than the one-dimensional presentations of most assumptions and stereotypes about black people, or more precisely, black men.

Mr. Friend's thesis is, however, heavily premised on a white middle class norm which casts the working classes of all ethnicities in Britain in the role of deviants (see Sharp and Green, 1975; Keddie, 1984). It does not seem to be a racist perspective, but one which is both gendered and class based. Black males, from this perspective, appear to be in multiple jeopardy. As black, they face prejudice and so in protecting themselves they learn to become over-sensitive about their colour. As male, they do not receive the same level and quality of nurturing as girls and therefore depend on negative macho street cultures for their sense of identity. As working-class (Caribbean) they do not learn the nuances and subtleties of the English language which would help them negotiate their way in the world. As young people, the very adults they ought to look to for examples, namely black men, have themselves been socialised in this way and therefore do not offer a different, more

118

positive role model. All this positions black young males tenuously (perhaps vicariously?) and paradoxically in relation to the white middle class world of schools. For these reasons, and in particular because of the absence of 'social graces' to help them negotiate the world, black boys in school are more likely to 'knock against' authority. The implication seems to be that this accounts for the differential levels of punishment which they receive. It is not the deed per se, but the manner in which it is discussed and negotiated that gets black males into greater trouble.

Mr Friend's observations (though not his interpretation) are supported by Majors and Billson (1992). They contend that black males in America develop coping strategies or 'cool pose', which helps them survive the racism and oppression which they face on a daily basis. They characterise 'cool pose' as a form of 'masking', a way of behaving which prevents white society from ever knowing what the black man is truly like, what he wants, or what he feels. This is a necessary self-protecting strategy which developed out of the historical legacy of slavery and continues as a response to present day experiences of racism and discrimination which are practised in specific ways against black males. This is something that black males learn from an early age. Mr Friend declares that there is a specific Afro-Caribbean inflection to street life which he can't quite analyse. Majors and Billson would argue that this is precisely the intention of 'cool pose'- to conceal and confuse. However, they also argue that 'cool pose' creates particular dilemmas for the adolescent black male. Citing Fordham and Ogbu (1984), they state that because black adolescent males know that they are given inferior education and treated differently by teachers, they also know that they are unlikely to be given the rewards of academic success through employment, they develop

> an oppositional social identity and cultural frame of reference that results in a
> terrible dilemma: If the black child tries to conform to the expectations of white-

dominated schools, he may be accused by his peers of "acting white" and may sense himself that he is losing his own culture - if he does not conform, he is labelled lazy, slow, or difficult by adults who have significant reward power over him (p. 47).

These are important arguments that require investigation in the British context in order to enable us to understand the complexity of the relationship between 'race' and education. There are, however, two problems with both these perspectives. Majors and Billson's over-deterministic theory leaves no room for young black males to develop cultures which reflect localised interests and practices which might relate in a broad historical sense to racism, but might also be independent of that experience. This form of essentialism leaves little room for an analysis of other social factors which might be present in the life experiences of black males (whether in Britain or the USA).

Conversely, Mr Friend's theory does not explain why black girls, despite the more supportive nurturing which they receive and the fact that they are less likely to be influenced by macho street cultures, are nevertheless more likely to be suspended and expelled from school than white girls (see School Exclusion Unit, 1998). The focus on the cultural aspects of the behaviour of *working class* young males, and of black males, obscures the role of the wider society and indeed of schools on the educational experiences of young people (Noguera, 1996). It also, as already stated, ignores the ideological orientation of those in power to expel a student from, or retain him/her in school. The example of the 'hearing' above, as well as the interview do not present a headteacher who will do all in his power to ensure that students are given every opportunity to correct their behaviour so that expulsion is indeed the final act of despair on the part of the school. The overwhelming message is that they are sometimes expelled because they do not have the cultural capital to negotiate in acceptable ways with teachers

120

and others in authority. A major problem of black students, he argues, is their lack of social graces and of communication skills. He did also express the view that these should be taught in school and that teachers had to bear responsibility for this neglect. Such mitigating factors were not, however, considered in an expulsion.

That headteachers are placed by external constraints in a dilemma with regard to suspensions and expulsions is not denied. Mr Friend himself stated in an interview that ultimately, he has to do what his teachers want him to do especially in a context where teachers face a lot of stress and could go on strike if their views about certain students are not heeded. However, this argument would, in relation to black students, be much stronger if the debates around the suspension and expulsion of black children from school were a recent phenomenon specific to the post-1988 Education Reform Act. Black children were over-represented in suspensions and expulsions long before the introduction of the National Curriculum, indicating that over and above the difficulties created for schools and for teachers by official edicts, there is a need to examine the racialised nature of education and embrace that as part of the attempt in every school to understand what is going on in relation to specific children or specific groups of children. Over and above that is the type of leadership provided by the headteacher and his or her ideological orientation towards students. The personal role of the headteacher in determining the futures of black students (and indeed all students) is demonstrated clearly in the example of a headteacher whose policy was not to expel students. The example of Mrs C. below is given in order to highlight what I mean by this. Mrs C's school was part of a study funded by the DfEE and in which I took part. It was not a study about 'school exclusions' but is used here to underline the personal role of the headteacher which shows that he or she can shape the direction of a school and disseminate a vision which places students at the centre of the decision-making process.

Northern Catholic Secondary School

Northern Catholic School is different in many ways to Central City School. Although it is also located on split sites, it is a much smaller school with only 700 students. It is a Catholic school, but although such schools are said to be guided by 'an inspirational ideology' (Bryk et al.1993), evidence from two other Catholic Schools of equal size in the DfEE study indicates that Catholic schools are just as varied in their practices as any other schools. This was very clear in relation to expulsion where there was a bigger gap between Northern Catholic school and the other two Catholic schools than there was between the two Catholic schools and Central City Comprehensive. What this indicates is that what happens in each school is dependent on the internal culture of that school. It is my view that this culture depends to a large extent on the headteacher and the kind of lead they give.

Mrs C., the headteacher of Northern Catholic School, took the firm line that adults in the school are ultimately responsible for creating an environment which makes all children of whatever class or background feel that they are an equal part of the school community and that they are all equally valued. This, it may be argued, is the kind of rhetoric to which all schools would make a claim. However, it was in the realisation of the rhetoric that Mrs C. provided the lead. It is not possible to provide an in-depth description of Mrs C's philosophy and how this worked in the school. Suffice to say that she took as her starting point the fact that children are not only very different ethnically, linguistically, culturally, economically, and in terms of age, but that they bring these different experiences with them to school. It is then up to the school to create the environment and the structures which accommodate these differences rather than one which attempts to 'treat children the same'. Below are two examples of how this was translated into practice, examples which I hope will help to underscore the point about the importance of the headteacher's personal style and ideological orientation on the question of 'exclusion'.

122

One example was an Irish student who came from difficult family circumstances. Both parents were in prison and the student had been moved from one environment to another and had experienced very little stability in his life. This reflected itself in his attendance and behaviour at school. He truanted more than he attended school and when he did attend, he was disruptive and difficult to deal with. Teachers reached a point where they felt that they could no longer teach when he was in the class and the overwhelming opinion was that he should be expelled. Mrs C. described what happened.

In year 10 we said to him, "We know that you have been pushing to live independently and we can help you because we know that you can achieve". I asked staff to be a little understanding because coming from that kind of background with a whole lot of problems he needed a little care because he wasn't getting that kind of care at home. In Year 10 we looked at his work and decided that realistically he couldn't continue doing 9 GCSE's because he was so far behind. We thought he should aim to do 5 GCSE's and that he should be provided with the time that he needed to do that. We said that if he did his 5 GCSE's, and if he attended we would give him a reference to make sure that he went on and had a quality life afterwards. The boy ended up with 97% attendance in Year 11. 97%! He was beaming like an infant when I told him that he had achieved 97% attendance. He had made it his business to be in school and do the GCSE's he could. When they were having one of the subjects he wasn't doing, he would come and sit in my office and have all his work laid out. He could come and talk to me if he was feeling low and needed to talk to someone. We recognised that he was a good lad at heart. He is a success story, and because he has shown himself to be responsible, he had a holiday with his uncle's family who can look after him

and protect him. He has turned out to be a lad you can talk to **and** he has his GCSE's! (original emphasis) (DfEE study, pg.196).

What is obvious here is the compassion with which this headteacher viewed the student's problems. The student's difficult family circumstances were recognised, but rather than expel him for the psychological effects his personal problems created, the school decided that he needed protecting and he needed help. This contrasts sharply with the approach taken at Central City where Luigi's alleged psychological problems were presented as a strong reason for his expulsion. The two cases cannot of course be compared as they were not only very different, but occurred in different school contexts. In a school as large as Central City, it may not be as easy to provide the personal caring and concern that is possible at North Catholic. What is being argued here is the different orientation of the headteachers, where one is willing to explore every opportunity to keep the student in school whereas the other presents every argument to get the student out.

The second example was a black student at Northern Catholic, also in Year 10, who was said to be 'in a very vulnerable position'. This student spent his free time with 'a gang' of lads who were no longer at school, spent most of their time 'hanging out' on the street and were often harassed by the police. He was seen as a very difficult student who tested teachers' patience to the limits. The headteacher took a personal interest in him, talking to him about his future, counselling him and generally giving him responsibility in the school. Teachers were asked to try to motivate him as much as they could and because he was admired by students as someone who was 'tough', 'grown up' (because of his out-of-school existence) and not a 'nerd', teachers used his good behaviour to show others especially the younger ones that they did not have to break school rules or be defiant in order to be popular At the beginning of the DfEE study, I interviewed this student whose attitude then, at the beginning of Year 10, was,

124

I don't see the point of school. I come because my parents make me. But I'm not bothered about GCSE's. I know I'll be OK.

Towards the end of the year I interviewed him again and this is what he had to say.

I hang out with people who are older than me. They are not in school. They are not employed. I don't think I'll go in the same direction as them. I think it's important to have GCSE's (DfEE study, p.195)

Some time after the student had left school, I asked Mrs C. what had happened to him and was told that he had obtained GCSEs and was a community worker.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for recognition of the central role of the headteacher in creating the specific ethos and culture of a school. This culture can be one in which the suspension and expulsion of students from school is accepted as the normal response to problems of discipline, or it can be one in which whilst every case is taken on its merits, the structures are also adjusted to accommodate the needs of each individual. Whilst I agree with Grace, (1995) that league tables put pressure on headteachers to expel students from school, I also argue that external pressures are over-emphasised at the expense of individual initiative and the ideological orientation of the headteacher. Contexts differ, however, and some contexts may place the headteacher in a more difficult position than his or her colleagues in other contexts. This, I argue may be valid in a general sense, but does not account for the over-representation of some ethnic groups over others.

I began by illustrating the level and extent of over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions at Central City Comprehensive and against this data I analysed the headteacher's view of expulsions generally and his explanation of why black Caribbean students were over-represented amongst those who were suspended and expelled. In order to understand the headteacher's ideological position in relation to the expulsion of students, I described an 'exclusion hearing' in which the headteacher had a clear opportunity to accept the student back into the school. The proposal from Luigi's mother was that he be given a suspension during which time she would take personal responsibility to ensure that he received some counselling. Mr Friend's insistence that Luigi was 'dangerous' fits well with his theory that some children's circumstances pre-dispose them to a life of crime and correlates with his refusal to give the student another chance. The problems at Central City were however, more complex in that the headteacher had to make some difficult decisions in a context in which ethnic rivalries within the communities served by the school were likely to spill over into the school itself. A careful juggling game had to be played to ensure that all ethnic groups felt that the headteacher was not taking one side against another.

The extent to which these considerations may have influenced Mr Friend's decision in Luigi's case can only be speculative. However, as this student was of Bengali and Italian origin and therefore did not fit into the frame of the 'over-excluded' black student, an interview was conducted which sought to examine the extent to which Mr Friend's deterministic views of childhood applied to black students. Once again, social class emerged as a strong determining feature of his personal values and beliefs. It was a view which seemed to imply that the role of schools was to assimilate the working-classes whatever their ethnic specificity. The emphasis was on the class/cultural characteristics of students and not on the structural dimension of their experience.

This view was contrasted with that of a headteacher who did not expel students but sought different ways of supporting and accommodating their needs. There seems little doubt that a different ideological approach would have seen the two students from Northern Catholic School expelled, with very different outcomes for both of them.

In the next chapter I extend this argument about the personal responsibilities of individuals in affecting the life chances of students. In this case, I focus on the ideological orientation of individual teachers, and argue that, just as headteachers can and do hold perspectives which can work for or against students, so too can teachers. This is of particular importance in relation to suspensions and expulsions as these are essentially the gates through which students are either allowed to complete their education, or to drop out prematurely.

CHAPTER SIX

Teacher Perspectives

So far, I have made a case against the expulsion of students from school. I indicated that expulsion is one of the ways in which schools sustain hegemonic practices and reproduce social inequality which in turn complies with the economic interests of the most powerful in society. To position myself thus, however, implies that there are pedagogic practices and other ways of relating to students which do not have these effects or at the very least, which can help to minimise these effects. In chapter five, I showed how the ideological orientation of the headteacher is important in deciding the fate of students. By contrasting the orientation of two headteachers, it was possible to see that students' lives could be affected in positive or negative ways depending on whether or not the welfare and interests of the students were placed at the centre of any disciplinary decisions. A headteacher is thus either punitive or redemptory in his/her approach to students' misdemeanours, with actual consequences for the students concerned. Similarly in this chapter I examine the 'ideological orientation' of teachers and discuss ways in which teachers might have an effect on the emotional and academic welfare of their students, with particular reference to black students.

After thirty years of studying the pedagogic practices of teachers in the USA, Martin Haberman (1995) concluded that there were certain characteristics which made some teachers successful with 'children in poverty' or children in inner city schools, most of whom were African American and Latino. He termed such teachers 'Star' teachers. Similarly, in her study of schools, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) identified teachers whom she found to be particularly effective with African American students. These educationists

and others (see Fine, 1991; Evertson and Emmer 1992; Cullingford et al, 1997) contend that the way teachers see their jobs and the attitudes they hold of their students, affects how they carry out their jobs as teachers. They outlined the features which they found to contribute to the effectiveness of teachers of students from minority ethnic groups. An important feature of this was the kind of attitude that teachers held towards their students, their ability to respect their students' identities and to provide teaching which was both culturally relevant and engaging. I have drawn on the work of these educationists as a framework for discussing the relationships between teachers and black students. I have found the following themes from their work to be the most relevant for assessing the extent to which teachers might compound or mitigate the effects of school processes on the general exclusion of students.

1. To what extent do teachers consider particular students such as working class, black or students with difficulties as 'problems' that someone else should deal with?

2. To what extent do they take responsibility for the behaviour and learning outcomes of students?

3. To what extent do teachers hold parents responsible for the poor behaviour of students in the classroom?

4. To what extent do they recognise the damaging effects of structural and systemic processes on their own teaching and on students' learning and how far do they seek to reduce these effects?

I examine the perspectives of teachers on the question of behaviour and discipline in the light of these four themes. The aim is to extend further the theme discussed so far that

129

teachers as individuals and schools as institutions need to be aware of the ways in which their practices contribute to or reduce the life chances of their students. This issue of the teacher's personal perspective of or attitude to discipline and to students in general is particularly important given the relationship between 'exclusion' and the prison system presented earlier.

For ease of coding, I divided teachers' responses into four categories to correlate with the above themes. There were those who saw the problem of 'exclusions' as a problem of   A - students; B - themselves/school.   C - parents; and   D - the system;

To categorise teachers in this way is not to imply that any of them were either 'star' teachers, or 'bad' teachers or that any of them held to only one view. As Mickelson, (1990:58) states,

People do not adhere to simple unidimensional belief systems. Rather, belief systems are often multi-layered and contradictory; they reflect academic or abstract values and beliefs about society, as well as practices or concrete levels of experience.

It is recognised that teaching is a complex process and that without the sustained observation of many teachers, it was not appropriate for me to label teachers as either good or bad, effective or ineffective. There were times, for example, when teachers expressed contradictory views. Some would, at times, condemn black students in general and then point out individuals who did not fit the group image. Placing teachers into categories merely serves to highlight those *ideological orientations* which were more or less conducive to maintaining black (and by extension, all) students in the school, using the categories and frameworks of those who have carried out detailed observational studies of teachers. The overall aim is to attempt to establish, through the discourses of teachers, the
130

extent to which their ideological orientations to teaching and learning could have affected the level of black student over-representation in suspensions and expulsions. Although it would be difficult, without the statistical evidence, to draw a direct relationship between *an individual's* ideological orientation and the *actual suspension* or *expulsion* of a student from school, one can with some confidence contend that such ideologies, or values and beliefs, had a direct effect on the exclusion or inclusion of students from equal participation in schooling. One can assume this in a general sense because in all the schools studied, the number of referrals (that is, reports of poor or disruptive behaviour) by the classroom teacher was often crucial in deciding whether a student should be suspended, whilst the number of suspensions were in all cases, taken into account for deciding an expulsion. A teacher's ideological orientation (namely, the extent to which the teacher took responsibility for student behaviour) was likely to determine the number of referrals of students a teacher would make. Equally a teacher's racialised perspectives were likely to affect the outcomes of black and other minority students.

The Sample.

My analysis is based on interviews with *forty-three* of the fifty-one teachers interviewed in the three schools. Four of the interviews from Shire school were very brief and did not provide sufficient information to be useful, and four teachers declined to discuss the issue of black student over-representation.

All the teachers from Shire School had been interviewed about *specific* students in the school. The interviews were semi-structured in order to cover more or less the same questions for each of the students involved in the study. This proved to be a useful way of helping me to see whether teachers demonstrated a different set of values and beliefs when talking about individuals rather than expressing general theories about discipline or issues of 'race'. Interviews at the two London schools were unstructured but were all based on

the central question of investigation in these schools, namely, why African-Caribbean students were over-represented in all categories of 'exclusion' from the school.

In total therefore, the analysis is based on interviews with eleven teachers from Shire School, eleven from North City School and twenty-one from Central City School. There were thirty white teachers, and thirteen black teachers. The teachers listed below and quoted in this chapter are representative of the general perspectives of these teachers. There were no black teachers at Shire School. North City School had the most black teachers. Unfortunately, the study was prematurely terminated in this school and only three white teachers in total were interviewed. Two out of six black teachers from Central City are cited.

Teachers cited in chapter

	Shire School	North City	Central City
White	Brenda Willis	Deputy Head	Headteacher
	Mrs Quinn	Helen Small	Ingrid Mann
	Mr Spall		Sam Peters
	David Tolman		Hugh McNeal
	Olga Steyn		Pat Sinclair
	Ms Yearwood		Irene McMaster
			Marian Clarke
			Sandra Jefferson
Black		Herman Davey	Mary Christian
		Mrs Pickard	Mr Benjamin
		Henry Price	
		Daryl Morrison	
		Steven Hill	
		Brenda Valley	

Teacher Ideologies and School 'Exclusions'

Ideologies, according to Hall (1992), reveal themselves through discourse. Discourses, he states, are

> a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements are made about a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed. (1992:291)

Through the semi-structured and unstructured interviews it was possible to discern the ways in which teachers made sense of, or constructed knowledge about discipline in schools with particular reference to the behaviours of black students. Haberman (1995) argues that discipline is not a priority for 'star' teachers because they see problems as part of their job. He compares them to dentists who he says,

> are not floored when a patient's open mouth reveals diseased gums or decayed teeth.....They assume problems are the reason for needing skilled practitioners" (op.cit. pg.4).

Thus Haberman's successful teachers did not see poor student behaviour as extraneous to the task of teaching, but as part and parcel of the task of teaching. They therefore took responsibility for students' behaviour by using their organisational and pedagogic skills to keep students learning and engaged, such that discipline was not a major issue for them. Such teachers found ways of engaging even the most difficult of students, recognising that each individual was unique and brought with them a unique set of problems as well as talents and interests. In the last chapter I gave an example of a headteacher who took just

134

this approach to the students in her school. Whilst this doctoral study did not go out to find 'star' teachers, there were many examples of students who were considered to be difficult by some teachers and yet whom other teachers managed to inspire and engage in ways which brought out the best in the student.

A. The Problem of Students

In total there were 19 teachers who saw a problem with students, that is, they saw the problem of discipline as a problem of the general deterioration of young people in the manner discussed in chapter three. Their ideological orientation was therefore to place the blame for poor behaviour on students. These teachers expressed frustration at the difficulties they faced with students in general but black students in particular in the classroom.

Of the nineteen, there were five (two white men, two white women and one black woman) who felt that black students behaved in ways more deserving of suspension or expulsion than other groups of students and that there were no mitigating factors. At no point did they indicate that students might have been bored, or not stretched, or that there may have been a problem with the organisation or content of their lessons, or indeed that individual students may have had problems and might have needed some support. One of the teachers talked specifically about the black students she taught - students who were the subject of discussion by all the other teachers in her school. She personally found these students to be a problem but the fact that other teachers had no problem with these students is itself an indication that these students did not have 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' but that one had to consider the teachers' own styles or the messages which they conveyed to students which may have produced these negative effects. Cullingford and Morrison (1997: 67) for example state that

...even if unintended, teachers can act as a barrier to particular children feeling an accepted part of the school system through subtle forms of bullying that labels, differentiates and excludes.

What was common amongst these five teachers was the belief that there was something 'wrong' with black students. In a discussion with two Home Economics teachers, Brenda Willis and Mrs Quinn, I asked questions about specific students at Shire School whose progress I was tracking. They taught three of these students, but were only able to talk about two of them as the third was a persistent truant and they had hardly seen this student. These teachers illustrate what I mean by teachers' ideological orientation as evidenced in their discourses about black students. It will be seen in the examples given below, that teachers go from the specific, to the broader category of black pupils without any prompting on my part.

MB. What kind of progress would you say Gavin was making?

Brenda Willis. Very little. Very little. He and Sean are grossly underachieving. Which is sad really because they are both quite intelligent boys.

MB. Why do you suppose they are not making any progress?

Mrs Quinn. If you ask me, and I'm sorry that I've got to say it, I think they have a real problem about their colour. I think that's a real problem with our black pupils. I find it inconceivable that a teacher would deliberately single out a pupil because of their colour. I think something happens to the Afro-Caribbean children when they get to the second or third year. If you start talking to some of them, there is an underlying chip on the shoulder. And yet it's not because of their race that they are picked on. It's because they become so laid back. They stop trying. I don't know what it is about them that they take things so easy.

136

Brenda Willis. We all have off days, children have off days, it's not just Afro-Caribbean children. It's the underachieving that bothers me.

Mrs Quinn. Oh as people, they are super, or can be. They have such outgoing personalities.

Brenda Willis. But do you think that's general, because there's Nigel who said, "I've worked hard in years 1 and 2, and I've decided that I'm not working anymore". He's English, British.

Mrs Quinn. That's if you look at it on an individual basis. But there's something...I'm sure something happens to some of them which may lie dormant and they may try to sweep it under the carpet for so long, and then it comes to the fore.. It's this colour difference. I never seem to notice it in any other backgrounds....It seems such a shame to feel that different colours should have any effect on any of us because there is beauty in all peoples, whether they are Japanese, or Chinese, all the different colours.

One can see from this conversation how Brenda Willis tries to cling to a notion of diversity which is not bound by colour, whereas Mrs Quinn, despite her protestations about beauty in all peoples, seems sure that colour is largely responsible for people acting in particular ways, thus cancelling out or at any rate reducing the possibility of viewing black students as individuals. Although she makes an attempt to find mitigating circumstances when she talks about 'something happening to *some* of them', this is immediately cancelled out by her statement that, 'I never seem to notice it in any other backgrounds', thus implying that there is something wrong with black people (unlike Japanese, Chinese etc) for noticing colour and for letting it 'come to the fore'.

Another teacher in this school (Ms Yearwood) about whom I had noted in my diary, after an interview with her, that she was 'a caring teacher, concerned about underachievement of

137

black pupils' drew on the same discourses of 'race' to express her frustration with one black student's behaviour. She entered the office of the Head of Year whom I was interviewing and declared,

> I just don't know what to do about Sean. I'm absolutely tearing my hair out.

Then turning to me she said,

> Maybe **you** could tell me what to do. **You** must know what makes **them** tick! (My emphasis)

I had seen, but had not yet spoken to this student. Ms Yearwood, on the other hand, was his teacher and was therefore in a much better position than me to know 'what made *him* tick'. She nevertheless assumed, not only that all black students were likely to or did indeed behave in ways which left her 'tearing her hair out', even though she did not teach all the black students in the school, but that I, as a black person, would have unique insight into the specific behavioural characteristics of black people. As a teacher of many year's experience, it seems unlikely that she would have been appealing to a researcher who was new to the school to tell her what to do about the behaviour of students in general. Her initial appeal to the Head of Year is for help with a specific student, but it becomes clear that she considers that the kind of problem she is faced with is too alien and therefore beyond her or any other white person's understanding because it is lodged somewhere in the 'blackness' of the student and not just in his behaviour.

In another example, I had been observing a science lesson in which I noted that two boys, one white and one black who sat several paces apart, had been the most talkative in the class and had been rightly reprimanded most often. I had also noted, however, that the white student had laughed, chatted, walked about and thrown things many more times than the black student and yet the black student had had his name called out twelve times in the

138

course of a one hour lesson and the white student had been called out five times. On a number of occasions, the black student had protested, (and I had seen) that he was engaged in what might be termed 'legitimate' activity - borrowing a ruler and then returning it, or throwing paper into the waste paper basket - activities in which a lot of other students were taking part. I asked the teacher afterwards whether he had been conscious of picking on the black student.

Mr Spall - Shire School: I do notice Sam more than I do others because there are so few black children in the class. But I confess I hadn't realised that I called him out that often. He's just so physical you see. The black kids in the school are very physical. You notice it in sport. I mean, do you think they have to be so physical just to survive? I mean the world over, blacks excel in the very physical sports. Do you think they need to, you know, make their mark on the world just to survive as a species?

In his study of Kilby School, Mac an Ghaill (1988) described the racist stereotypes held of black students as 'crude caricatures'. He noted how African Caribbean students were generally judged in behavioural and not academic terms unlike the 'Asian' students who were more likely to be judged on academic terms. The example above supports the findings of Mac an Ghaill but also underscores the biological basis on which some teachers interpreted the behaviour of black students. The teachers described here illustrate the use of 'racial frames of reference' (Figueroa, 1991) to assign particular characteristics to whole groups of students even in the face of individuals who defy the stereotype. Conversely, the stereotype could be used to make assumptions about individual behaviour. Mrs Quinn again.

MB. Do you teach Glenda?

139

<u>Mrs Quinn.</u> I don't actually teach her. I bump into her in the corridor. She's very pleasant, but I imagine as soon as you get her into a situation where you want her to work, there could be a lot of conflict. I think she's very, I think she's got a chip on her shoulder. She's never accused me of picking on her, but I could imagine that's what she would do. She's got a kind of glare in her eyes of animosity.

That this student has been 'written off' on the basis possibly of staffroom talk is evident from the authoritative way in which the teacher assumes *without personal knowledge*, what the student is likely to do. The 'chip on the shoulder', which Mac an Ghaill also found to be one of the ways in which teachers typified the black students , is less therefore, an indication of the student's individuality, but is based on a 'truth' about black people as she illustrated in her earlier statement in which she said that black students had a problem with colour. She is unaware of the contradiction in her statement in which on the one hand the student is said to be very pleasant, and on the other, has 'a glare in her eyes of animosity'. It does not occur to Mrs Quinn that it may be <u>she</u> and other teachers who have a problem with colour and not the black students. That this was a distinct possibility was underlined by teachers who are discussed in the next section. This same student Glenda was, for example, discussed with another teacher who fitted category B - that is teachers who saw the problem as one of the school or the teacher and not the student. But for 'Students as Problem' teachers, conflict with black students is presented as a given.

The kind of essentializing seen above was a common feature of these five teachers, although Mrs Pickard's (black teacher, North City School) frustration with black students had its roots, not in biology but in youth cultures.

140

Mrs Pickard. It really upsets me to see the way they behave. It's almost as if they have to prove something, you know, "I am the greatest, I can beat you all up, I am the coolest kid on the block".

MB. Would you say that the black pupils are the only ones to behave like that.

Mrs Pickard. Yes, and that's what makes me so sad, because at the end of the day it's going to be harder on them to get a job than the white kids. But no matter how much I try to tell them that it's a tough world out there for black people, they just don't seem to care.

MB. Do all the black students you teach behave like that.

Mrs Pickard. Well no, there are some exceptions. James, for example, is very quiet. He is not the brightest of kids, but he gets on with his work, and is no trouble.

MB. Is James different because of his personality or are there other factors which affect black students, like for example racism, or family, I mean, some people say that these are....

Mrs Pickard. No. I mean, I'm not denying that there is racism in the society, in the school even. But *I'm* certainly not going to be racist toward them and that doesn't stop them behaving badly. I mean, I went to school in this country so I know about racism, and as far as families are concerned, it's just not true. Black families are very ambitious for their children, and I would say *especially* the single parents. I find that the parents are very supportive. I just think that some of them (black students) want to please their friends so much, they are out of control...

Whilst there were other teachers who thought that peer group cultures had a particular effect on black students, Mrs Pickard was the only one, out of all the black teachers interviewed in her school, who thought that black students not only behaved worse than all other groups, but that there were no other factors beyond these students themselves, to

141

explain their behaviour. Her 'I am doing the best I can' attitude was reminiscent of teachers who lay the blame of exclusion entirely at the door of the students. There is no analysis of whether 'doing one's best' was in fact doing what was right for students. There was also an assumption, perhaps a miscalculation on her part, that these students had their work futures in the forefront of their minds.

Noguera (1997) argues that teachers make the mistake of focusing on future employment as a way of motivating students, whereas young people, and especially those young people who already see how their own communities are excluded from the job market, see little relation between the education they get and opportunities for employment (see also Fine, 1991; Ogbu, 1988). Mrs Pickard's school was in fact located in an area with the highest unemployment in London.

Haberman (1995) contends that the best teachers try to make learning itself the reward for being in school, so that they try to make sure that students want to be in school because 'learning feels good' and not for some external reward. It seems, however, that the solution is not to present 'learning for its own sake' as the reason for being in school, but to present learning as both fun **and** a way of increasing one's employment opportunities. What was clear about Mrs Pickard and the other teachers in this category, was not that they did not care, and Mrs Pickard was not unaware of difficulties that black students might face. Rather, what was interesting about the responses of these teachers, was the lack of analysis of the teacher's own role in the behaviour of students and how this might have affected the nature of the relationship they had with students. The science lesson which I observed and which I mentioned above seemed to me to be boring for the students, the majority of whom were off task and spent most of their time chatting, laughing and walking about with seemingly very little attention being paid to the teacher who in turn spent a considerable amount of time reprimanding students.

142

Ten of the teachers who thought that black students presented a problem, were, unlike the five teachers discussed above, able to see the behaviour of black students not only as a problem *of* black students, but in the context of a system of schooling which compounded the problems faced *by* black students. In other words, from these teachers' perspective, black students in general behaved in ways that were more likely to contravene school rules and lead to suspension or expulsion. There was therefore something about being black that was a problem. However, they also recognised that processes of general exclusion of black students took place in the school and saw this as equally a problem for the maintenance of discipline. These are some of the responses given by these teachers to the question, "Why do you suppose that African Caribbean students are over-represented in exclusions in this school?"

> Ingrid Mann (white Head of Department, Central City School): Because I think they are quicker to confrontation...Their reactions to situations are often more extreme, either through the kind of language they use or their body language I also think that the Afro-Caribbean kids in the school are more street... more quickly.... are keen to have an image. I'm not saying they necessarily want to have a bad image, but image is very important, kudos, street cred is important. But unfortunately, a lot of, you know, the contributing factors to street cred - having the right language, wearing the right clothes, hearing the right music, being able to quote the right, you know, the right musicians are not what school is about . But black kids often complain about unfair treatment and I think as a school we have a duty to look at that.....

Ingrid Mann sees the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions as justified, but is prepared to concede that they might also have a legitimate grievance. A

143

black Head of Department from North City School had a similar perspective. He, however, was of the view that the more physical presence of black male students was intimidating to teachers, such that they then did not reprimand them, thereby allowing their behaviour to deteriorate to the point of a suspension or expulsion. This was his answer to the question posed above.

> Henry Price (black Head of Department. North City School): I think first of all, they tend to stay in school, unlike white pupils who if they are disenchanted with school, just don't come. Black parents expect their children to come to school. They tend to expect the school to sort things out. Secondly, I think there is a socialisation problem in that a lot of black boys are very macho and the way they act is very challenging. They are quite often defiant to authority because they have a lot of negative feelings towards school. But I also think a large number of teachers feel challenged by, or physically threatened by black pupils and they don't challenge their behaviour. Therefore their behaviour becomes outrageous and they are then going to be removed from the school. I just think that the way black people behave is just not understood by white teachers.

Henry Price echoes the view of Mr Friend (the headteacher of Central City) that black students present a macho image and also that youth cultures and the need for 'street cred' is detrimental to black students in so far as it contravenes expected modes of behaviour in the school. It is evident here that the onus is placed on both the students and the teachers, but, whereas it is expected that students will conform to existing middle class norms and values of schooling, there seems to be no expectation that teachers could themselves do something which could enhance the students' experience of school (Ladson-Billings, 1994 op.cit). It is, from this perspective, the peer group cultures of black youth that need to change.

144

Sam Peters illustrates the confusion that white teachers experience in the face of black youth and the peer group. It is the more exaggerated modes of 'normal' peer group behaviour that puzzle him and which he characterises as 'bizarre'. He is nevertheless able to see that the expulsion and suspension of black students does not rest with the black students alone.

Sam Peters (white Head of Department, Central School): Well, one of the things I think is peer group pressure. It's just not cred to be academic, you know, if you're good at books, then you're a bit iffy there, you know, there's always this pressure to be ....because, I mean I've got a GCSE group and there are three Afro-Caribbeans in there. All extremely able. Physically able, there's no doubt about that, but also academically able, but their behaviour is most bizarre. One of them obviously needs to seek attention all the time, and I've said to him that if he behaved like that outside, he'd be arrested.... There's another kid who is, I think wants to succeed but because he's mates with the other two, he's got to be seen to be, you know, bouncing about, jack the lad, not conforming, pushing the limits......But on the other hand, there doesn't seem to be a standard, I know it's difficult and you have to treat each case individually, but there doesn't seem to be any sort of standardisation of levels of punishment that if (a pupil) goes beyond a certain level, then this must happen. (For example) an act of violence is an act of violence and it has to be dealt with, but I mean, if you have an act of violence and one child gets excluded for it, it's very difficult to defend why there wasn't an exclusion for another child involved in violence, and this really concerns me as far as the Afro-Caribbean children are concerned.

These three Heads of Department capture accurately the perspectives of this group of teachers. They consider that school is about a given set of expectations and that in order to meet these expectations, there are established processes and procedures that need to be followed by both teachers and students. What this amounts to is that students are in school to learn and teachers to teach and that students must comport themselves in a particular way if teachers are to be able to do their job. But conversely, teachers must treat students fairly in order not to compound *an already existing problem* of black students' 'volatility' and greater susceptibility to peer group pressure. Sam Peters, as did other teachers, alludes to unfair treatment of black students which is systemic and not confined to the actions of individual teachers. An implicit contradiction in this perspective is that whilst black students *as a group* are seen to be *inclined* to behave in particular ways, there is nevertheless an appeal to the individual (as Sam Peters illustrates above) to behave differently. There is little recognition of the tension created for black students in the expectation that they behave as individuals whilst being judged and assessed as a group.

That teachers need to treat all students fairly can be accepted as a given. However, the notion that black students behaved, not just differently, but worse than other students was open to question as the perspectives of other teachers discussed below, show. There are, however, three other points to consider. The first is the peer group. There is little doubt that these teachers, including the headteacher of Central City, considers the peer group to be a negative influence on black students and more so than on white or 'Asian' students. That this might be the case must therefore be considered. However, that this 'peer group effect' is likely to be an example of a localised state of affairs and not one to do with 'race' or ethnicity must also be examined. It was notable, for example, that none of the teachers at Shire School mentioned the peer group at all, let alone as something that was significant in the expulsion of black students from school. Furthermore, if the adolescent peer group had such a powerful hold on black males, and if the intimidating nature of this accounted

146

for their over-representation in suspensions and expulsions, should one conclude that this was equally the case in the primary school where even very young black children are also over-represented in 'exclusions? (Hayden, 1997; SEU,1998)

The second point which has been raised by a number of educationists who write about youth, is that schools do not seem to understand and are therefore not able to effectively support the emotional development of adolescents (Curtis and Bidwell, 1977; Mickelson, 1990; Gottfredson 1993; Hargreaves et al, 1996; Cullingford and Morrison, 1997). These writers argue that there seems to be little understanding of the complexity of adolescence which manifests itself in the contradictory need to relinquish a childhood which was dependent on adults whilst remaining at the same time, dependent to a certain extent on adults. The process of acquiring independence necessarily involves adolescents in a period of contrariness as they try to resolve the conflict between attempts to please both the adults from whom they are trying to break away, and the peer group from whom they have their identities affirmed. Curtis and Bidwell (1977:46) go so far as to claim that

> The adult must (expect) rudeness or even insults from the emerging adolescent who is struggling for independence. It is not intended that rudeness be condoned by the teacher without comment, nor is docile acceptance recommended. The need is for teachers and staff to see these behaviours for what they are, a striving of the youngster for a meaningful relationship both within himself (sic) and with others. Pupils must learn that rudeness is not the correct method of expression, but they will not learn this if they are faced with similar rude and punitive expressions from staff. Acceptance of the person and the need for expression without approval of the specific rude behaviour is a recommended procedure.

It is important to point out that the writers above who theorise about youth and about emerging adolescence do not specifically address questions of 'race'. The problem of peer group influence is therefore not a problem of 'race'. However, because of the dominance of black youth in modern hip hop and rap cultures, black expressions of youth culture were viewed by teachers as more problematic than those of white students. The teachers discussed above seem to hold to the view that it is because black students behave worse, in other words they are more likely to be afflicted by the contrary needs of adolescents than their white peers, that leads them into trouble. The question that is raised is whether this view results from a tendency on the part of some teachers to assign subjective meanings to the different behaviours of adolescents (Gillborn, 1990; Mac an Ghaill, 1990), or whether black students really do 'behave worse' than their white or Asian peers. Duncan (1996:142) contends that if black young people respond differently in schools, than this may very well be

>...a political response to White Supremacy and not attributable to laziness or an inability to engage academics.

Is it also possible, as Haberman (1995:5.) asserts, that

>Most teachers see discipline as a set of procedures that must be put in place before learning can occur and believe that few of their problems with discipline emanate from the way they teach.

Supporting this argument, Gottfredson et al (1993:180) argue that

>Disorderly behaviour occurs more frequently in the absence of clearly defined classroom activities that constrain and structure student behaviour.

148

However, Haberman makes a point that is particularly important for underlining the basic theme of this thesis. He states that

> Teachers are trained to escalate, i.e. warn, withdraw a privilege, administer a negative consequence, remove, suspend, and finally evict. Not only are such procedures ineffective, but the number of at-risk, disruptive, and failing students is skyrocketing as more and more teachers use more and more punishments. In truth, the possible rewards adolescents receive from peers for noncompliance are more powerful than any of the school's punishments. (p. 7).

Those teachers who did not think that the over-representation of black students in school suspensions and expulsions was the problem of black students themselves but more of the teachers and the school were inclined to agree with Haberman. This will be discussed in the next section. Before that, I turn to a group of teachers whose ideological orientation was apparent more because of what they did not say, then by what they did say.

There were three teachers at Central City and one at North City who made it clear that they were only willing to talk about the individual students whom they taught and not about exclusions in general. The interviews were as a result, very short, and largely confined to 'technical' information about individual students who did not do homework, or were disruptive, or came ill-prepared to school. Although this group was asked the same basic question as were all other teachers in these schools, namely, "Why do you think black students are *over-represented* in exclusions?", the response given by Hugh McNeal, captures the essence of their reasons for declining to answer the question.

> I don't want to be drawn into answering general questions of that kind. I teach a number of black students and they don't all cause problems. Those that do

inevitably give a bad name to the others. I teach some decent black students and I teach some that frankly shouldn't be in the school. But I could say that about some white students too.

It is possible that Hugh McNeal and the other teachers felt insecure about talking about specific groups for fear of having their statements mis-interpreted and therefore of being accused of stereotyping black students. Ironically, however, his statement about some black students giving a bad name to others could itself be construed as a stereotype in that it assumes that the group can be judged on the basis of an individual's actions. But it is their silence on an issue which is enormously important for the students in the school which is of interest here. If they know that black students are over-represented in 'exclusions', a grave situation for the students concerned, how can they, as teachers, not have an opinion about it? Even if they are afraid of having their statements mis-interpreted or subjectively interpreted by the researcher, is this still not an indication that ideologically they are more inclined to blame students (all students) then to take responsibility, as Haberman's 'star' teachers do, for student behaviour? Hugh McNeal's own ideological orientation towards students who do not conform is clear in that he makes the statement that some students should not be in the school. But even if he had not said this, his, and the other teacher's refusal to position themselves in relation to the question posed raises questions about their own beliefs about behaviour or more specifically, the behaviour of black students. It can, with some validity, be said to contribute to the labelling of black students qua black students as 'deviants' which is implicit in the responses of the teachers discussed above.

Woods (1977:121) argues that the need to operate broad typifications of students is not a pathological condition of teachers, but

Rather, it is also a product of social pressures and constraints - a coping strategy that has become institutionalised in teacher practice and culture and school processes.

This argument has some validity in relation to issues of 'race' in schools in that teachers are not given sufficient (if any) preparation for teaching in multi-ethic contexts. But, as Woods (op.cit) argues further

..the teacher can be a party to 'moral panics', and he or she may contribute powerfully , though perhaps unconsciously, to the process of deviance amplification. Other teachers, however, define their roles differently, i.e. reflexively, in appreciation of this deviance amplification process (though they would not articulate it this way) and adaptively, in accordance with the shifting implications of social change (p.86).

It is to such 'reflexive' teachers that I turn next.

B. The problem of the teachers and the school

Twenty of the teachers took the view that black students in general did not violate school rules any more than their white or Asian peers. Eleven of these teachers were black and nine were white. It is perhaps of some significance that all but one (Mrs Pickard above) of the eight black teachers who were interviewed at North City School took this view. From the responses to the question about why black students were over-represented in 'exclusions', I was able to distinguish a clear orientation *away* from the students as to the causes of this phenomenon, as I discuss below. At Shire School where teachers were mainly asked questions about individual students, differences in orientation between teachers were more obvious because of the personal relationships that teachers had with these individual students. There was either a sense that there was something wrong with

black students, or teachers were quite clear about what it was they thought black (and all) students needed in order to fit into and function within the school. One of the students, Gavin, who was one of the three students 'shadowed' in the school and discussed earlier, was a clear case in point. Gavin and his sister Glenda were notorious in the school and Gavin in particular was seldom absent as a subject of staffroom 'gossip' or banter. Yet one teacher, David Tolman had sensed the 'political' nature of Gavin's struggles. In an overview of all the 'misdemeanours' for which Gavin had been suspended over a period of two years, the Deputy Head (not David Tolman) expressed surprise at the fact that each one of them had been related in some way to issues of 'race', in particular setting himself up as a 'barrack-room' lawyer to defend the rights of younger black students in the school. David Tolman had realised this and pointed to the fact that he showed Gavin respect, he listened to his views, was interested in his difficulties and saw in him a person of depth who was able to give his best as long as he was treated with dignity and respect.

This teacher recognised that it was up to him to understand the issues that beset his students and engage with them. An example of this was well illustrated by another teacher at Shire School who had had difficulty with Glenda, Gavin's sister who Mrs Quinn (above) *assumed* she would have problems with .

> Olga Steyn (white teacher, Shire School): It all hinged on a book which we were reading in class which used the word 'nigger' quite a lot. She refused to take part in lessons and became quite aggressive. And that's how everyone would see her, as this aggressive black kid. There is an inability for a lot of people to see that aggression is well-founded. People don't see that people don't become aggressive without good reason and that it isn't enough for us to say, "Oh, aggressive child". You've actually got to take on board why the child is aggressive. Anyway, I talked to her quite a lot. She had called me a racist and I found that very upsetting. I had never been called this before. But I think its' up to us to provide the environment

where Glenda and people like her feel safe, and if we are not providing that environment, we can't be surprised if they are aggressive. It isn't enough to say, "Well, I'm not a racist". Well, maybe we're not, but as a white woman in the teaching profession, I have to take the responsibility for that. I have an obligation to handle this in a certain way. It's a hard fight to win.

There is recognition in Olga Steyn's beliefs, that people are not only positioned differently in society and that they will resist practices which they find oppressive, but also that schools have a professional obligation to recognise these societal differences if they are to cater equally for all their students. She views the attitude of ignoring the different experiences of students and treating all students 'the same', not as deliberate racism but as benign neglect. This view did not preclude the possibility that there were individuals who were blatantly racist and who were partly responsible for a general deterioration in the efforts that black students put into their school work and their relations with others. Mary Christian provided an illustration.

Mary Christian (black teacher Central City): It's become very apparent to me that there are individual teachers who are racist and who wind them up and they react to that.

MB. Have you any idea what form this racism takes?

Mary Christian. I think most of it is fairly veiled. Most of it is picking on individuals when there are other kids who are doing the same thing who are not picked on, which is a way of winding them up and which encourages confrontation. There's a group of four Afro-Caribbean kids who started off quite bouncy and keen and quite motivated, and it's starting to drift away. It's starting to get lost. They're disillusioned. They feel as if they are always at the end of trouble, they're always the ones who get blamed. They're always the ones who are the scapegoats.

153

Although holding a view that is diametrically opposed to Mrs Quinn (Students as Problems), Mary Christian provides a possible answer to the puzzle raised by Mrs Quinn of something happening to black students when they reach a certain age. But whereas Mrs Quinn's view seems to be grounded in a belief that children are responsible for the kind of people they are or become, Mary Christian, like Olga Steyn, sees children's behaviour as a response to external factors, such as teacher racism. A deputy headteacher expressed more graphically her anger and frustration at what she saw as the blatantly racist decisions taken by the school. She talked to me after three black male students had been expelled, a decision she clearly found to be not only unfair, but racist.

> Irene McMaster (white Deputy Head,Central City): If it is the policy in this school to exclude the black boys, then I wish they would come right out and say it. That way we would just get them all out, one after another and we might be saved some of the hypocrisy and I could save a lot of time trying to work with students and to counsel them. I am so angry about this that I am thinking of going to the CRE. I'm getting some advice on this.

The strength of feeling with which this deputy headteacher expressed her distress at the expulsion of these three boys was echoed by two black teachers in the same school. One of them was sure that 'black boys were being targeted', and that there were teachers who were able to put pressure on the headteacher to exclude certain students, and the other felt that black parents were duped into thinking this was the best school in the area, but that if they saw what happened to black students they would think twice about sending their children there.

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153

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The responses of teachers to the issue of youth cultures exposed more clearly the vulnerable position of the black students. Black students were, in all cases, said to have a more 'visible' presence, especially in the London schools than white or Asian students. Most teachers explained this visibility as a difference in the youth cultures of black students who were described as having their own styles of talking, walking, dressing. But these styles were variously viewed by teachers in category A, as either arrogant, cheeky and boastful, or they were, from the perspective of teachers in category B, a sign of self-confidence, self-esteem, independence, self-assertion, or resistance. One black teacher said:

> Daryl Morrison (North City School) There's a very delicate relationship between the black kids and the white staff in the school. The staff find the black boys very intimidating. They have a way of doing things which is not conforming, they have a certain way of walking, of talking, doing their hair, wearing their clothes and a lot of effort goes into controlling these aspects. It's a complicated subject, but I believe white people feel threatened by black people that are not trying to be like white people. It's very difficult to understand why that is and I don't think they understand it fully themselves, but it's something that shows itself all the time in the school and there's often major over-reactions to things that black boys do.

One thing that category B teachers were all agreed about was that the way teachers perceived this difference between white, Asian and black youth cultures, and the consequences arising from this perception, impacted more severely on black students than on white or Asian students. What seems clear from these teachers is that the processes which lead to the suspension and expulsion of students can often be the result of the personal preferences and subjective judgements of teachers, a point which I discussed in an earlier chapter in my discussion of the relevance for schools, of Foucault's theories about prisons. (See also the parallels which I drew between Scraton's analysis of prison officers'

judgements of prisoners, and Gillborn's analysis of teachers' responses to black pupils). Marian Clarke and Sandra Jefferson, both from Central City School, illustrate the nature of teachers' subjective judgements of students.

> Marian Clarke (white Head of Department): I find that Afro-Caribbean students like to justify themselves as do any other students, and they get angry if they feel something is unjust but often don't get the chance to talk through the reasons why they have felt a situation is unjust. You often hear them say, "You wouldn't let me get a word in edgeways", you know, "You wouldn't listen". If I've had to deal with a student, I'll say, "Why didn't you say that to Mr So and So, or Miss So and So?". "I tried Miss but....". And I think sometimes with Afro-Caribbean students what happens is that people don't take time. *Staff find a more silent, a more kind of sober insolence easier to handle than a more obvious, open, physical one* (My emphasis).

What is important here about Marion Clarke's perspective is that, unlike the teachers in category A discussed above, she does not think that black students necessarily behave *worse* than white students, but that they *responded differently* to situations, and that this response was the result of the differential way they were treated in the first place (cf Duncan, 1996). It is this response which teachers punish and is likely to lead to more severe sanction against black students. Indeed Mr Friend (headteacher, Central City) alluded to this when he talked about the absence of social skills on the part of the black students, although in his view, the fault lay with the students and not in the reaction of the teachers. In Marion Clarke's view, it is white teachers that have a lower threshold of tolerance for the things that black students do.

Beynon, (1989) describes the way in which students 'suss out' teachers in order to discover their weak points and establish the ground rules for a working relationship. This behaviour was tied up with the need for boys to secure their sense of masculine identity in a context in which violence in particular, was both promoted and sanctioned as a means of 'character building' and initiating the boys into men. At Central City, boys of all ethnicities were engaged in 'sussing' teachers. I was therefore interested to know whether black students had different ways of 'sussing' teachers that elicited differential responses from teachers or whether some teachers did indeed have a different threshold of tolerance for different groups.

Sandra Jefferson (white teacher, Central City) expressed it this way:

MB Do you think adolescents just need to test (teachers)?

Sandra Jefferson Yes, I think they do.

MB Do you feel more or less tested by white students?

Sandra Jefferson I think they (different ethnic/youth groups) just have different brands. I mean personally I favour the Afro-Caribbean model because I'm more in tune with it. My least preferred model, well, there are two, are tough white working-class lads. There's a whole group in the school, who've all got their hair in horse tails, who chew gum defiantly in your face and who are very sneery. Or, there's the other model which is your very middle-class West Hampstead white who look down their nose and pick you up on every word you get wrong and you know, you can't tell them anything kind of routine. But I know a lot of staff in the quietness who admit to me that they find that incredible noise of Afro-Caribbean kids very intimidating.

Sandra Jefferson acknowledges her own prejudices and also underlines what other teachers said, that in the context of British schools, black students were not alone in having attitudes that were defiant or anti-authority, but that it is the 'Afro-Caribbean model' that is least popular and therefore most likely to meet with sanction.

Student/teacher inter-actions are clearly important for the cumulative effect they can have on a student's referral record. However, whilst the outcome of these interactions might well be to some extent a matter of teacher preference, Sandra Jefferson also acknowledges that the treatment of black students might emanate as much from teachers' own fears as from the different 'style' of black students. These fears may be historically rooted in a cultural fear of something that was perceived as not just non-conforming, or rule-breaking, but sinister and threatening. She refers to the fact that white teachers might find black students intimidating and adds,

I remember when I first worked in Brixton and suddenly was faced with a whole room of black kids and that whole thing, I was really frightened, it was really foreign to me.

Several teachers (and see also next chapter on student perspectives) talked about this 'inexplicable' fear of black males. Two examples will help to illustrate this phenomenon and to underscore the points raised in chapter three about the historical construction of black men in Western society. One example comes from a careers officer who worked in an advisory capacity to one of the schools and is therefore not one of the forty-three teachers from whom my examples are drawn, but whose statement is useful as she was not merely giving a perspective, but like Sandra Jefferson above, talking about her own experience.

Angela Prince (white careers officer): We have one black careers officer in our department, and he's someone I talk to in a friendly way.....I was really shocked with myself when one day I was walking home after work and I met him coming in the opposite direction, and I paused in my tracks. It was like I didn't trust him, and this is someone who is a colleague!

Diane Samuels (white teacher, Central City): As an antiracist I know that I have to keep asking myself why it is that when I see two or three or a group of black men and I'm alone, I immediately feel cautious. It's not something I can easily put my finger on because it's just a feeling I get that somehow I need to be more careful. I don't feel like that about the pupils in the school because I know them well, but I can imagine that a new teacher or a supply teacher who doesn't know them or a teacher who doesn't get on well with pupils could easily feel threatened by black pupils.

Implicit in what these teachers are saying is that there are factors outside the control of black students, in this case black male students in particular, which might contribute to the kinds of relationships these students have with white adults. Teachers who are inclined to blame the black students for the poor relations they have with white teachers tend to overlook the extent to which this white cultural construct of the black male might lead teachers to project their own fears onto the behaviour of black students (see also Woods 1977, Open University Course E202, Unit 27-28).

The most persistent explanation for the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions was seen by Category B teachers to lie in institutional factors. At Central City School, a number of teachers believed that because the school had never set down proper criteria for what constituted an 'excludable' offence, or examined the

159

factors which led students to break rules or receive a referral, the meting out of punishment was haphazard and largely based on subjective criteria. This allowed for personal prejudices and subjective reasoning to be used in the discipline of students. (See discussion of the Case study in chapter five). If white teachers were generally more able to cope with the 'silent insolent type' of challenge, (said to be characterisitic of white students) and felt more threatened by the open, physical type which they perceived to be more characteristic of black students, then it seemed likely that they would choose to let 'someone else', namely someone higher up in the management structure, deal with the black students. The consequences were likely then to be more severe as Sam Peters (above) clearly alludes to in the case of violence. In addition, if black youth styles were seen to be less acceptable or more deviant than others, than these styles were more likely to be policed and punished and lead to a greater number of referrals which in turn are taken into account in deciding a suspension or expulsion.

Other 'external' factors beside 'race' were drawn upon by this group of teachers to explain the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. For example, all the schools were predominantly working-class. An indication of the ideological orientations of teachers towards students in their school could be found in general class-based statements such as "The kinds of children who come to this school wouldn't appreciate that", or, "they wouldn't be able to cope with that", or "you can't really expect that kind of achievement from the children who come to this school". At Central City School, the headteacher expressed his concern that unless the school was seen to be tough on discipline, it would lose its small intake of middle class students and this would be detrimental to the school's academic profile. The interactions of 'race' and class were signalled strongly in teachers' perceptions of the school's attitude, and in particular the attitude of senior management to the issue of discipline. Teachers from North City School in particular, recognised that attitudes to class were a problem for the students in their

160

school. Low teacher expectations were a problem for all working class students, but these class expectations were also racialised, thus compounding the situation for black students in relation to discipline.

> Herman Davey (black teacher, North City): When I first came here, I told the children they must try to get As, Bs, and Cs. That is a pre-requisite for getting into higher education. If you have got lower than that, you can still go for higher education but you have to re-sit or do an access course. The Head of English came to me and said, "Mr Davey, I understand you are telling the children that D, E, F, and G are not good grades", I said, "I tell them that these are not the grades to aim for". And he turned to me and he told me, I even wrote it down, he said, "Mr Davey, the children you want to teach don't come to this school. They do not come to this school". He meant any children, white or black, but the majority of the children in the class were black. Well, I had sixteen children in the class and thirteen out of the sixteen, seven blacks and six whites, got A, B, and C. He was shocked, he was stunned....They think children who come from this area can't pass literature. I had twenty-three children in my (literature) class, and twenty got A, B, and C ...I am not saying it to boast. I am saying it because if I can do it in the same school, *the same school* (original emphasis) then they can do it as well.

There is not only the strong belief here that the problems students face in school are systemic, but that it is up to the individual teacher not to support the status quo. Indeed both Haberman and Ladson-Billings, in their studies of effective teachers found that these teachers tended to work *in opposition* to the status quo which was seen by them to operate against the interests of students. At North City, a major problem which worked against the interests of students was the fact of institutionalised low expectations. Lowered expectations in Herman Davey's view, lead to less effort on the part of teachers.

Other teachers at North City School echoed these perceptions of low class expectations, but underlined the racialised nature of that kind of teacher culture.

> Steven Hill (black teacher): It is very rare that you find a school in a predominantly black area being looked upon by teachers within that school as an academic school. I mean, I've actually heard the term used in this school that this is a non-academic school, you know. And I've heard it from the Headmaster no less.

> Brenda Valley (black teacher): If you look at the exam entries and the exam results, the majority of kids that have not been entered are black boys. Because they don't do their coursework. They get away with not doing their coursework because it is expected of them not to do it, whereas the white kids, if they don't do their coursework, it's, "Why haven't you handed your coursework in?" So it is chased up you see. With a lot of black kids, it's, "Well there's no point because he won't do it anyway". You see?

Teachers in this category placed the onus of responsibility for student outcomes on individual class teachers and on the school itself. Whilst not specifically engaging in a critique of the role of schooling in the lives and experiences of students, nor a critique of their own or other's pedagogical practices, they were nevertheless clear that black students did not create the conditions which led to their over-representation in suspensions and expulsions. The above discussion shows six main factors which they felt placed black students, and in particular black male students, in a position of disadvantage in relation to their peers. They variously pointed to the subjective interpretations and preferences of teachers in relation to the peer group cultures of adolescents, namely the preference for

162

'quiet insolence' over 'open challenge'. Some talked about the lower level of teacher tolerance for the cultural styles of black young people. Others described the 'fear' factor which led to more frequent referral or more severe sanction against black (male) students. There were various references to blatant racism on the part of some teachers; to institutional factors which inhibited an examination of the school's practices in relation to discipline and therefore allowed unfair practices to prevail. And finally they pointed to a class ideology which disadvantaged all working class students but interacted with 'race' and gender to make black (male) students more vulnerable to disciplinary mechanisms within the school. The overall effect as one black teacher stated was that,

...when it comes to discipline, the black child gets the brunt of the whole thing, worse than the white child., That is a fact. I have observed it personally....When two kids commit the same crime, black and white, the black child would be punished more severely.

C. The Problem of Parents

When families are held responsible for students' problems, serious family outreach is unlikely to be undertaken. (Fine, 1991, p.155)

Questions relating to the families of students were rarely posed during the interviews, but teachers invariably volunteered this information when talking about particular students. Most teacher discourses revolved around the *structure* of the family as a system of support or lack of support for the *student*, or they revolved around the *parents* as either supportive or lacking in support for the *school*.. The *family* as such was seldom discussed and was only invoked if structurally it signalled a lack, or an absence, as for example in the absence of (usually the father) in the single parent family. This 'absence' often 'explained' the difficulties that a student was said to be facing, or the problems s/he was causing. It

invariably explained why a student was 'out of control' or 'needing a lot of attention', implying that there was no-one to impose discipline at home, or that the remaining parent (usually the mother) was unable to give the time and attention the child needed, and the child was therefore demanding excessive attention from the adults or from the peer group at school. In some situations the burden of single parenthood was seen to create demands on the child that were said to be interfering with his/her education. Pat Sinclair, a white teacher, was very keen that I should interview one of the students in her tutor group because, "He might really benefit from speaking to someone like you". David, she said, was a 'nice lad' whom she was very fond of but the problem was that he was missing a lot of school and was not always well organized when he did attend.

> Pat Sinclair (Central City). The trouble with David is that he can't get out of bed in the morning. I have personally telephoned him when he's failed to show up for the tutor period and he's still been in bed. I think there are problems at home. His mum is on her own and he has a younger brother and I think he is expected to take quite a lot of responsibility for his brother.
>
> MB. Have you ever discussed his situation with him?
>
> Pat Sinclair. I tried once, but he wasn't going to tell me. He just says that everything is fine, but I don't believe him. That's why I thought maybe he would talk to you. Maybe he doesn't want to talk to a teacher and maybe he doesn't want to talk to a white teacher. But he might be willing to talk to you.

Despite the teacher's obvious caring for her student, there is no indication that she believes the problem to lie anywhere but the home, and that the answer lies in giving him the support that, by implication, his lone parent cannot give him.. She indicated that she 'got on' very well with David and she thought that he liked her, but said that she had not asked

164

him whether there might be anything in the school that might have discouraged him from attending.

In another example, the student lived with his grandmother only, and whilst the problematic family structure was implied, namely that there was no man in the home to be a role model for the student, it was the strict regime imposed by the grandmother that effectively 'emasculated' him.

> Brenda Valley (black teacher): There is one boy in particular, because of the strict regime he has to cope with at home, at school it's just a way of releasing things. The school does let him get away with it because of the repression that he has to suffer at home with his grandmother. She is a very religious woman and I had to take him home one day because he had a knife in school. He just sat in the corner like a child, a baby. He comes to school and because he cannot be a man at home, he tries to be a man at school - with the aggression, walking around with condoms, having a knife. He is not allowed to get away with things at school just because of his home life, but the school does sometimes take that into consideration.

Although Brenda Valley fitted into category B (teachers/school as problem), in this example the school is presented as humane and caring. But this is only when the already dysfunctional structure of the home compounds the problems of the individual student. The 'single parent family' was thus represented as dysfunctional and the source of the child's educational as well as social problems.

When 'parents' as opposed to 'family' were discussed, this was generally in the context of how or whether the parents supported the school in the discipline of the child. The single parent family in that context was not necessarily viewed as a problem. It was not

165

uncommon to hear teachers declare that "Johnny is from a single parent family, but mum (and it was usually mum) is very supportive of the school'. The relationship with parents seldom manifested itself as one of mutual or equal partnership. It appeared instead to be based on a notion of partnership which encompassed the need for parents to endorse the school's expectations and ensure the students' compliance. In a study that a colleague and I carried out for the DfEE, a teacher stated that she did not believe that teachers really wanted parents to have an equal and collaborative relationship with schools. She was of the view that teachers felt threatened when parents became empowered.

In my mind, teachers expect parents to come here just for the parents' evening, the disciplining....I think that teachers expect parents to support the school when it suits the teachers for the parents to support the school. But if the parents come in about something that they want, then it's like, "This is our school and parents should not be involved in that" (Blair and Bourne, 1998:136).

This tendency to view the relationship with parents as one that had to occur on terms set by the school was a pattern amongst those interviewed, but only five teachers were identified as presenting the responsibility for the poor behaviour of students as entirely that of the parents. Pat Sinclair, quoted above, was one of these. David's problem was not poor behaviour but poor attendance and coming to school without the appropriate equipment, or not completing his homework. These were seen as areas of supervision by the parents. There was thus a distinction between blaming parents for not preparing students adequately for school, and blaming them for poor behaviour within school. Mr Benjamin fell into the latter category.

> Mr Benjamin (African teacher): It's the early socialisation that is at fault.
> Discipline starts from a very very early age, and sometimes we're lacking,
> especially with one parent families who are not very powerful or strong or don't

166

have enough money to set them in the right way. Class, I think, is very important. With a lot of the black kids, working class kids, they have not been given that early socialisation which puts them on an equal footing with middle class kids. I think it's the same for working class white kids, it's the home background. It doesn't give them the status they need to function equally in school.

Although it appears at first, that Mr Benjamin is not critical of parents but of the class system which places working class children at a disadvantage, it is clear that he considers parents to blame for not giving their children the early preparation to meet the middleclass demands of the school. When asked what he thought parents could do, he talked about parents reading to their children, making sure they went to bed early and helping them with their homework. The focus, therefore, is less on what schools could do to mitigate the effects of class, and more on what parents *should* do to meet the middle class needs of the school so that the school does not discriminate against the children. The onus was on the parents, and not on the school.

Only one of these five teachers who placed full responsibility on the parents thought that poor behaviour on the part of black students had something to do with their cultures. This teacher described black students as 'a total menace' who, unlike the 'Asian' students, came from backgrounds where the parents had no interest in their children's education. This view was unique to this teacher, although a deputy headteacher did express the view that his school had deteriorated in the twenty-five years he had taught there because, "the quality of the parents who sent their children to the school has gone down". It transpired that whilst the school had always served the local working-class communities, demographically, the area had changed from being a white working class area to being nearly 50% black.

There were thus a variety of views relating to the role of parents in the education of their children. The structure of the family was an issue for many teachers, but especially for those teachers who were critical of parents. If the structure of the family was seen to deviate from the perceived norm of the two-parent, nuclear family, then it was generally viewed as 'bad' for the student and by extension bad for the school (see also Mac an Ghaill, 1988).

By and large, parents were judged according to their level of support for what the school was doing and any critique by parents was seen as insurbordination. A deputy head, for example, considered that a letter a parent had written to her in response to her own was "very rude' in tone and not supportive of the school's attempt to ensure that the student arrived to school on time. The mother had written asking whether the deputy head "was unaware that there had been a series of bomb scares on the London underground" which had largely been responsible for her son's lateness to school. In another example, the parents of a black student questioned the school's fairness in suspending their son when another student involved in the same incident had not been suspended. The headteacher stated that he thought the parents were more concerned with making excuses for their son ("who the staff know to tell a lot of untruths") than with understanding the school's position. On the whole, however, there were few criticisms of parents by teachers. Most parents were described as 'supportive'. This, I discovered from my interviews with parents, to be less because parents agreed with or accepted the school's decision about their child, and more with feeling powerless to do anything which might lead to a worsening of their child's position in the school.

Fine (1991: 162) states that working class parents' relation to 'public' school is fragile.

168

They won't risk 'raisin' sand', that is, making trouble, because they fear that anything short of full co-operation with a school might jeopardise their children's education.

From my interviews, it seemed that parents were framed as 'ideal' when they supported the school in the criteria laid down by the school, and 'problematic' when they challenged or questioned what they perceived to be unfair or unjust practice. McLaren, (cited in Woods, 1977, p.48), has argued that teachers use cultural deficit theories 'as a rationalisation for their failure to teach'. Haberman (1995) is of the view that,

> Teachers have historically 'blamed the victim' by pointing to studies that showed students' inferior intelligence. This attribution freed teachers from responsibility. When such reliance on heredity fell out of fashion, a newer, more sophisticated basis was needed in order to blame the victim or exonerate the schools. 'Dysfunctional family' filled the bill (p.12).

D. The 'System' as Problem

Teachers in all categories thought that the changes brought on by the Education Reform Act had restricted the resources available to deal with disciplinary issues and had therefore made it more difficult for them to discharge their responsibilities to all students, including those with particular educational needs. There was a discourse of paralysis which prevailed in discussions about Local Management of Schools, the National Curriculum, and League Tables, as teachers talked about 'no time to spend on needy pupils', 'no resources to support teachers', 'pressure to shift the focus from children to money', 'no longer feeling that special relationship with one's pupils', 'no time to see parents, to talk to the educational psychologist, to make home visits or visit the learning support unit'.

169

The consequences for issues of ethnicity were seen to be particularly grave.

> MB. Do you think teachers would welcome some INSET on issues of 'race' and multiculturalism?
>
> Olga Steyn (Shire School): No, they wouldn't. Those who are anti will be anti anyway. But even those who are more open-minded would consider that they had other priorities right now with the Education Reform Act and all the changes they keep introducing.

The effects of the Education Reform Act were felt acutely in relation to what teachers could do for students.

> Category A, (Helen small -white teacher- North City): Everyone is trying to get their house in order. There was a time when we could see parents, see the Educational Psychologist, make home visits and visit the Learning Units. But there is so much tightening up of resources and teacher time, that teachers don't have time anymore for those who don't shut up and behave. There is no support for schools and students are being rejected by the system.

In addition, London teachers bemoaned the demise of the Greater London Council.

> Category B (Irene McMaster -white deputy head-Central City): What we have lost in London is an authority that gives us backing and gives us resources and has a central point of contact. We need advice over things like resources in different subject departments - resources in terms of expertise for educational welfare, educational psychologists and a framework of expectation. We have lost a whole

170

body of inspectorate that can come in either on equal opportunities issues or racism or humanities or special needs. There is a general feeling that we are on our own and we haven't got the structural and emotional support from an authority.

There was thus no clear ideological divide between teachers in relation to the role of 'the system' (namely, government imposed statutory regulations), for the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. It is nevertheless possible to conclude that where teachers were already ideologically pre-disposed to blame students for their exclusion, there was a greater likelihood that such teachers would not consider themselves accountable for the suspension or expulsion of a student, and 'the system' could be another means of masking one's own inadequacies as a teacher. By invoking 'the system' it was possible to hide from view one's inability to keep students engaged and interested and to add legitimacy to the declared need to suspend or expel a student from the classroom or the school.

Whilst Apple (1990) argues rightly that schools work in a context in which the parameters of what schools.should do or be about are imposed externally, Ball (1987) believes that it is not enough to look at structures outside the school in order to understand the problems faced by a school, but it is necessary to examine the micro-politics of the school itself and the complex inter-relationships within it. He concludes that in his study

The rhetorics, shifts in power and changes in policy outside the (school) provided a linguistic and conceptual framework for internal debate rather than a set of structural determinants (p.24).

Whilst agreeing with these writers, I would argue further that it is important to scrutinise the ideological orientation of individual teachers because teachers as individuals have a

powerful influence on the ultimate fate of their students. This is so because teaching

ideologies, to quote Sharp and Green (cited in Ball, 1975, p. 44) are

a connected set of systematically related beliefs and ideas about what are felt to be the

essential features of teaching....(and which are) embedded in a broader network of social

and political world views whose determination, *in the individual actor* (my emphasis)

derive from the socialisation experiences undergone .

Where teachers' world views not only differ substantially from those of their students, but

are inclined to objectify these students as 'Other', then the consequences for these students

must be the subject of some concern. This may in part explain the reasons for the over-

representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions, as well as explain why this

over-representation existed even before the statutory imposition of the National

Curriculum.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to attempt to illustrate the role played by teachers and

schools in affecting the life chances of their students. This was in order to re-emphasise

one of the themes of this thesis that ideologies work in and through teachers to

disadvantage their students. This is a particular concern with reference to the suspension

and expulsion of students from school because of the tendency, as demonstrated by

research, of 'excluded' students and students who 'drop out' of school without

qualifications, to become involved with the criminal justice system. The long term effects

of this are considered particularly serious in a context in which prison labour (currently in

the USA) is considered to be an attractive alternative to foreign based production of goods.

I adopted for my analytical framework, the theories of educationists whose studies of teachers and teaching have led them to conclude that it is the teacher's own organisational styles and content presentation which determine the extent to which students will remain sufficiently engaged and interested in order not to present a disciplinary challenge in the classroom. They argue that teachers who do not reflect on their own teaching methodologies and who transfer the blame onto the students themselves, their families or invoke external factors to explain the behaviour of students, are more likely to create situations where the disciplining of students becomes necessary. Where teachers also operated with a 'racialised frame of reference', I argued that their ideological orientation was likely to result in more black students being disciplined than was warranted by the behaviours of these students. More than half of the teachers discussed in this chapter were inclined to blame the black students themselves or their families for their over-representation in 'exclusions' from school.

There was, however, an important consideration for teachers. It was argued that the context of teaching might make it more or less difficult for teachers to maintain the high ideals set out by educationists such as Haberman or Ladson-Billings. The requirements of the National Curriculum, for example, restrict the opportunities for teachers to make teaching culturally relevant to students from different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the existence of league tables of schools in an environment in which schools are forced to function by the principles of the market, and the removal of many of the resources which schools depended upon to support students, has not only served to de-skill but to disempower teachers. Fine (1990:140) puts it succinctly.

> Disempowered teachers are unlikely to create democratic communities inside their classrooms, but are more likely to move toward silencing. Disempowered teachers are unlikely to view the "personal problems" of students (and dropouts) as their

173

professional responsibility, but are more likely to render them outside the domain of education. And disempowered teachers are unlikely to create academic contexts of possibility and transformation, but are more likely to want to retire.

Despite this context, and accepting fully that teachers cannot support their students effectively in such conditions, the question raised in this thesis is why black students should be affected more than other students. Teachers as we saw, were divided in their responses, but, taking the framework given above, I concluded that black students were likely to be more vulnerable where teachers, in addition to displacing responsibility for what happened to students, also operated with racial or culturalist frames of reference.

In the next chapter, I consider the perspectives of students and of parents on the question of the over-representation of black students amongst 'excludees' from school. I will draw out differences and similarities where they exist, between students, parents and teachers on this issue, and consider the extent to which this might impact on the kinds of disciplinary measures which are taken. I will explore also the extent to which black students present an anti-school perspective in order to ascertain the extent to which students' own wishes to be or not to be in school might supercede teachers' ideological orientations towards them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Student Perspectives

In the previous chapter, I took as my theoretical framework, the notion that ultimate responsibility for ensuring a good teaching and learning environment devoid, or with a minimum of discipline problems, lies with the teacher. I focused in particular on the work of educationists such as Haberman (1995) who found that teachers who took responsibility for student behaviour by ensuring that the work was not only relevant to the students, but kept them engaged and learning, were least likely to have problems of discipline. When they did face a problem, they looked for solutions in their own pedagogical practices and did not seek to blame the students or their families. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1994) found that teachers who were most effective with black students were those who not only provided the students with a culturally relevant education but also did not hold negative racial assumptions about them. Arising from this position is the view that regardless of the socio-economic, racial/ethnic background of the students, when discipline fails in the classroom, the teachers least likely to succeed and therefore more likely to seek to suspend or expel students are those who place the problems which they face on the students themselves or their families. In addition, where teachers hold particular assumptions about the class, racial/ethnic, cultural or other aspects of the students' identities, a process of exclusion would have begun even before those 'critical' incidents (Woods, 1993) which led to the actual suspension or expulsion of the student.

Attribution theorists argue, as Brown (1986:193) does, that

> The attributions of actor and observer commonly diverge in such a way that the
>
> actor favors external causes and the observer favors causes internal to the actor

(psychological dispositions). Since actor and observer commonly disagree in their explanations of the same event, one or the other is likely to be in error. When a criterion for error is available, it is the observer who is typically in error...

In chapter six, I outlined the perspectives of observers (teachers) about the behaviour of black students which might contribute to or result in their over-representation amongst those who are suspended and expelled from school. I noted that teachers were divided in their views, with some teachers concluding that the main responsibility for the over-representation of black students in school expulsions and suspensions lay with the students and their families, whilst others placed the responsibility on pedagogical and organisational factors in the school..

In this chapter I outline the perspectives of the actors (students). I consider the salience of student explanations for their over-representation in 'exclusion', as well as taking into account the situational factors which might lead to a different point of view between teachers and students.

For my analysis I've drawn on a range of interviews both individual and groups of students from the three study schools. There were ten interviews with individual students from Shire school (6 male and 4 female), five with individuals at North City School (all male - the study was prematurely terminated by the headteacher), and twenty with individual students from Central City School (18 male and 2 female) The reason for this difference between the numbers of boys and girls interviewed at Central City had to do with the fact that all the boys interviewed individually at this school had either been permanently expelled or had been or were temporarily suspended at the time of the study. Only one girl had been expelled from this school, but I was unable to make contact with her. Two girls who were interviewed had been especially singled out by the headteacher as being 'at risk'

176

of expulsion. I also draw on two group interviews with students at Central City. One was a group of five sixth form students, three girls and two boys; and the other was a group of five boys three of whom spent every day in the Withdrawal (or discipline) room where I was supervisor for a week.

Apart from the students from Shire School who were being tracked as individuals and were therefore interviewed about their general personal experiences of school including experiences of 'exclusion', all the other students were asked to speak about the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. As with the interviews with the teachers, a number of themes emerged in the discussions with the students. Students were keen to let it be known that they did not believe that black students were always 'innocent victims' of teacher racism. They acknowledged that black students, like any other students, did things or behaved in ways which deserved sanction and sometimes expulsion. However, in explaining why black students should be over-represented in suspensions and expulsions when other ethnic groups of students in their schools were not (at least at the time the research was carried out), racism and racial discrimination came up as the only possible explanation. At no point did they imply that black students had 'racial' characteristics which made them different from other groups.

The main themes that emerged in these interviews were overwhelmingly to do with institutional factors which routinely excluded black students from equal participation in education. There was the view that where black students did behave in ways that were more visibly challenging, it was usually as a response to a situation which they found to be unfair, and that this usually related to individuals or to particular groups of friends, and not to black students as either a racial or cultural category. The main themes which emerged were similar for both individual and group interviews. These are discussed next.

The Self-fulfilling Prophecy

Theorists of the 'Self-fulfilling Prophecy' argue, in the words of Corrington and Beery (1989:78-79) that

> Teachers' expectations invariably affect the way (they) relate to students, and the student in turn reflects these expectations through his (sic!) own actions so that in time he comes to fulfil the teacher's original prophecy. When teacher expectations challenge students to achieve at their best, a reciprocal process is set in motion that is at once expansive and exhilarating for students. However, if a teacher's expectations undermine rather than challenge the student, the reciprocal process can be a brutalising experience:

In a previous chapter, I discussed the work of Gillborn (1990), whose observations were that teachers used different rules for assessing the behaviours of students and that these rules were rooted in teachers' racial perceptions of students. Similarly studies by Wright (1987) and Connolly (1995) illustrated the ways in which teachers differentially treated the black students in the early years of schooling, and this was supported by studies carried out by Mortimore et al. (1988) and Tizard et al. (1988) whose focus was not 'race' but who concluded that black children were subject to less praise and more reprimands than children from other ethnic groups. They state,

> In our interviews with the children, we observed that (black boys) received most disapproval and criticism from teachers, and they were most often said by teachers to have behaviour problems (Tizard et al, pg.181)

Corrington and Beery (op.cit.), citing the work of Ray Rist (1970), underline the effects of teacher expectations on students.

178

A frightening example of how this process can shape the destiny of an entire classroom is provided by Ray Rist (1970), who followed the fortunes of a group of ghetto children through the first three years of school. After the first eight days of school, the kindergarten teacher identified the "fast" and "slow" learners in the group and assigned them to different work tables. Rist convincingly demonstrates that these placements were made not so much on the grounds of academic potential -no test scores were available to the teacher- but, in reality, according to social class differences within the group. Children who best fit the teacher's middle-class "ideal" (e.g.neat appearance, courteous manner, and a facility with Standard American English) were seated at Table 1, while everybody else was relegated to an inferior status. Predictably, the teacher spent the majority of her time and energy on the students at Table 1. Just as predictably, this led to a lack of interest and restlessness at Tables 2 and 3, so that when the teacher *did* attend to these students, it usually took the form of reprimands for misconduct ("sit down"). From the lack of attention and teaching, these students made little or no progress, which further convinced the teacher of the correctness of her original judgement that these were indeed non-learners.

The idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy in relation to black students was put forward by one sixth form student from Central City School.

Nathan (black student, 17 years) Teachers have preconceived ideas about the abilities of black students. Students pick this up and start reacting negatively. It's usually a build up of negative feeling in the black student and then it goes to a stage where the school wants to get rid of them anyway. So if they do anything, they're out, whereas white students don't have that negative build up.

Some writers (see for example Woods, 1979; Riseborough, 1984) warn against positioning students as 'victims' of teacher behaviour, and see the importance of viewing students not just as agents in their own lives, but as themselves capable of subverting teacher intentions and in doing so, they "critically affect the teacher's health and survival and the degree of stress that the teacher experiences" (Riseborough, op.cit. pg. 17). Interactions in the classroom therefore are a two-way process between teachers and students. The context of teaching is undoubtedly important for deciding the nature and outcomes of these relationships. A racialised environment, namely, where racism is a factor not only in the school but in the wider society, is bound therefore to compound the negative effects of this dialectic relationship between teachers and students. However, ultimately, teachers have overall power to decide the fate of students through the sanction that is available to them in the form of suspension and expulsion of students. That some teachers operate a system of 'selective exclusion' on the basis of students' class, perceived 'race' or 'ability', has been demonstrated many times over both in the United States and Britain (Brophy and Good, 1974; Sharp and Green, 1984; Keddie, 1984; Wright, 1988 and 1992; Gillborn, 1990). A sixth form girl from Central City saw how the internal dynamics together with external factors affected black males more than black females. She was referring to her own school which was in an inner city area where black residents experienced high levels of unemployment, poverty, police harassment and racial conflict.

Gloria (17 years, Central City): The black boys see no point, there's nothing out there for them. Teachers don't motivate them, they leave it up to the students themselves. I know that I'm here to stay, there's nothing I can do about the system. It'll be the same system for my children and grandchildren. So I think about getting the most for myself, even though I don't like it.

Gender

Here Gloria underlines an important point made by Mirza (1992). Girls are more likely to view their schooling as an important foundation not only for the world of work, but for their future responsibilities as mothers. Black girls, according to Mirza, expect to be the primary carers of their future children and do not necessarily expect that they will have a man living with them. They are also very conscious of the fact that black men experience high levels of unemployment, and do not therefore assume that the fathers of their children will be in a position to support them. They have to think beyond the immediate relationships which they have with teachers and make use of strategies which will help them survive the barriers and obstacles which are thrown up by racism. Boys, faced with the challenge to their masculine pride in their interactions with teachers and others in authority in the school (Mac an Ghaill, 1994), and faced with evidence that they are not likely to share in the rewards which an education gives to their white peers,(Ogbu, 1984), are less likely than girls to adopt passive forms of resistance in order to preserve their 'racial' identities. Gillborn (1990) did report on black males who tried to keep a low profile (see also Fordham, 1996), and chose to avoid teachers with whom they were likely to come into conflict, rather than have to face the need to defend their honour and dignity by reacting to situations which they found intimidating. However, it seems from the evidence presented by these studies, that black males are targeted more for discipline in co-educational contexts, than are black girls.

Five boys interviewed as a group at Central City endorsed the gender aspects of schooling as expressed by Gloria. The interview with the five boys took place in the school's Withdrawal Room (WR) which was where students were sent when they were removed for any reason from a lesson. This was the fourth out of five days of my supervision of the WR. These five students, four black and one white were all aged between 14 and 15 years

and three of them had been sent to the WR on each of the four days. These three were all friends, were very loud and engaged in a lot of homophobic banter.

MB. This is my fourth day in here, and you guys have been coming in here every day. Can you tell me what's going on? I've seen more black boys in here than anyone else, and that's also the case in terms of exclusions in this school.

Dino: Is that right? Who says that more black boys...

MB. The Head says so. It's in the statistics for exclusions.

Joe: That's because we're hard. Noone tries to mess with us. Like yesterday, you should have checked ol' Dino here. Mr Pearle in history tried to make out like he hadn't done his homework so he just told Mr Pearle off and had to be sent out.

Dino: No he didn't, he said that I hadn't done it properly. He's always picking on me even when others haven't done their homework. Sara hadn't even done hers and he just speaks to her soft because she's a girl. (Mimicking) "Saaraa, why haven't I seen your homework?

Joe: That's because he fancies her. .

Dino: How can he, he's a battyman

(Loud laughter, mimicking and speaking at once)

MB. Shhh. This is serious. I mean you guys must be missing out on so many lessons. Doesn't that bother you?

Reggie (white student) It's true though about Mr Pearle, he's always picking on Dino.

MB. But I mean, I haven't seen many girls in here for example, what happens with you boys?

Bryn: Girls are more sensible and think about the consequences. They are more calm. Boys act 'hard'.

182

MB: What does that mean?

Sol: It's like, right, when a teacher picks on you, right, you can't just back down and let him get away with it

Joe: It's when you stick up for yourself. Not letting no-one take liberties with you. That's what it is.

MB: What about white working class boys, don't they also have to be masculine and 'hard'?

Joe : Because they don't get picked on, and they don't get harrassed by the police like we do, we've got to be harder. Ain't that right Reg? Police just stop us and search us -just roll up in cars, slow down, drive slowly looking at you and all you're doing is walking home.

Although these boys presented a nonchalant stance, partly, one presumes, because of the need to maintain the 'hard' image by presenting the other side of 'hardness', namely being 'cool', (see Majors and Billson, 1992), when I was able to talk to some of them individually and they were not under pressure to protect their masculine image, they seemed vulnerable and nothing like as tough as they wanted to appear.

Bryn: The white boys expect us to be tough all the time. And sometimes you might just be feeling really scared inside, but you can't show it.

Mr Friend, the headteacher at Central City was particularly aware of this point, though he seemed equally unaware of what he, as Head of the school, could do to help and support black boys.

Mr Friend: Black boys are cast into roles of being tough. They are not allowed to be sensitive and gentle. They are not allowed to admit to any kind of nervousness or tentativeness or to admit that they are worried about anything.

Black boys at the time of the study, were at least four times more likely to be expelled than white boys in his school. The argument here is that there is a considerable amount of agency that can be exercised by individuals, and in particular headteachers (see example of Mrs C. DfEE study discussed above) to reduce the vulnerability of certain groups from wider social presumptions and expectations.

The Peer Group

The peer group was therefore another strong theme in the discussions with students. That peer group cultures do influence the behaviours of black boys cannot be disputed. However, what is certain from what the students say, is that whatever specifically black peer group cultures emerge, these are, possibly in large part, a response to racialised perceptions and expectations of black (boys) by their peers, as well as a response to racism which they face in and outside of school. Black students were expected to be 'tough' (see also Connolly, 1995). But this may only tell us that they used body language rather than verbal language to display their toughness but that they were no more likely to break rules than their white peers in similar circumstances. It may of course also mean that in order to live up to expectations of them, they were more likely than white males to do things that seemed 'tough', as some teachers in the previous chapter indicated. This study was not able to establish beyond doubt that they did not. However, if this were the case, then the solution would seem to be for teachers and schools as institutions to attempt to understand the pressures on young people, the racial and ethnic dimensions of such pressure, and to find ways of overcoming these rather than to punish them. In addition, if the peer group

184

does exert more pressure on black boys than on white boys, one question that is left unanswered is why there should be an over-representation of black students amongst those suspended and expelled even amongst children as young as Infant and primary school age (see Hayden, 1997) and in areas (for example Shire School) which were not marked by socio-economic deprivation and the black peer group was not mentioned by teachers or students as an issue. An explanation for the over-representation of black students in exclusion in mainly white areas may have to do with their greater 'visibility'. Brown (1986) describes experiments whose objectives were to show that, "novelty attracts selective attention". He explains that

> If one contrasts groups with a solo black (sic!) with groups having all white members, then the novel person should be disproportionately salient and so credited with greater causal efficacy than other group members. That same prediction can be made of groups consisting of one woman and a number of men as opposed to groups in which all members are of the same sex. And when many other things are held constant, that is the way it goes; the novel person in a given context is perceived as an especially important cause of what happens in the group (pg.188).

This may be a valid point in situations such as Shire School as shown by the science teacher and which I discussed in the previous chapter. It may also be that black (male) students are caught between the low academic and behaviour expectations of teachers, and the (negative) high expectations of their white peers as Bryn above explains (Connolly, 1995) so that black students are placed in multiple jeopardy composed of class factors, gender, racism, racialised peer group expectations, and in some contexts, 'selective attention'.

Two persistent themes in my discussions with black students were that they unfairly treated or 'picked on', and that teachers showed little or no respect for students generally and for black students in particular. Other areas of concern included the effects of stereotypes which were held about black students, in particular males, the blatant racism of individual teachers and the knock-on effects of this for black students generally.

Unfair Treatment

There was widespread feeling amongst students that black students were more likely to be picked out for talking or other forms of disobedience in the classroom than white students (cf Mortimore et al,1988; Tizard et al,1988; Gillborn,1990, 1995; Connolly, 1995). Although the students who took part in these discussions insisted that not all teachers treated black students unfairly, nevertheless, all black students stated that where students of all ethnic groups were involved in 'messing about', or other forms of rule breaking, the black students were the ones most likely to be picked out for reprimand or punishment, a view which supported what most of the black teachers and some white teachers said.

> Sean:(black student, 16 years, Shire School) If say, I'm sitting next to a white friend in class and the friend is telling me something, the teacher can hear where the talking is coming from, but instead of looking to see who is actually doing the talking, he'll just call out my name. It's just always me that gets the blame.

Connolly (1995), in his study of an Infant school, argued that black children were constructed as problems by a combination of teacher stereotypes of black people and black men in particular, and the ambivalent attitudes of envy and admiration of their peers. Black boys were thus 'produced' as 'bad' and likely to be singled out or blamed for incidents in which they had taken no part. He provides an interesting example of a boy

186

who was blamed for whistling in the class even though he was absent from school on that day.

The singling out of black students was at times done knowingly and oppressively.

Tyrone (black student; 15 years, Central City): My friends and I were just about to go into our classes when Mr C. came and goes, "You, you and you", calling out the three black boys. And he goes, "Give me your diaries". So we said, "What for? We haven't done anything wrong". And he says, "Don't ask me for an explanation. I don't have to give you an explanation. I'm a teacher, and when I ask to see your diaries, you give them to me".

This selective form of identification, reminiscent of the 'Pass Laws' of apartheid South Africa, was said to be not uncommon in schools, and was not only the view of students, but of some teachers, especially black teachers.

Glenda:(black student, 15 years, Shire School) Isobel, Lorene and me are really good friends, yeah, and we always used to stick together especially at lunch times. Then this group of white girls started calling us names, racial names and calling us slags, and so we started to call them names. Anyway, it got really bad and Mr Martin, the Deputy Head decided it had to end. So he calls us three black girls and tells us that he never wants to see us together in the playground again, and so every break, Isobel has to go to that corner of the playground, (pointing) I have to go to that one, and Lorene has to go to that one. But the white girls can stay as friends and don't have to split up. And now Isobel hardly ever comes to school and me and Lorene sometimes bunk off because there's just no point coming to school if you can't be with your friends

Cullingford and Morrison (1997) emphasise the importance of friends in helping young people develop a sense of identity and for 're-inforcing, reflecting, and reciprocating valued aspects of the self' (p.62). The importance of having one's 'mates' in school to 'muck about' with and generally relieve the boredom of school routine has also been discussed by other writers (see for example, Woods, 1979 and 1990). That these students should have been deprived of the chance to meet with their friends was not only keenly felt and resented, but removed one of the most important motivations for coming to school at all. But it was the unfair and racialised manner in which the deputy headteacher had solved the problem of the rival 'gangs' which rankled most in the minds of the students and was referred to in nearly all the discussions which I held with students in the school.

The view that black students are more likely to be punished or to receive harsher treatment than their white peers was expressed to me in other research contexts such as the DfEE study (Blair et al 1998) and the study carried out for Barnardos and the Family Service Units (see Blair 1994). Furthermore, this view was repeated consistently in all discussions with students regardless of gender or location of school.

In all of these discussions, there was no attempt by black students to deny that they sometimes broke rules, or indeed that some black students (as did students from all other groups), caused severe problems for the learning of others. What was found to be unacceptable were the multiple assumptions about black people which informed teacher-student interactions and which sometimes led to unfair decisions.

The implications of singling out black students, whether consciously or unconsciously, for differential treatment, has, as I have already indicated, important implications for suspensions and expulsions.. If black students are singled out for extra surveillance and

188

control, or given harsher treatment than others, then they could, and this research has shown that they do, receive a disproportionate number of disciplinary referral forms. These in turn are taken into account in decisions about whether a student should be suspended, expelled, or given another chance, and the more referral forms one has, the higher the likelihood of expulsion.

Respect

This was an area of high concern for students, and their parents too. The notion that teachers do not respect students and in particular black students, was a particularly sensitive point especially for boys aged around 14 and above. It seems that disrespect manifested itself mainly in the way teachers talked to students.

> Steven: (14 years, Central City)....It was the way he was talking to me. He had no respect for me. I'm not saying I wanted to be treated like an equal, after all I'm only a child, but that's not what I'm saying. He had no human respect (original emphasis), like he wasn't talking to another person, you understand what I mean. So I said to him, "How can you expect me to act like an adult yet you don't even talk to me or respect me like a person who has some intelligence?".

> Richard: (15 years, North City School) I'm not rude to all teachers, but I'm rude to those who don't show me respect. Who treat me like I'm not a person. What I find is so unfair is the way these teachers have so much control over my life....

> Lawrence: (15 years, Central City) I was standing in the corridor and the teacher bumped into me and then very rudely told me to get out of the way. I thought, "He bumps into me, no apology, and then roughly tells me to get out of the way". So I

189

said to him, "First of all you walk into me and then you start ordering me about and trying to make me look bad in front of everyone when you were the one in the wrong". In the end it turned into a big thing and I was excluded.

Wexler (1992), writing about a school with a predominantly minority profile of students in the United States, says that life in the school,

> "from the students' point of view is, at best, a testing ground in self-determination and at worst, 'a battle' to defend against what they experience as an assault on the self".

Teaching, according to Clark (1995), is a social and moral exercise. It is more than the transmission of information. Good teaching therefore involves paying attention to the human, the social, and the moral dimensions of schooling and not only the technical and academic. Students' accounts above point to neglect on the part of teachers to these aspects of schooling in relation to black students. The sense of not being treated like a person or with some humanity, comes through strongly in their statements. Teun van Dijk (1993: 104) states that

> Negative opinions about minority groups may be expressed and conveyed by intonation or gestures that may be inconsistent with seemingly 'tolerant' meanings.

Van Dijk refers to these forms of behaviour as 'offensive speech acts' (see Aappendix 4 for example). For black students these speech acts signalled to them the 'true intentions' and feelings of teachers and they were particularly sensitive to the display of these in public situations, as Lawrence above makes clear. That he was suspended as a result of his altercation with the teacher underscores the vulnerability of students in general and black

190

students in particular despite the dialectic relationship which teachers and students have in the school or classroom context. Such humiliations raise the question about the extent to which teachers might themselves force students into 'face-saving' positions where they have to 'act tough' in order to retain an element of dignity. Wright (1987) reported that in her study, interactions between students and teachers which had left students feeling humiliated had led to widespread antagonism. Students, she said,

> were inevitably forced into highly significant face-winning, face-retaining and face-losing contests between themselves and the teachers" (pg 111).

I mentioned in the previous chapter that schools have been found by theorists of youth to be singularly unresponsive to the needs of adolescents. Hargreaves et.al (1996) talk about the need that adolescents have, to feel that teachers care for them. Adolescents, they state, *"is a time for establishing and testing perceptions of self as worthwhile individuals"* (31). Teachers are 'significant others' to whom young people look to for confirmation of their acceptance and status as people that matter. Insensitivity or blatant disregard of these needs, is characterised by Clark (1995) as an abuse. Speaking generally about the needs of children and not of black children in particular, Clark says,

The victimisation of children is denied by society or rationalised as necessary disciplining. Our culture of parenting and pedagogy invariably takes the side of the adult and blames the child for what has been done to him or her.....Faced with the power of adults and the social conspiracy of denial, we and our children repress our feelings, idealise or excuse those parents and teachers who abuse us, and tragically, perpetuate the victimisation of the next generation (24).

A factor that is often omitted in research, and certainly one that seems to be absent in teachers' dealings with black students is that their identities go beyond the question of 'race' or ethnicity to embrace those factors which they share with all young people - the fact of growing up. It is often assumed that when individual black students misbehave, it is a factor of their 'race' rather than of their adolescence. It seems likely that this would lead teachers to treat black students differently from white students and thus help to explain the pervasive feeling amongst black young people that they are treated unfairly. It is also assumed that in order to create a positive learning environment for black young people, one need only address questions of racism and discrimination and ignore the need to understand black young people *as young people.*

Black students in the study outlined other ways in which they were, according to Clark's definition, abused. Two ways in which black students felt abused and which I discuss below were that teachers used stereotypes in their dealings with black students, and that blatant racism also played a part in some teachers' interactions with black students.

Stereotypes

The above discussion has focused on the salience of 'race' as a framing device for teachers' understandings of black student behaviour in schools, and has emphasised the 'nonsynchronous' or uneven way in which racial inequality operates in the educational context (McCarthy, 1990). We have seen for example, that black boys were, according to the information given by the two London schools, five to six times more likely to be expelled from school than black girls. This could be explained in part by the fact that different stereotypes operate for girls and boys in co-educational contexts, but also that by and large boys and girls respond differently to particular situations. Teachers were perceived by the black students to draw on gender differentiated constructions of black people which were prevalent in the wider society. These discourses do not begin and end

192

in education but can be traced historically to early European theories about 'Others' and how Europeans made sense of these 'Others' (Rattansi, 1992). Such theories have led to a range of different stereotypes which affect groups in different ways. For example, whilst the theory of white superiority provided a particular view of non-white peoples generally, different types of stereotypes developed in context at particular moments in history for different groups. Black men have been variously represented as violent, aggressive, sexually out of control and engaged in illicit activities such as mugging and drug pushing and these are perceived by black pupils to inform some of the stereotypes of black boys' behaviour in school.

One sixth form student at Central City explicitly equated the assumptions which some teachers were said to hold with those believed to be held by the police. He talked of the 'heavy-handed policing' of black males by teachers. He was of the view that interactions between white teachers and black students were informed by stereotypes of black people in films and in the media. Black teachers were different, he said, because *"They understand the situation because they experience it themselves"*. One 15 year old black student summed it up like this:

Andrew: Teachers don't treat students with respect anyway, but they have a different approach for black students because they think you're a thief, they think you're violent, they think you're a troublemaker, and from these thoughts....just from the way we're dressed we get stereotyped. A black boy with designer jeans and they want to know where he got them. A friend of mine was in the WR and the teacher was saying, making blatant racist statements saying that he must have got this expensive clothes from drug money, and that his brother was a thief and his father was a dealer, making racist jokes like that. That's why I argue so much with teachers, because they say such things and I can't find it in myself to treat such teachers with respect.

This statement, which was spoken with considerable anger, indicates the deep level at which students feel 'abused' by racism. For young people, at an age when they need positive affirmation of their identity and integrity and a sense of their own worth, these 'offensive speech acts' can be nothing less than psychological abuse. Patricia Hill-Collins (1986) contends that stereotypes function to dehumanise and control. There were many anecdotes by students of occasions when teachers assumed that when something went missing, it was a black student to blame. For example,

> Lynda (13 years, Central City): We had just gone back to the classroom after P.E. when Miss James came and asked if she could see me. She took me into the corridor and asked if I had seen this girl's purse which had gone missing from the shower room, so I said, "but Miss, why have you picked me out to ask?" And she said, "I'm not picking you out, I intend to ask everybody who used the showers". So I said, "No, I haven't seen the purse". She says, "Are you sure because things could be a lot worse if you were found to be lying". And I said, "I haven't seen it, and I haven't taken it, OK?" and I went back into the class. Then she comes into the class and asks the whole class, she doesn't call anyone else out, she asks the whole class if anyone had seen the purse. They just think we're thieves for no reason.

There were several examples of this kind where black students felt that they had been unjustifiably singled out and suspected of theft or other form of dishonesty for no other reason than the fact that they were black.

> Cameron (15 years, North City): Mr Stanley came into the class and came straight over to me and said, "Where is it? Hand it over". I didn't even know what he was

194

talking about, but he just took my bag and started searching it. Only later when I

was about to go home he came over to me and apologised because someone had

lost their personal stereo, and he just assumed it was me.

MB: Why do you suppose he thought it was you who had taken it?

Cameron :I don't know. I don't steal and I've never taken anything from school, so

I just think he picked on me because I'm black.

Mr Stanley may well have been acting on information given to him by someone else. His

own reasons for picking this student out may not have been informed by racism. However,

the fact that the student thought so was based on wider experiences of black students.

Historical representations of black people as dishonest for example affected black young

people outside of as well as in school (for example it is well known that random stop and

search policies of the police affect black people more than any other group in Britain).

This is a fact seldom grasped in teachers' relations with or understanding of the needs of

black students. Mr Stanley, for example, should never have accused a student without first

making sure of the facts, but he also failed to grasp the implications of his accusation for

black students for whom this was a particularly sore point which related to police

harassment of black people. In Victor's statement below, it seems that 'you're damned if

you do and you're damned if you don't'.

Victor (15 years. Central City): I found a cheque book. I went to hand it in to the

police and went home. Next thing they were coming to my house to ask me

questions and to accuse me of stealing it.

There were other kinds of stereotypes. Mirza (1992) describes the racialised class and

gender stereotypes which teachers in her study held of black girls and the sexual

undertones of white male teachers' assumptions of the girls. Others, (see for example

Fuller 1984) write about the perceptions of teachers that black girls have 'attitude', a point which was raised in one of my interviews with a group of black girls in the study carried out for the DfEE (Blair at al. 1998). Shelley's example below, taken from the DfEE study, seems to me to epitomise the 'racial frames of reference' (Figueroa, 1994) which inform the understandings of teachers such as Mrs Quinn, described in the previous chapter.

Shelley: Teachers stereotype us, they stereotype the black students.

MB. What kind of stereotypes do they use?

Shelley: It's just the way they stereotype us. Ms X said to me, "Don't start any of your Afro-Caribbean attitude with me". My parents are divorced, I live with my white mother, I've never been to the Caribbean, so what did she mean by that? (Blair et al pg.38)

It was also felt that teachers stereotype black students as being more capable of sport than of having intellectual ability.

Steven: (15 years, Central City) They're always pushing us into sport. When it comes to school work they don't think you can do it and they don't give a damn about you. But when it comes to sport, they love you.

Darren: (14 years, Central City) I was excluded once, right, and the school was going to play a football match in the school league. Now everybody knows that I'm really good at football, and of course the teacher wanted me to play in the league, so although I was supposed to be excluded, they decided to end my exclusion so that I could play for the school.

Again, from a psychological point of view, young people need a sense of achievement in order to give them direction. In his statement Steven underlines the insecurity which students feel as a result of the selective and racialised way in which they are valued in the school and that this correlates with the manner in which school subjects are valued and hierarchised. If a student is black, they are not, in his view, prized for their intellectual abilities but for their lower level 'physical prowess' in sport. Darren demonstrates, not only that students are aware of the tendency in schools today to prioritise behaviour management over academic achievement, but the inconsistent and selective way in which rules are applied when the interests of the school are at stake..

That Darren was deemed bad enough to be kept out of school and to miss out on essential subject knowledge but not bad enough to come back and 'rescue' the football team, raises questions about the legitimacy of suspensions and expulsions. Indeed one parent who was interviewed for the DfEE study considered bizarre the whole notion of sending children home as a punishment rather than suspending them from those school activities to which they had privileged access, such as certain sports.

Racism

I was interested to find out just how students conceptualised racism in order to see whether there were discrepancies between the different student accounts. Taken in isolation, the question below could be said to be a leading question. However, in the context of the discussion I was having with the students, the idea of teachers being racist had already been raised. In all cases, it was the students and not I who raised the issue of racism.

In all interviews with students, they were careful to differentiate between teachers whom they thought were blatantly racist, those who seemed to be ignorant of what constituted

racism and those for whom racism was said to operate at an unconscious level. Some students tried to define racism, whilst others described it as something one 'felt' and was therefore not that easy to define. The discussion took place with a group of black students at Central City School.

MB. When you say they (teachers) pick on black students, do you mean they are being racist?

David (15 years): Yes, but I don't think it's the kind of racism which says, "I hate black people". It's like, they have this feeling about black people which just won't escape from them. It's always there.

Brian (14 years): I don't think all white teachers are racist, but it's easy to pick out the ones that are, especially as some of them can be so blatant. There's one teacher, even when I put my hand up first, she goes past me and asks someone else. She does that a lot. I also find that she tries to spend as little time as possible explaining things to me, then she moves on to someone else. It's like, anything I do, however small, it seems to irritate her and she'll make a big thing out of it. I have her for three lessons a week, and I *want* (original emphasis) to go to school, but I feel I can't.

MB. But how can you be sure that what you are experiencing is racism and not a personality clash, say.

Brian: It's the body language. If you've experienced it you know it and can tell the difference between one white person's attitude and another.

Jason (15 years): It's the way they speak to you, look at you, degrading you, putting you down. It's difficult to explain. It's more something that you feel but can't describe. And you certainly won't be feeling that way about all white teachers.

What was certain from my interviews with students was the level of resentment which was generated within black students when they felt that they had been unfairly treated. One student pointed to this as a major source of conflict between teachers and students.

Jason (Central City): Any black person that realises what's going on, and I can tell you, no black person I know, no black person who can see that something is obviously happening to them, is going to keep quiet about it. Like in school, we can see these things happening to us, and no black person is going to be quiet when they are pushed down. They'll always say something.

Despite this pervasive feeling amongst black students that they were placed in a position of disadvantage in relation to their white peers, there was also the view that negative reactions did not match the level and extent of unfair or unjust treatment.

Bryn: Compared with the way teachers 'cut you up', I'd say that black students really hold back a lot, a lot.....One teacher told a black girl that she looked like a chimpanzee. She just walked out and I thought, "Good for you. You don't have to take that from him", and I was cursing him in my mind. He saw the look of anger on my face so he came up and tried to talk about my work, but I just stiffened up and gave him a look which made it clear to him that I wanted him to keep away from me.

Bryn vividly demonstrates the extent to which black students felt that their identities were eroded and demeaned and also the vicarious way (Essed, 1990) in which racism was experienced. This is an issue often not understood by white teachers and white people in general. In this statement, Bryn shows how an image of white teachers as racist can take

199

hold in the minds of students. We see also the academic and behavioural effects of certain 'speech acts' on black students.

Bryn's case is one which underscores Clark's (1995) theory of abuse which I quoted above. Faced with such emotionally corrosive practices in the classroom, it does not seem far-fetched to conclude that black students (on top of any other family or social issues which they might be facing) will have their ability to concentrate and participate in the classroom severely restricted.. Such teacher behaviour goes against the ethos of classrooms which according to Ladson-Billings (1994) characterises 'good teachers' of minority students. With 'good teachers' of minority students,

Psychological safety is the hallmark of these classrooms. The students feel comfortable and supported (p.73).

This example also underlines the notion that observers (teachers) and actors (students) attribute different causes to events, and that the situational factors help to explain this difference. In this situation, the teacher might not have directed his offensive statement at Bryn, but his action resulted in a deterioration of his relationship with the student. The teacher might attribute Bryn's reaction to an internal cause (a chip on the shoulder or a persecution complex) and not realise that Bryn's reaction was directly triggered by the wider racial implications of his statement even though not directed at him personally.

The Grey Area of the Unconscious

Hansen (1997:167) declares that

> A teacher's style can express warmth and coldness, friendliness or hostility. It can exude dislike or caring for students; it can be threatening or encouraging ; it can

reveal aloofness or engagement-and all of this repetitively and automatically, which is to say, non- self-consciously, as the core term habit implies.

Many years ago in my role as an Advisory Teacher for a particular Local Education Authority, I was asked to investigate the complaints of a black woman who claimed that her son was being racially discriminated against in a school for children who were said to have 'emotional and behavioural difficulties'. This student was one of only three black students in the whole school. I spent a week in the school, tracking this child's activities and observing all his lessons. It was impossible throughout that week to say categorically that the child was being discriminated against. But one teacher whose lessons I observed on three occasions, displayed in his interactions with this student (and it seems that he did so quite unconsciously) some of the behaviour characteristics outlined by Hansen above. When I talked in general terms to the teacher about this student, he did think that the student in question was 'difficult', but then that was why he was in the school. He gave no verbal indication that he thought any less of this child than he did of the other students. Yet his body language and his tendency to frown or become annoyed or irritated when he had to deal with the student were quite apparent to me. I did not notice this in any other teacher's dealings with this student. It did not come as a total surprise to me therefore when I interviewed this child and in answer to the question about who was his favourite teacher and who was his least favourite, he mentioned this teacher as his least favourite and his lessons as the ones he least enjoyed.

I use this anecdote to illustrate the problem of defining racism primarily in terms of blatant and malicious activity. This nine year old child was unable to identify the reasons for his antipathy towards this teacher other than to say, "I don't think he likes me very much".

201

The conversation below with a fifteen year old student from Central City is another example of the difficulty of ascertaining whether the teacher was indeed racist or whether she had different relationships with students who did or did not perform well in her subject, mathematics.

Alison: Miss Allen gave the whole class a detention because we were late and I swore under my breath but she heard me and I got a referral format.

MB. What did you say?

Alison: It's a bit rude.

MB. It's OK. I'd like to know what it was.

Alison: I said 'fucking bitch' because she's such a.....she's so evil. Everyone hates her. When everyone left the detention everyone was calling out, 'bitch', right, and I kept on saying 'fucking bitch, fucking bitch'. When I came out, the other maths teacher heard me and he was going to let me go and then I told him that Miss Allen was a racist and he said. "Right, I don't like what you are saying, so I'm going to report you".

MB. Are there any other pupils in that class who get into trouble a lot with Miss Allen?

Alison: Yes. there's a boy called (....). He's not white. he's like Colombian, and there's another boy Abdul and a black boy called Graham, and a white boy called Ben. He's the only white student that she picks on.

MB. What I'm really trying to understand....You know I've spoken to Miss Allen and she certainly sounds as if she, you know, she doesn't support racist ideas and she's very sort of antiracist. you know. So why would she think she's not racist and yet you see her so differently...

Alison: Because she always acts like that in front of other people. She'll say to us, like, she'll say, "Alison -diary!" And when she gets to Joanne who's a white girl, she says, "Joanne can I have your diary please".

MB. So you're saying that she actually started off by asking for diaries differently from the way she asked the white students.

Alison: Yes, because they're so goody goody, you know. There are these goody goody children in our class. Joanne is such a goody goody. If you don't do any work then Miss sends you to the Withdrawal Room.

MB. What do white pupils say about this teacher?

Alison. They don't say nothing but they think she's racist. Joanne, she's my friend, she thinks she's (Miss Allen) racist. But I don't think she's racist to Hayley. She's black you see, but she's good at her work so Miss Allen wouldn't tell her off. There's only one white boy she treats bad, and that's Ben, you know, the boy we saw coming in.

This conversation illustrates a number of important points, but two in particular are worth discussing. Firstly it supports the theory that the relationship between teachers and students is a dialectical relationship in which students are not mere victims of the teachers' ineptness or attitude but find their own ways of 'getting back' at the teacher. However, although students may not be mere victims, in this case the only 'revenge' they can pay is to call the teacher demeaning (sexist) names whereas the teacher holds considerable power and is able to physically keep them back after school for what after all appears to be a minor infringement, namely being late. This action is clearly felt to be a spiteful one by the students for all or many of them to feel justified in hurling abuse at her. This is an example of where the teacher's authoritarianism has the potential to create conflict because it appears to be based on a struggle for power in the classroom, rather than on negotiated control which allows students an opportunity to exercise an element of responsibility for

their own behaviour (Haberman, 1995). In my discussion with the teacher, she explained her authoritarian approach by saying that she was unable to teach unless students arrived on time and there was absolute silence in the classroom.

The second issue which this conversation with Alison raises is about students' perceptions of racism. It seems that Miss Allen 'picks on' those students who are not good at her subject and therefore presumably are less likely to conform to her preferred mode of classroom behaviour, and she favours those who are 'goodie goodies'. Included amongst these is a black student who Miss Allen does not tell off because she is good at maths and presumably also well behaved. When I spoke to Miss Allen, she was considerably upset by Alison's accusation (made to the Deputy Head) that she was a racist who 'picked on' the black students and vehemently suggested that if she was a racist then she should be sacked because she did not believe that there was room for racist teachers in the classroom. Did Alison merely assume that because those who got into trouble most in this particular class were black meant that there was a process of deliberate racial exclusion going on? On the other hand, did the teacher use subtly offensive 'speech acts' or body language which had the effect of excluding more black students than they did white students, however unintentionally? The fact that she did not have problems with at least one of the black students in the class may not in itself be an indication of fairness to all black students. As a teacher who already differentiated between her students on the basis of their conformity and affinity for the subject which she taught, the ground was laid for possible unfairness towards students on other grounds.

204

Positive Experiences

Clark (1995), amongst others (Woods, 1990; Haberman, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994) emphasise humane qualities or 'humanity' to describe their concept of a 'good teacher'. Clark states

> In the language of children, their good teachers nurture them by treating them as intelligent people who can become even more intelligent, by taking time to learn who we are and what we love, treating us fairly by treating us differently, by explaining why he teaches and acts as he does, by telling stories of her own life outside school and listening to ours, by letting me have a bad day when I can't help it. The good teacher is both funny and serious. We can laugh together and this makes me feel happy and close. She puts thought into surprising us in ways that we will never forget. He draws pictures that show how ideas are connected; we don't feel lost or afraid that we will be sent away or humiliated. The good teacher loves what he is teaching, but does not show off or put distance between us. The good teacher sets things up so children can learn from one another. She knows how to be a friend while still a responsible adult (p.15).

Woods (1990) also reported that students' views of a good teacher were of a teacher who had a sense of humour, was able to keep control, made students 'work', but also showed students respect and humanity.

My interviews with black students were not all a case of doom and gloom. They too identified teachers they liked in the same terms described by Woods. One student whom I had been asked to see because he was 'at risk' of being expelled talked warmly about his (white) English teacher.

MB. Are there any teachers you like?

Gary: Miss Fletcher, my English teacher. She really encouraged me and I really enjoyed English.

MB. What did you like about English?

Gary: She just made the lessons fun. She's quite strict but she's also quite relaxed. She just seems to understand about black people.

MB. What do you mean?

Gary: Well, when we were reading a book which was about black people in America, she was asking us about black peoples' experiences here.

MB. Was she asking the black students that?

Gary: No, everybody was answering, even the white students.

Good teachers then were those who encouraged students, they were 'strict' (i.e able to control the classroom situation) but made learning an enjoyable experience, and for black students, they were able to make the lesson inclusive and culturally relevant (cf. Ladson-Billings, op.cit.). Good relationships were seen by black students to be dependent upon the teacher's ability to be fair, to be encouraging and interested in them, and to 'respect' students. Those that did not live up to these qualities were clearly distinguishable to the students. Clark's interviews with 60 'good' teachers in American primary and secondary schools revealed that their perspectives of the 'good teacher' were not different from those of the students. It is worth ending this section with his summary which places in sharp relief the difference between these teachers and those that black students talked about. However, it is important to note that being a 'good teacher' in all -white contexts does not necessarily have the same meaning as it does in contexts of diversity where different or additional criteria are required (Blair et al 1998).

To teachers, the heart of good teaching is not in management or decision-making or pedagogical content knowledge. No, the essence of good teaching for teachers is in the arena of human relationships. Teaching is good when a class becomes a community of honest nurturant and mutually respectful people. Experienced teachers treasure the moments and memories of times when laughter, compassion and surprise described their day or year. Cultivation of the self-esteem of young people is very high on the list of goals of the good teacher. Better to leave my class having learned a little mathematics and loving it than knowing a lot of mathematics and hate it. This is a case where the commonsense of good teachers is supported by fascinating research: in one of a series of studies of the phenomenon of 'flow' by University of Chicago psychologists, the research team found that, independent of student ability, their performance was best in classes they saw as 'enjoyable' (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984). Good humour was mentioned again and again as a quality of the best teachers remembered. Enthusiasm for teaching, fascination with the content, and openness to admitting mistakes are important in good teachers. The good teacher is capable of expressing love, care and respect in 150 different ways. The good teacher is an adult who takes children seriously (Clark, 1995:14)

Conclusion

This chapter was concerned to explore the perspectives of students about the over-representation of black students in school suspensions and expulsions. In all cases, students made clear that there were teachers in their schools who respected students, made learning fun and were fair at all times. Where teachers knowingly or unknowingly discriminated, or where they created an ethos which made some groups of students feel excluded from the processes of learning, they were said to create a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students responded according to the low expectations of teachers.

The peer group was also said to occupy a central role in the lives of students. The influence of the peer group on black students was seen to be in part the result of a complex combination of racial and gender stereotyping by both white teachers and white students. Black students were constructed as 'tough' and threatening (Sewell, 1997), so that they were more likely to retain a high visibility especially in situations of conflict with teachers. However, this was itself dependent on context as discussions with black students from Shire School did not highlight the peer group or other forms of youth cultures as significant in their experience of schooling. This seems to suggest that there was nothing distinctive about the cultures of black students which would distinguish them from their white peers. The verdict then was not that there was something biologically or culturally distinctive about black students which made them a particular problem for schools, but that factors existed to shape the activities of black students in ways which did not exist for white students. Importantly teachers themselves were implicated in this process.

The analysis of student perspectives also pointed to the racialised environment of the school and the failure of teachers to make the connections between the school and the wider society in relation to issues of 'race'. Students catalogued experiences of general exclusion or blatant 'abuse' of black students by teachers, a situation which was likely to deny black students equal access to the benefits of school and instigate or aggravate conflict. Injustice was particularly felt where structures of support for students did not exist so that students felt that no matter how racially abusive a teacher had been, teachers were more inclined to 'stick together' than to risk 'sticking their neck out' for the sake of justice and fairness (see appendix 4).

There were four basic narratives to students' accounts. These were about unfair treatment, stereotyping of black students with particular reference to males, lack of respect for black students, and blatant forms of racism, all of which were shot through with assumptions
208

about gender. The teaching and learning contexts created by some teachers for black students were in sharp contrast therefore with those normally associated with the 'good' school or the 'good' teacher. There were nevertheless examples of teachers whom black students defined as 'good' teachers, who were seen to operate fairly at all times, to encourage and motivate all students, and importantly to be culturally inclusive and relevant in their teaching.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

Parents' Perspectives

Black parents' voices are often silent in writings about 'race' and education, and yet it is the parents who have been the prime movers in the attempt to secure better educational opportunities for their children (Chevannes and Reeves,1984). In this chapter, I draw on the perspectives of parents from the three schools in the study. Most of those interviewed were mothers, either because the mother was the only one available at the time of the interview, or because the mother was the only parent living with the child.

In an earlier chapter. I mentioned that black parents' concerns about the over-representation of their children in suspensions and expulsions goes back a long way, at least to the late 1960's. In their book, The Heart of the Race, Bryan, Dadzie and Scafe (1984) describe the sense of powerlessness felt by black parents, many of whom were newly arrived immigrants at that time, in relation to the racism and discrimination faced by their children in schools. There was a sense in which as new arrivals, they felt that they were 'guests' with limited rights, added to which was a belief that the school was the domain of the professional, a boundary that parents could not cross. It nevertheless became clear that something would have to be done as evidence began to accumulate of the high levels of intolerance and discrimination, and the low levels of academic achievement which faced their children (Coard, 1971). This was the spur for the development and growth of Supplementary or Saturday Schools where black children could be provided with extra academic support from members of their own communities and be insulated from the racism which they faced from both teachers and their white peers at school. Parents interviewed talked about their own experiences of schooling and the

effect this had had on their ability to support their children. Parents below are identified by the school which their child/children attended. Elbeda, who herself had attended Shire School, remembered the one defining moment which had led to a downward spiral in her own academic performance during the 1960s.

Elbeda (Shire School): I came from the Caribbean at the age of 12, so I went straight into secondary school. We had been given very structured teaching in my school in Jamaica and we knew our times tables and knew how to do long divisions, you know, and I was quite good at arithmetic. I remember one day the teacher gave us all several pages of arithmetic to do and said that as soon as we had finished we should let her know so she could check what we had done. I remember I was amazed by how easy the sums were. It was stuff I had done at my school in Jamaica. Anyway, I was the first to finish and I was going up to her desk when she said to me really rudely, "Sit down. You can't possibly have finished yet". So I said I had finished. She took my book, checked my sums and then turned to the class and said, "What do we do to people who cheat?" No-one said anything so she said to me, "I want you to show me where you copied these answers from. I will not have cheats in my class", and she tore the pages out of the book, told me to sit down next to her and do them again. I was so humiliated and so scared that of course I didn't get very far with them which just confirmed to her that I must have cheated the first time. That was a real lesson for me because I made up my mind that I was never going to expose myself like that again. Most of the time I was bored, but I would never put my hands up if I knew the answer. I was put into low streams, in fact there were only four black children in the school and we were all put into low streams for all our subjects. I left school with only two CSE's. Our parents just didn't know how to help us. And to think that my children are going through more of the same, but different if you see what I mean....

Painful personal experiences of this kind produced different types of responses from parents. Elbeda talked about how she felt that she had let her children down because she had allowed these early experiences to paralyse her and make her feel intimidated and afraid of going into school to support her children. Other parents were moved to go to schools whenever their children reported unfairness or discrimination, resulting in being labelled 'aggressive' and 'volatile' (See Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

Jennifer (Central City): I had such bad experiences when I was at school and my parents really weren't there for me because they had so much to face themselves. Anyway I decided that I was not going to let my children go through the same thing. And it's not like I was there every day or every week, but when they started sending him home for such minor things, I just thought I couldn't let them get away with destroying my child's chances, so I used to go to the school and the headmaster was always very nice to me. But it was always the same teacher, and I think in the end they excluded him not because he had done anything so wrong, but because they didn't want to have to deal with me anymore.

Partnerships between parents and schools are generally regarded as important for children's education. But, as the chapter on teachers' perspectives attempted to show, these relationship are not usually 'partnerships' in the sense that parents share an equal place with the teachers in determining what happens to children at school. The term 'partnership' it seems, is merely a rhetorical device which presents schools as 'open' and willing to work with parents in the interests of the students whilst masking the power that schools have to ensure that parents comply with the school's non-negotiated mechanisms for imposing discipline. Tomlinson (1984) contends that

Schools are not in any case flexible in their response to parents, partly because a liberal stance prefers not to single out particular groups of parents for particular treatment, and partly because lack of knowledge and poor communication may inhibit teachers from understanding minority community needs and wishes (p.10)

What in fact black parents indicate is that despite this liberal stance on the part of teachers, they have in fact always singled out black parents for particular treatment by allowing stereotypes of black people to inform their relations with black families (Man an Ghaill, 1994). Jennifer's experience, which was by no means unique, shows black parents inhabiting a contradictory space between non-attendance at school and being labelled 'uninterested' in the child's education, and attendance and being labelled 'aggressive' and uncooperative if the parent is in any way critical of the school. Parents endorsed many of the points raised by black students.

It needs to be stated that all the parents interviewed had had experience of their child or children being either suspended or expelled from school. The perspectives are therefore largely from parents who felt aggrieved by the school. Despite this, however, the consistency of their responses, and the level of agreement with their children even though they were interviewed separately, validates their strong feelings about the issue of suspension and expulsion. Their views were moreover, confirmed in interviews with parents from other studies (Blair, 1994; Blair and Bourne, 1998). As with their children, none of the parents tried to justify bad behaviour or to pretend that their children might not have done something that required censure. Like their children, it was the selective nature of such censure, or the inconsistent way in which sanctions were applied, that mattered to them. This was a point raised by teachers too as discussed in chapter six. Of all the parents interviewed, only one set of parents were in complete agreement with the school

about the expulsion of their son. I outline the details of this one case here before the discussion of the substantive views of parents.

I was visiting the school (Central City School) on the day that Mr and Mrs Williams were called to a meeting about their son Mark. I was invited to attend as an observer at the meeting where Mark's truancy, his tendency to sleep during lessons, and the fact that he was suspected of smoking marijuana were discussed. He seldom did any homework and was behind with his coursework. His parents agreed that the school had given him many chances but wanted to have one more chance where they would try to supervise him even more closely than they were already doing.

I arranged to interview Mr and Mrs Williams and Mark in their home the following week. When I arrived I was told that Mark had been grounded and that I could interview him in his bedroom where he was confined for that day. My interview with Mr and Mrs Williams lasted for only half an hour. They reiterated that the school, and the deputy headteacher in particular, had done their best to keep Mark in the school. They felt pessimistic about his ability to stay in school. He sneaked out at night and that was why he was usually so tired on the days when he did go to school. They did not suspect racism, discrimination or unfairness in the school's treatment of Mark. Not only did school not seem to agree with him, but Mark's out-of-school and unemployed friends were a much stronger influence on him than the school or his parents. After my interview with them, Mr Williams went to Mark's room to ask if I could see him. He was not in the room despite the bars on the windows. He had escaped through the bathroom window! Not long after this episode the deputy headteacher at the school told me that Mark had been expelled.

This case was unusual amongst the cases in the study in that the parents and the school seemed to work together and were in complete agreement about the boy's problems. All

214

the other interviews indicated poor communication between the school and the parents, and a belief that even if their children had done something which needed some form of sanction, either the sanction was out of keeping with the level of the offence, the punishment had been unfairly imposed, or the full facts of the events which had led to the child's suspension or expulsion had not been properly investigated and verified. In other words, expulsion had not been a last resort but a convenience for the school.

Mark's case does, however, raise questions about my belief that expelling students is unnecessary and a violation of the student's human rights. A distinction needs to be drawn between students who no longer wish to attend school and this is supported by the parents especially where the student already has employment (see for example the School Refusers described in chapter five), and students whose parents support their need to be in school, but the student is 'troubled' and has become so disaffected that school is no longer desirable or seen as relevant. My example of Mrs C. the headteacher of a school in the DfEE study who personally mentored students who were in especially vulnerable situations points to possibilities of rehabilitation for these students. It is unclear whether similar possibilities were explored in Mark's case. It seems unlikely as the number of students with 'special needs' who were expelled from this school indicates. My main argument is not that young people should be kept in school *at all cost*. Rather, it is to say that many young people would benefit from remaining in school if only a more personal and caring approach were taken towards them. What seems more likely to happen, is that such students are considered an inconvenience and personally blamed for their troubles as a way of masking the school's failure or refusal to support and nurture them.

I discuss the perspectives of the parents under two main headings: 1. Relationships between teachers and students, and 2. Relationships between teachers and parents.

Parents saw teachers' attitudes to students as one of the most damaging features of the relationships which they had with black students and therefore a leading factor in the over-representation of black students in 'exclusions'. Parents supported the views of students that teachers treated them with little or no respect, did not listen to their views and allowed racial stereotypes to inform their relations with black students. It was felt that, as the educators, teachers should be the ones who provide the parameters which guide student behaviour. That they should, in other words, be role models to the students.

> Mavis (North City): They don't show the children respect. They shout at them, put them down and basically don't talk to them like to another human being. Yet they expect the children to be saying, "Yes Sir, Yes Miss", all the time.

Some parents emphasised to their children the importance of not retaliating when they felt that teachers did not show them respect. They tried to instil in their children the importance of conforming to the school's demands as a way of 'beating them at their own game' by insisting that they be on time, dress neatly and be respectful (see also Blair et.al.1998)

> Jacqui (Central City): I tried to say to him, "Just ignore them. They are not going to be there in the future when you are looking for a job. Don't cheek them back, you know, you're the only one that's going to lose out. But it's useless asking our children to do that when the very people who are supposed to be in charge of their welfare treat them with so little respect.

But whilst this conformity would clearly be approved of by teachers, there is evidence to show that black students are the least likely to truant (Schools Exclusion Unit 1998) and

216

most likely to come to school clean and well dressed and yet they are still over-represented in 'exclusions'. The kind of lack of respect that teachers had of students and discussed by students in the previous chapter, seems to bear no relation to school uniform, or to whether or not they came to school well equipped (a problem presented by students from all ethnic groups). Parents were, however, aware of the preconceptions that white teachers in general have of black people, a perspective which was shared not only by other parents (Blair et al, 1998; Cohen et al, 1994), but as we saw, by black teachers and by students. These preconceptions of black students led teachers to assume that blacks students were more likely to engage in certain types of behaviour than other students, and so 'pick on' them unjustly

> Liz (Shire School): Apparently a supply teacher walked into the classroom and there was a group of boys in the corner who were messing about and didn't pay attention when they were told to sit down. She went and called the Head of Year and said that the black boy was the main culprit. He had to go to the office and of course he wouldn't tell the Head who the others were, so he got suspended, and he wasn't even the main person involved. When the other boys realised that he was being suspended, they went and gave themselves up. She'd only picked him out because she didn't know their names, you know, and he stood out from the crowd.

This last quotation is an interesting example of racial discrimination and one that illuminates one of the many reasons why black students are over-represented amongst suspensions and expulsions. The teacher in question may not have been motivated by malice against black people, but one has to ask what she would have done had there been no black students involved at all. It is not unknown for teachers to detain a whole class, or in this case, perhaps all the boys rather than allow one boy to pay the penalty simply

because his colour made him stand out from the rest. It may have been convenient for the teacher, but what about the implications for the student?

One of the side effects of students getting 'picked on' was that they became labelled as trouble-makers and found it very difficult to shake off this image (see letter from parents, appendix 5). The image even followed them to another school, so that they were unable to make a fresh start. In a study carried out for Barnardos and the Family Services Units (Cohen et.al 1994), a parent I interviewed underlined this point.

> Brenda (Barnardos/FSU): He seems to settle down and he can have good times, and then it'll just, I don't know, he seems to get one teacher that says, "We know all about you", and it starts all over again .

I wrote in that study that,

> This labelling did not stop with the pupil in question but was extended to his/her siblings which tended to establish a 'family' rather than an individual reputation, with unfortunate consequences. One parent said,
>
> "She compares my two daughters to him all the time. She pulls them all the time in the corridor about his behaviour - so now, both of them, it's no longer.-they're in school- but it's "Can I have a day off?" and " I don't feel well", and it's because they know she's going to teach them and she's going to compare them all the time and it's not right".

Another theme in the issue of student-teacher relations picked out by parents from the three study schools was that teachers do not listen to what students have to say in order to give them a fair hearing and avoid making unfair decisions. This was a persistent complaint on the part of students themselves. Both parents and students thought that if

218

teachers listened more to what students said, they might become more aware of the causes of conflict in which black students were involved. They might, for example, become aware of the extent of racist name-calling and of racial harassment endured by black students (see CRE, 1997). Both the CRE and the Runnymede Trust, for example, specifically recommended to the DfEE that this problem be made explicit in the government's so-called 'Six Pack' (DfEE 1993) which gave guidelines to schools on a number of issues relating to the 'exclusion' of students from school. Parents felt strongly that this inability in schools to listen to students left students feeling unsupported and uncared for by teachers. Although this is not an issue for black students alone, the perception that teachers were more likely to blame the black student heightened the sense of grievance that decisions were racially based rather than being based on the 'facts' of the situation. The sense of grievance on the part of both parents and their children was less against the students who indulged in racist name-calling, but more against the teachers or other adults in positions of responsibility over the students, for not taking a firm stand on this issue, or else professing to take a stand and then not doing anything about it.

> Rosina (Central City): She just wouldn't listen to what Andrea had to say. She heard what the other girl had to say, and that was that, you know, just not caring that there are two sides to every story. Andrea just felt that she had no-one to turn to, and I can't blame her for feeling so rebellious. She just felt that she was facing a brick wall. She was doing so well, you know, and this is what they've done to her.

Despite parents' second-hand accounts of their children's experiences, there is a consistency to the reports which cannot be dismissed lightly. Furthermore, their views were endorsed by parents whom I interviewed for two other studies (Barnardo/FSU, see Cohen et al 1994; DfEE, see Blair et al, 1998). These various studies were carried out in

different parts of the country in cities such as Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, and different parts of London. There were both black as well as white parents of black children involved. The Barnardos/FSU study, in which a group of white parents were interviewed by Ruth Cohen in relation to their (white) children who had been expelled, reinforced the strength of class as a factor which shapes and influences teachers' relations with parents. However, the racialised nature of teachers' relations with white (mothers) of black children gave these parents a qualitatively different experience from other white parents, as I discuss below.

Teacher-Parent Relationships.

A strong theme to emerge out of the analysis of parent-teacher relations was the sense of powerlessness and lack of control felt by parents over the suspension or expulsion of their children. There were echoes of the complaints made by students that teachers and others in authority did not listen to them or heed their concerns. In the Barnardos/FSU study I wrote the following which is relevant for my analysis here:

The sense of powerlessness was compounded for the parents by the feeling of alienation from official discourse and the inconsistency of the support (if any) which they received or had been promised by the local education office. Officials were said to backtrack on their promises, or to make offers of help which they never followed up, to give up help when a parent or child most needed it, or simply not to communicate with the parents about whatever progress was being made regarding their child's education. There was a sense of hopelessness because of lack of access to information which would help them to be less dependent on others to get things done (p.52).

220

Brown (1998) affirms that the power relationship between professionals and parents who are not of the professional class is deep and that this differential relationship can result in the skills of parents being devalued by teachers and other professionals. Mac an Ghaill (1994) too contends that there is 'a failure to acknowledge the differential positioning of parents to schooling and its discourses of social exclusion' (P.161). These writers believe that a major obstacle to good relations between schools and minority ethnic group parents and their communities lies in the preconceptions and racial or ethnic stereotypes which are held about different groups. Tomlinson (1984:198) states that

> One way of improving home-school relations with ethnic minority parents would be the introduction of much more structured links, both to inform parents about the education system in general and thus help make the education of their own children more meaningful, and also to encourage teachers to listen to the views of ethnic minority parents without preconceived stereotyping.

The question of stereotyping was said by parents to be a major cause of the poor relations between many black working class parents and schools, which made the situation a great deal worse for the student. There was, for example, the persisting stereotype that black parents are not interested either in their children's education or in their academic progress (Brown, 1998). Tomlinson (op.cit.p.15) adds that

> The research caricature of the low-achieving working class child and his or her low level of parental encouragement may have had more effect on teachers than is generally acknowledged.....(Yet) the stereotype of the apathetic, uninterested parent is not supported by research.

Most of the black parents interviewed had attended school in Britain. The persistence of stereotypes of the 'aggressive' African-Caribbean parent were felt to be an excuse for not having to pay attention to what black parents were saying and therefore a way of not having to cater for the needs of black children.

> Norma (Central City) In the end they excluded him for such a trivial thing that I was sure it had more to do with me going to the school and demanding explanations for things which were not right, you know, than with anything he had done. It was me they couldn't take, not my son.

In her study of the perspectives of white working class parents, Cohen (1994) drew several parallels between the experience of white parents and those of black parents. The experience of powerlessness and of being treated as 'a nobody' was clear in both ethnic groups. However, there was a difference in that black parents did not always accept that their children caused the level of difficulties that could merit either suspension or expulsion. Whilst white parents generally accepted that their children were difficult or had problems which required specialist help, the black parents were often baffled by reports of behaviour which seemed to be out of character for the child concerned. Whilst white parents felt that what they needed most was access to information about their rights, access to those who made decisions about their children, adequate and appropriate facilities for those children who needed specialist help, and to be treated with dignity and respect, black parents felt they needed all this, as well as the removal of racist assumptions which often led to unfair treatment of themselves and their children. There was an assumption, for example, that black people were 'alien', had lower standards, that these were imported into Britain and had the effect of contaminating British schools and by extension, British (read white) children.

222

Jennifer (Central City): The teacher said, "We just don't accept that kind of behaviour in this country", you know, treating me like I was an immigrant when I was born and brought up in this country. And in fact, my experiences in school were *so* (original emphasis) bad, I'd never have experienced that kind of thing in Jamaica. So trying to make out like countries where black people come from the children behave badly - and it's exactly the opposite.

The feeling of being stereotyped was shared with the one white parent of a black child in the study. She was a teacher and was sure that half the problems faced by her son had to do with the fact that he was black. As he attended the same school at which she taught, she herself did not have the difficulties from her colleagues that she had had in the child's previous school. She described her first meeting with the headteacher of that school.

I was called to a meeting by the headteacher, and when I walked into his office, his jaw dropped. He was visibly shocked. He just hadn't expected a white middleclass woman and one in his own profession!

Whilst the fact that she was middle class produced a reaction of shock, the reaction to working class white parents was said, by a parent in the Barnardos/FSU study (Blair, 1994) to be one of contempt.

Avril (Barnardos/FSU): Because my two older children are half-caste because my first husband was black, they just think I'm trash, and they take it out on all my children, even the white ones. I'm sure that's why my daughter and my son had so much trouble at school.

223

Patricia: (Barnardos/FSU): I'm sure Rachel's father being black has something to do with the kind of help I've had. The last headmistress just didn't hide the fact that she held me in contempt.

Most of the parents felt disrespected by teachers and others whom they had to deal with in relation to their children's 'exclusions'. Associated with the sense of powerlessness and not having any control over their lives and their children's lives, was a sense that officialdom or the (white) middleclass worlds of schools and staffrooms treated them in a manner which was designed to cause misunderstanding and conflict and close off opportunities for proper communication. There were strong echoes of students' accounts in their statements which re-inforces the argument that parents, in particular working class parents are differentially positioned in the school system and that systemic practices inhibit attempts to create partnerships between parents and teachers.

Conclusion

From interviews with parents, class seems to be an important factor in the quality of the relationships between parents and teachers. The interaction of 'race' and class adds another dimension to the relations between schools and black parents which according to parents, goes some way to explain why black students are more likely to be excluded than white students. The relevance of these relationships for students is obvious in that good communication between the school and the parents is essential if solutions to problems are to be found.

Black parents underlined many of the issues which black students gave to explain their over-representation in suspensions and expulsions. Some of these issues applied equally to the relationships between schools and parents. Despite the existing rhetoric about home -

224

school partnerships, it seems that working class parents in particular do not share in the power of the school to determine the academic futures of their children. Parents communicated a sense of hopelessness about the decisions that were taken about their children. They felt powerless to influence the outcomes in relation to a breakdown between their children and the school, and indeed felt even more excluded or obliged to go along with whatever decision was taken.

Many of the difficulties faced by black students were said to lie in discriminatory or unfair practices. These were the result of stereotypes of black people which were said to inform or influence teachers' dealing with black students. Similar stereotypes influenced the relationships with parents leading to conflictual rather than friendly or productive relations. The losers in these situations were the students.

Parents' perspectives help to confirm some of the earlier arguments about the role of the school in the broader debates about the economy and society. The responsibility for creating proper structures of communication between home and school is that of the school. The lack of such structures for communicating effectively with black parents, must, in a situation in which such communication is generally experienced as being mediated by racism, be a serious disadvantage to the education of black students. According to parents, it increases the chances of expulsion of black students, and exacerbates the long term consequences for them.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis has been to investigate the question of why black (male) students are over-represented in suspensions and expulsions to such a high degree compared with their white and South Asian peers. In this concluding section, I provide a summary of the research findings, provide an overview of some of the theories discussed, examine the limitations of the study, and discuss possible directions for future research.

Summary

Three schools in different locations and with different numbers of black students were studied. All three were mixed comprehensives serving a predominantly working-class student population. Headteachers, teachers, students and parents were interviewed for their perspectives on the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. Some classroom observation and analysis of 'exclusion' reports was also done.

I adopted as my theoretical framework studies within the sociology of education which have argued that through the processes of schooling, education plays an important role in helping to regulate national and international economies (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Young, 1971; Sharp and Green, 1975; Ball, 1987; Apple, 1990). Students' life chances, I argued, are limited or enhanced in order to position them, through employment, according to the needs of capital. This allocative role of schools is achieved through processes and procedures which reflect middle class interests and therefore favour those students who already possess the cultural capital required to succeed academically. The 'sifting'

process in schools therefore largely occurs on the basis of the particular groups to which students belong.

Various writers, however (for example, Ball, op.cit; Whitty, op.cit; Apple, op.cit.) argue against the tendency to draw a direct conspiratorial relationship between the activities of schools and the needs of capital. They see this relationship as a complex arrangement that does not necessarily require the tacit or conspiratorial agreement of those who work within schools. Vested interests, they argue, are maintained through discourses that reflect dominant groups in society. As a result of their failure to reflect the diverse interests of social groups including the interests of those who do not have equal access to structures of power, schools inevitably support the status quo, a status quo that correlates with structures of economic power. But schools are not alone in regulating the lives of subordinate groups in the interests of dominant groups. The work of Michel Foucault was drawn upon to illustrate how institutions such as schools and prisons operate along similar lines in the maintenance of hegemonic interests.

The notion of suspending and expelling children from school was seen within this context. It was argued that processes of exclusion do not only describe the overt practices that remove a student from the physical boundaries of the school, but refer to a range of sometimes subtle and covert practices which can be either deliberate or unconscious, and which exclude an individual both emotionally and psychologically (Booth et al.1996). One way in which students are excluded is through a process of 'labelling' which allows for the construction of particular groups as 'deviants' (Becker, 1963). Students can have their access to knowledge impeded by the assumptions which the teacher holds about the particular class/cultural group to which students are perceived to belong (Keddie, 1984). These assumptions do not necessarily signal a teacher's deliberate intentions, but reflect the social and cultural values that have been imbued over a period of time. Alongside this

negative construction of particular groups is a cultural imaging of children in general. The press and media play a large part in constructing an image of children which, I argued, leads to the displacement of responsibility for the moral development of children from society and on to the children themselves. It is a process that ignores the structural features of poverty and disadvantage in the lives of children and their families and attempts to create a consensual image of the pathology of the poor and disadvantaged groups in society. Images of children as 'uncontrollable monsters' have allowed schools to remove very young children from school with little criticism or disapproval. The absence of reflection both by the individual teacher and by the school as a whole, on how these processes of exclusion occur allows for their reproduction at individual and at institutional level. The assumptions about children or about groups enter the 'taken-for-granted' or normative aspects of a school's activities and translate into practices which allocate certain groups predominantly to a particular quality or type of service. Several writers have provided examples of how these processes result in unequal treatment of students (McLaren, 1986: Keddie 1974). An example from Wright et al (1998) told of how a teacher assumed that the daughter of a middle class school governor was likely to know the answer to questions and was therefore paid more attention than others, leading to the student who was the narrator of the story, and who came from a working class background, feeling that his knowledge and opinions were of no value to the teacher. Other studies have shown how students are allocated to particular subject bands, sets and streams on the basis of their class or ethnicity and how this results in an inferior education being provided for them (Rist, 1986; Oakes, 1985; Wright, 1987).

It has been argued in this thesis, that allocative processes also occur on the basis of students' perceived 'race'. Studies done in the United States point to the greater vulnerability to exclusion of 'racial' minority students resulting in a disproportionate number of them dropping out of school without having gained any qualifications (Fine,

228

1991). Gillborn's (1990) British study showed how subtle mechanisms of exclusion operated in the classroom and how individual teachers were able to affect the quality of students' educational experience by the kind of relationship they built with them. These relationships were particularly affected by the assumptions teachers held of black students leading to a disproportionate number of them being suspended or expelled from school.

What then is the source of this kind of relationship that exists between white teachers and black students? The answer was sought in history. 1. In mediaeval superstitions and beliefs about 'Others'; 2. In the deeply rooted class structures of British society, and importantly, in 3. the legacies left by slavery and colonialism which led to doctrines of white supremacy becoming embedded in the culture (Rattansi, 1992). The presence in the 'Mother Country' of the colonial 'Other' saw a continuation in post-colonial times of these boundaries and divisions along racial lines. I argued that the assumptions held of black (male) students generated fears and anxieties that have their origins in this cultural history. The experience of black students therefore went beyond mere 'labelling' and extended to a system of demonising and criminalising of black young people. Emphasis was thus placed on the importance of the values and beliefs of individuals for helping to create either singly or collectively, an institutional environment in which diversity is recognised, accepted, and catered for, or one which reflects and reproduces the educational and long term interests of a few.

A school can, I argued, either be a democratic institution or a hegemonic institution. By a democratic institution I mean one in which there is acknowledgement that social discourses are produced, controlled and regulated by and for dominant social groups, understanding how such discourses operate to exclude, and creating a culture within the school which actively challenges this (Freire, 1985). In a hegemonic institution, members accept a 'business as usual' model which does not leave room for reflecting on the many

and subtle ways in which particular groups may be badly served by the school (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985).

The choices for schools, however, are neither as simple nor as straightforward as this. Schools work within particular contexts and constraints. In Britain the Education Reform Act introduced a competitive market model of education which has placed schools under so much pressure that for many teachers, their job has come to be defined by the range of coping or survival strategies which they can find (Woods, 1984; Hargreaves, 1984). Expelling children from school has been recognised as one of the ways in which schools cope with the pressures which they face. It has thus been acknowledged throughout this thesis that schools and in particular headteachers, have been placed in a dilemma by statutory demands which are made without the accompanying resources to aid them (Grace, 1996). However, it has also been argued, that schools are not helpless victims of these demands and are able, with leadership, to avoid some of the consequences of these constraints. It has been found for example, that levels of 'exclusion' of students vary from school to school and that it is not always related to the socio-economic background of the students who attend the school (DfEE 1993, 1998). Over and above the pressures created by the Education Reform Act, with particular reference to the National Curriculum and school league tables, there exists in a school, a culture or ethos which either looks outwards towards children and their parents as the main source of disciplinary problems, or the focus is inwards to find ways of providing all children equal access to education, whatever the constraints. I have argued that the outward focus thwarts any efforts to find bold and imaginative ways of catering for the different needs of students, whereas the inward focus is more reflexive and seeks different ways of solving problems within the school. It was further suggested that whatever the effects of the Education Reform Act on levels of expulsion of children from school, this still does not explain why black children have been over-represented even in times of relatively little or no pressure. It also does
230

not explain why some schools are able to retain very low or no rates of expulsion whilst others continue to expel many children.

My argument has been that those in positions of authority in a school (the headteacher, school management and teachers) determine whether a school will be either democratic or hegemonic. An important person for creating a vision of a democratic school as described above, is the headteacher. It was argued that through his or her personal leadership, the headteacher is well placed to initiate a particular vision and goal for the school. A great deal depends, however, on his or her ideological orientation towards children or young people and towards education. I suggested that a 'business as usual' headteacher was more likely to conform to traditional definitions of schooling and was therefore more likely to suspend and expel students who did not fit within this traditional model than one whose approach placed the diverse needs of students at the centre of school processes. The case study of Central City Comprehensive was used to highlight some of these issues as well as to examine some of the processes which might affect or exacerbate the position of black students in the school.

Statistics from Central City Comprehensive showed the extent to which black students are disadvantaged through the school's suspension and expulsion system. It was revealed that black students, and especially black students of Caribbean origin, were the only group to be over-represented in suspensions and expulsions in relation to their numbers in the school. A breakdown of those students who were permanently expelled between 1993 and 1995 showed that students deemed to have 'special educational needs' were the most likely to be expelled. Other categories included students who had totally rejected school and either truanted excessively or the school had given up on trying to motivate them in any way. Another group were students who had not had a record of poor behaviour nor did they have 'special needs', but had broken an important school rule. That these students

231

were not given another chance was a reflection not of the irredeemability of these students, but of the headteacher's own ideological orientation towards children and his belief in the extent to which the school should take responsibility for the moral development of students. One category of expelled students which raised important questions about the justice and fairness of suspension and expulsion processes in schools was that of students who did not fit into any of the other three categories. All the students in this group were black. The reports for these students outlined a range of misdemeanours which included disruptiveness, refusal to obey instructions, and general lack of co-operation with teachers. I argued that these categories were at best vague, and at worst were subject to individual interpretation of the nature and severity of the offences committed (Gillborn, 1990, 1995). A discussion with the headteacher which I expand upon below, helped to throw some light on why this category of student was likely to become more involved in conflict with teachers than other groups.

I argued that the headteacher's personal values and beliefs were important in determining the fate of students in the school. Interviews with Mr Friend, the headteacher of Central City Comprehensive, indicated that he held a pathological view of class which informed his perspective on discipline. He subscribed to the view that a child's destiny was pre-ordained from a very early age, a view which seemed to influence his decisions about whether or not to expel a student. This was borne out in the case of Luigi, a student who was said to have witnessed a murder in his family. This event, according to Mr Friend, had made the boy 'dangerous', and his bringing a gun into school was seen as evidence of this, even though he had not displayed any other behaviour that could be labelled as such. Mr Friend was nevertheless able to argue that Luigi needed specialist help which the school was not in a position to offer. This was the argument presented in the 'Exclusion' reports of all the other cases of 'special needs'. Although the DfEE (1993) guides schools to use expulsion as a last resort, the headteacher was not asked by the committee which
232

presided over the hearing into Luigi's expulsion, whether he had tried any other methods for keeping the student in school. Indeed, when a suggestion was made which could have allowed for the student's return after a period of counselling, this was rejected and the 1944 Education Act invoked to absolve the school from further responsibility for the student's education. The personal power of the headteacher was highlighted by this event as was the arbitrary nature of decisions that were crucial in determining a student's future.

The group most affected by suspensions and expulsions at Central City Comprehensive were black boys. Yet an analysis of the reasons for suspensions and expulsion which took place during 1993 and 1995 failed to show that black students were any more likely to engage in those activities for which students were sanctioned than were their white or South Asian peers. Indeed what appeared was that black students were likely to face harsher sanctions for the same offences, and in at least two situations, were 'excluded' without the evidence being produced that they had indeed committed the offences of which they were being accused.

Mr Friend's perspective on the suspension and expulsion of black students was also based on a pathological view of culture. In his view, the single parent family was better for the black male child because nurturing habits in black families left the black male dysfunctional and the adult male was therefore unable to offer a proper role model for the growing black child. Girl children received the kind of nurturing from their mothers that allowed for their development both intellectually and socially. Boy children, on the other hand, were left to resort to a life spent on street corners, in groups where particular types of peer group cultures developed. These peer group cultures overlapped with white working class youth cultures in some ways but also displayed specific ethnic dimensions. Although in Mr Friend's view, the various elements of the black male peer group were more difficult to define, one of the more easily observable characteristics was a display of machismo and

233

toughness. This, combined with an absence of social etiquette and an inability to express themselves in socially acceptable ways (which was the result of poor nurturing by the family) resulted in more conflict between black students and (white) teachers which led to more frequent and sometimes harsher treatment of them. The explanation for their over-representation is said to lie in their class and their family and peer group cultures and also in the failure of teachers to teach more subtle ways of self-expression. That this latter point was a failing of the school was not taken into account in deciding an expulsion.

In contrast, I provided an example of a headteacher whose school served one of the poorest areas in Britain where there was a high percentage of unemployment and other forms of social deprivation. However, the headteacher's ideological orientation was to keep students in school and to take responsibility for providing the help, support and moral education that would prepare the student for a stable and responsible life after school. All students were considered to have 'special needs' but some were seen to be more vulnerable than others and therefore needed more support and help from adults. The difference between this headteacher (Mrs C.) and Mr Friend was in Mrs C's ability to avoid, indeed to challenge assumptions about students' families and backgrounds and to take responsibility for what happened to the students whilst they were in the care of the school (Haberman, 1995; Clark, 1995). Whilst constraints do indeed exist which have made the working lives of headteachers and teachers more difficult, Mrs C's view was that children who have after all been placed in the care of the school, should not have to pay for this with their futures. Her example showed that it is possible for those in authority in schools to avoid some of the worst consequences of government edicts on the lives of students.

Continuing with this theme of the individual and collective responsibility of teachers for their students, the perspectives of teachers were sought in relation to the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. These perspectives were
234

considered from within a theoretical framework in which the most 'effective' teachers of black students and therefore those least likely to support or cause the suspension or expulsion of students were those who had the skill to keep students motivated and felt responsible for any breakdown of discipline in their classrooms (Haberman, op.cit). In other words, these teachers did not seek to blame parents and children for what happened in the classroom but were able to see how students' learning could be affected by negative assumptions and lack of consideration for their individual needs. This was not to deny that children are affected by factors outside the school, including factors within the family. Indeed the examples from Northern Catholic School in the DfEE study showed how students could be rendered vulnerable because of the home or social environments in which they lived. Rather, it was to say that teachers could do much to mitigate the effects of these external factors.

Interviews with teachers in the three schools in the study showed that they vary in their orientation or attitudes towards students. This is, of course, because teachers are themselves a diverse group with different biographies and experiences which inform their work as teachers. In relation to the influence they might have on students' life chances, this study did not pursue the life histories of teachers, but drew instead on the work of others. Studies of teachers by researchers such as Martin Haberman and Gloria Ladson-Billings led them to conclude that a teacher's ideological orientation towards students affected their relations with students as well as their effectiveness as teachers, especially with students from minority ethnic groups. In this study, I examined the general orientation of teachers towards discipline and also towards students and their families. The central question was to discover where teachers thought the responsibility lay for the suspension and expulsion of students and in particular the suspension and expulsion of black students.

Some teachers were found to lay the blame entirely on students themselves and on their families. There were, for example, teachers whose racialised views led them to conclude that black students qua black students behaved in particular ways and were therefore entirely responsible for whatever disciplinary measures were meted out to them. These teachers operated with preconceptions of black students, an approach which contrasted with that of teachers who were found by Ladson-Billings (op.cit.) to be successful with black students. As these teachers attributed the behaviour of students to 'race' and neglected other essential determinants of behaviour such as adolescence or even provocation, I argued that they were more likely to consider the behaviour to be beyond their control and therefore to refer these students to a higher authority. The vulnerability of these students to suspension or expulsion was thus greater than it might otherwise have been.

There were other teachers who were also inclined to blame students for disciplinary problems in school, but did not attribute this behaviour to 'race'. These teachers saw the influence of the peer group as being of particular importance, especially for black students. Some were also able to see the role of prejudice or of racial provocation as mitigating factors in the behaviour of black students. However, they were just as inclined to accept that students should be suspended or expelled regardless of mitigating factors. Their orientation towards a traditional approach to schooling, an approach which has been judged to be largely hostile to the interests of working class students (Haberman, op.cit; Noguera 1998) does not leave room for the school to perform the necessary educative role which would help students negotiate different methods of resolving their difficulties. It also does not offer a solution for students whose behaviour is the direct consequence of racism from teachers. It is, even in these circumstances, the student who pays the penalty for the teacher's action. Whilst teachers have powerful organisations such as Teachers' Unions to support them and ensure that justice is done for them, children and their parents

236

have no such support, especially in schools oriented towards a pathological view of children and their parents. The answer in such schools is the removal of the student from the school.

A third group of teachers were more sympathetic towards students and were able to see how teachers and the school as an institution could be responsible for poor discipline amongst students. These teachers recognised the extent to which they individually and collectively could disadvantage students on the basis of class, culture, ethnicity and so on. They recognised the assumptions held of student groups and also some of the unfair processes and practices that operated against particular students. Some of these teachers, for example, questioned the beliefs of their colleagues that black students did more to deserve punishment, and surmised that the fragile relationship between black students and white teachers might be explained by an underlying belief in the supposedly 'aggressive' nature of black males. What this meant was that white teachers might respond differently to black male students as a result of this underlying fear. They confirmed Ladson-Billings' view that black students respond well to teachers who understand and respect them as people and respect their cultures. They were also willing to take personal responsibility for the behaviour and success of the students they taught and did not seek to blame the families of students when things went wrong. These teachers reflected more the ideological orientation of Mrs C., the headteacher of Northern Catholic in the DfEE study than of the headteachers in their schools.

Teachers who blamed students were also more likely to blame the families of students for disciplinary failure. Families were generally conceptualised in two ways. They were either discussed in terms of how they supported the student, in which case it was the *structure* of the family that was emphasised, or in terms of how they supported the school, in which case the structure was less important than whether or not the *parent(s)* were co-

operative in helping the school with disciplining the child. Generally, the structure of the child's family was seen as the primary reason for the child's problems. A single parent family was seen as not able to cope especially with black boys. The problem lay in boys not having a live-in father to be both role model and disciplinarian. Hence the reason, according to Mr Friend, for black adolescent boys spending so much time on the street. However, at least according to Mr Friend, whilst single parent families are generally considered to be dysfunctional, black families are even more dysfunctional if they <u>do</u> have both parents present. The black adult male is not considered either fit to be a role model (indeed quite the opposite) nor is he, as someone who has acquired most of his learning on the street and is therefore ill equipped to teach the child the more genteel ways of communication, able to adequately perform the role of father. The only families which function 'normally' are middle class black families. On the other hand, all parents were judged by the level or extent to which they supported the decisions of the school. A single parent might be a problem for the student, but they were not necessarily a problem for the school.

Overall, despite the different sizes and locations of the three schools in the study, and the difference in the ethnic composition of the students, there were no clear lines of difference between the headteachers and the teachers on the question of discipline and on the question of black students and discipline. Teachers who saw black students as the problem were just as likely to be found in Shire School with 3% black students as they were to be found in North City Comprehensive with 40% black students. There were teachers in all the schools who placed the responsibility for discipline on teachers and the school as an institution. Perspectives which blamed parents for their children's behaviour were just as likely from the London inner city schools as they were from the relatively affluent environment of Shire School. All three headteachers were inclined towards the expulsion of students. They were all concerned about the over-representation of black students but

238

unsure what they could do about it. Although Mr Friend had clear theories about the educational experience of black males, he was unable to devise ways in which these students could be protected from the factors that led to their suspension and expulsion. Indeed he considered that because the school was under no statutory obligation to keep the students in school, the responsibility for their ultimate welfare had to be taken by the parents. The other two headteachers were not interviewed about their perspectives on the over-representation of black students, but the absence of any plan or strategy indicates that their thinking about what should happen to any students who did not conform was in line with that of Mr Friend. In this respect, they differed markedly from Mrs C. in the DfEE study who saw it as the school's responsibility, regardless of the source of the students' problems, to find strategies for keeping students in school.

It was important of course, to hear the voices of black students and their parents in this debate. A range of students from the three schools were interviewed. Those who had been expelled from school were interviewed individually, others were interviewed in pairs or groups.

Regardless of whether or not they had been 'excluded' from school, the overwhelming response of black students to their *over-representation* in suspensions and expulsions was to point to unfair treatment. They gave examples of being selected out for punishment or of being sanctioned more severely than their peers. Students were particularly concerned and angered by the range of stereotypes which they felt informed teachers' judgements of them. Some white teachers, they asserted, held a collective image of black students whether male of female, as thieves. This led to black students being singled out for suspicion when anything went missing in the school. Teachers were also said to find black students aggressive and violent and to feel particularly threatened to see black students (especially males) gathered in groups. Groups of black (male) students signalled trouble.

They felt that black students were constructed as 'tough' and threatening (Sewell, 1997), so that they were more likely to retain a high visibility especially in situations of conflict with teachers. Students catalogued experiences of general exclusion or 'abuse' of black students by teachers, what they tended to characterise as lack of respect. This situation was one which they felt was likely to deny them equal access to the benefits of school and to instigate or aggravate conflict. In spite of this, there was no attempt to deny that there were individual black students who broke rules, some who posed a particular disciplinary challenge to teachers, or some who were a particular threat to other students. What students objected to was what they experienced as the undifferentiated way in which they were perceived by teachers. This was unlike the experience of white students whose misdemeanours were assessed and judged individually and not assumed to be part of a white racial or cultural pathology or repertoire. The verdict then was not that there was something biologically or culturally distinctive about black students which made them a particular problem for schools. The problem was instead that of some teachers who perceived black students as homogenous and ethnically distinctive and constructed difference as a problem. This created an environment which effectively set black students up to fail in both behavioural and academic terms in ways which did not exist for white students.

One area of general agreement between black students and white teachers was on the question of the influence of the peer group. Both groups felt that the peer group played an important part in the lives of young people. But that was as far as the similarity went. According to students and to some teachers, the involvement of black young people in peer group cultures did not mean that they were more vulnerable to peer group influence than their white counterparts. Rather that there were distinct adolescent styles which were associated more with black young people and which were typically viewed as being more hostile to the priorities of schooling than the adolescent cultures of white students. The

240

influence of the peer group on black students was in part the result of a complex combination of racial and gender stereotyping by both white teachers and white students. The failure lay in the school's inability to understand the specific manner in which these cultures influenced young people, and in the inability to engage effectively with them. The problem referred to by the headteacher Mr Friend, of poor social skills on the part of black students, may therefore have at times been generated by the failure of teachers themselves to understand the particular cultural and youth styles of these young people.

The teaching and learning environment was important both for relations between different ethnic groups in schools, and for determining the behaviour and academic success of black (all) students. Relationships with individual teachers were, however, crucial to students who largely associated their experiences with individuals rather than with the institution as a whole. It was not unusual therefore, to hear students say that they liked their school and were happy there, but to single out individual teachers who marred their enjoyment of school or hampered their success. Conversely, there were examples of teachers whom black students defined as 'good' teachers, who were seen to operate fairly at all times, to encourage and motivate all students, and importantly to be culturally inclusive in their teaching.

Parents' perspectives in general supported those of students. They underlined many of the issues which their children gave to explain the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions. Some of the elements in the relations between teachers and students applied equally to the relationships between teachers and parents. 'Race' and class interacted in ways which left parents feeling their knowledge and experience of their children were not valued and not heeded. Some felt demeaned by the way teachers talked to them. Others that teachers' interactions with them were informed by racial stereotypes. They thought that the problem of stereotypes also informed teachers' dealings with black

students and that this was in part responsible for the level of confrontation between teachers and black students and hence the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsion. Negative assumptions could also lead to unfair and discriminatory action being taken against black students leading to a belief amongst parents that different criteria prevailed in schools for different ethnic groups. These factors hindered communication and left parents feeling helpless and confused. The relevance of these relationships for students is obvious in that good communication between the school and the parents is essential if solutions to problems are to be found.

Despite the existing rhetoric about home and school partnerships, it seems that working class parents in particular do not share in the power of the school to determine the academic futures of their children. Parents communicated a sense of hopelessness about the decisions that were taken about their children. They felt powerless to influence the outcomes in relation to a breakdown between their children and the school, and indeed felt even more excluded or obliged to go along with whatever decision was taken.

Parents' perspectives help to confirm some of the earlier arguments about the role of the school in the broader debates about the economy and society. The responsibility for creating proper structures of communication between home and school is that of the school. The lack of such structures for communicating effectively with black parents, must, in a situation in which such communication is generally experienced as being mediated by racism, be a serious disadvantage to the education of black students. According to parents, it increases the chances of expulsion of black students, and exacerbates the long term consequences for them.

To summarise the main conclusions of this study therefore. Firstly, there were two major strands in the discussions about the over-representation of black students in 'exclusion'

242

from school. One strand places greater emphasis on students themselves for their higher rate of suspension and expulsion from school. This view, held mainly by white teachers, including headteachers and deputy headteachers, saw not the problem of racism, but black student *sensitivity to racism*, sometimes characterised as 'the chip on the shoulder', as a major drawback for black students. According to this perspective, it was this sensitivity which led to confrontation between teachers and students, confrontation which was inevitably absent for white students and therefore was more likely to have an effect on black students in terms of suspensions and expulsions. Others saw this confrontation as symptomatic of poor social skills on the part of black students. Poor social skills were seen to be the result of family neglect and absence of positive role models for, in particular, black males. It is a perspective that overlooks the factors which produce confrontation and focuses for explanation on a cultural pathology of the black family. A third perspective within this strand sees the pull of the peer group on black students as being particularly detrimental to them. The adolescent black male peer group socialises young black people to regard toughness and machismo as socially acceptable. This inevitably leads to these young people challenging rather than co-operating with authority, the latter behaviour being regarded as 'soft' rather than as a positive form of communication. The peer group thus fosters negative forms of interaction with those in authority. Apart from ignoring the differences that exist between black students, this perspective disregards the educative role of the school in preventing antisocial forms of behaviour.

The second strand places responsibility for the over-representation of black students in suspensions and expulsions in social structures, in institutional factors and in the individual behaviours of those in positions of authority. This is a position held by most black teachers, many white teachers, and black parents and students. Society is seen to be already structured in ways which exclude black and other minority groups. These

structures are replicated in important ways within schools, including in the general exclusion of minority groups. In addition, black people are constructed in the media and other forms of information dissemination in stereotyped ways which inform the kind of knowledge held of black young people in schools. Black male students are particularly vulnerable to this kind of negative construction. This does not deny the vulnerability of black female students who are also subject to negative constructions based on 'race', ethnicity and gender. However, there is a gender difference in the way that male students respond to situations, a response which is the result of the gender and not of the 'race' of black students. In other words, any students from any ethnic group who are subjected to unfair or discriminatory practices, especially based on perceived 'race', are likely to respond in more challenging or uncooperative ways.

Institutional factors were also seen as important in determining the fate of students. Some teachers expressed dismay that the issue of suspensions and expulsions had not been properly discussed or examined in their school, leaving open the possibility of an inconsistent application of school rules. This was said to be to the detriment of some students, and black students were seen as particularly vulnerable. In terms of my own analysis I found that the conduct of expulsion hearings offered no guarantees of fairness for students so that a student's entire future could depend on the personal beliefs of the headteacher rather than on whether the student had learnt a lesson, was remorseful and deemed capable of change. The 'hearing' of the expulsion of the three students which I attended at North City School, demonstrated the arbitrary and inconsistent nature of such processes. The overall effect was to punish students rather than finding the best ways in which the student could be rehabilitated.

There were individual teachers in schools who were said by their colleaagues to have a negative effect on the experiences of black students. These teachers were said to
244

deliberately single out black students and to create situations which were likely to lead to confrontation. Although teachers who were overtly racist in their dealings with black students were few, the effect of such a teacher's behaviour could have knock-on effects for all black students as those who were not the direct target experienced the racism and suffered the effects vicariously.

My own conclusions are that in general, schools are inclined to expel students from school when they could perform a vital function of guiding students towards alternative ways of behaving and thus taking the responsibility for the moral growth of students in their care. Although the task has been made more difficult, schools have not had all their choices removed. The contrast between a heaadteacher who 'excludes' and one that does not indicated that whether or not schools expel students depends more on the culture of the school and the type of lead given by the headteacher than on external constraints.

The over-representation of black students reflects a situation which existed long before the 1988 Education Reform Act. Black students are over-represented not only because they are likely to be randomly distributed amongst those who are the most vulnerable to 'exclusion' such as children who are deemed to 'have special educational needs', or in care, as well as amongst the other categories identified by the DfEE as 'children with problems', but because they constitute a group who are subject to the triple jeopardy of school processes which are racialised, classed and gendered. These processes would need to be recognised and acknowledged if, what effectively amounts to the criminalisation (NACRO, 1998) of black male students and the removal of their human rights is to stop. This is not an easy process, but it is possible. Below I add some recommendations which might help to slow down and possibly stop altogether, this trend of excluding children not only from school, but from preparing them for their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Recommendations

Any recommendations must necessarily embrace all students and not only black students. However, as we underline in the DfEE study (Blair et al 1998), a 'colour-blind' approach necessarily misses out the effects of racism or ethnicity on students (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996). A 'colour-blind' approach is sometimes adopted in institutional settings where there is little understanding and appreciation of the manner in which ethnic groups are differentially positioned both in education and in the society at large (Brah, 1992). In finding solutions to the exclusion of minority ethnic group students from the learning process, it seems necessary to focus on solutions for all students whilst taking into account the specific ways in which particular groups, in this case, black students, might be affected by the practices of the school.

The first recommendation is the creation in schools of a **culture** in which the welfare of each individual student comes before the competitive image of the school.

Secondly, there must be recognition of the vulnerability of students. This involves recognising that a student might have particular problems relating to their backgrounds or families which require a sympathetic and compassionate approach rather than one which is condemnatory and exposes students to greater risk by expelling them from school. This means finding ways of supporting such a student. An example might be a teacher that is liked by that student and who mentors him/her in order to help the student deal with their problems in ways which do not exacerbate the situation they are in. Other structures of support may need to be put in place depending on the severity of the students' problems. The example of the Irish student at Northern Catholic School (DfEE study)whose family circumstances left him emotionally vulnerable and incapable of coping with school and for whom the staff at the school created structures of support is a simple example which did

246

not require extra human or financial resources, neither did it impinge inordinately on teachers' time. The student, who in different circumstances might have been expelled from school, was instead enabled to sit his GCSE examinations and to find emotional security and stability with members of his extended family.

The school needs to recognise the ethnic and racial underpinnings of social discourses and the manner in which these place groups of students at a disadvantage both within the society and within the school.

It also means the creation of a school culture which recognises the essential role of the school in providing moral and spiritual guidance to students and not a culture which abrogates the school's responsibility by pointing outwards towards the communities and families of students as the problems.

For any change to occur, especially the kind of change which centres on controversial and contentious issues such as 'race' and which therefore involves the examination of teachers' personal and professional identities, a lead has to be provided by the headteacher and senior management in the school. Such a lead requires sensitive and diplomatic handling which allows for open discussion amongst staff, of fears, anxieties and ideological differences without individuals feeling excluded or victimised.

There is a need for all teachers to be given the skills training in understanding and dealing with adolescents, and for individual schools to ensure that teachers are in touch with the interests of, and sympathetic towards, young people.

Teachers also need to be given skills training in relation to teaching in diverse multi-ethnic contexts so that they are able to empathise with the different concerns of their students.

Focusing more specifically on black students, it is important for teachers, headteachers and governors to have an understanding of the historical relationship between black communities and the educational system in Britain. They would also need to understand about issues of racism and how groups are differentially positioned within society. Information about the labour market position of men from minority ethnic groups would give some understanding of factors that might contribute to disaffection amongst black male students. This understanding should be part of the initial training of teachers as well as an ongoing part of in-service training for teachers, and form part of the continuing professional development of headteachers.

Where a particular group in a school stands out in any way, for example, as underachieveing, or over-excluded, it is important that discussions take place with the students, with their parents and also with staff about the causes of the problem. Parents and students need to be carefully listened to in order to see whether there are discrepancies between what they think is the problem and what the school thinks is the problem. One strategy might involve monitoring the academic progress of a particular group that has been identified as 'underachieving' in order to get a clear understanding of what the various elements of the problem might be. This would help to illuminate the differences between the problems for an individual student and those that affect her or him as a member of a group. This could have the added effect of challenging some of the stereotypes about particular groups of students.

Listening to students and their parents is perhaps the most important strategy in any attempt to solve problems which beset particular groups. However, both parents and students need to know that they are taken seriously and that steps will be taken to deal with whatever concerns they might have. This requires an open-minded approach and one

248

which is seen to be practised by those in management positions in school. Students often complain for example, that teachers will 'stick up for each other' no matter who is in the wrong. Students need to know that the school will pursue grievances justly and that justice will be seen to be done. This might involve a delicate balance between the welfare of students and the vested interests of teachers as accusations of racism and unfairness would have to be taken seriously. One strategy which seems to work well in some schools (Blair et al, 1998), is where students and teachers (particularly in the secondary phase) together draw up a Code of Practice for the school. This would apply to all those who form part of the school community and would address ways of dealing with conflict and ways of handling disagreements which occur between adults and students.

Monitoring withdrawals, suspensions and expulsions by students as well as by 'referring' staff might throw light on the relationships between individual teachers and students and would thus help to illuminate areas in which teachers themselves might need help and support in their work.

Ethnic and gender monitoring helps to throw light on group effects in relation to academic achievement. Ethnic monitoring should not be used merely to reveal which groups are 'underachieving', but to raise questions about underachievement in order to initiate a whole-school policy.

There needs to be greater sharing of good practice between schools. The LEA could perform an important role in identifying schools that succeed academically for minority group students, and help to set up networks of communication and training. Whilst this might involve an initial investment in time, the long term effects of having good stable relationships between various groups in schools were appreciated by staff in those schools where such an investment had been made (Blair et al 1998).

In making these recommendations I am conscious that changing the cultures of schools is far from being a quick and easy process (Ball, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994). This change is particularly challenging when it involves difficult and contentious issues of social justice. Staff will invariably have different understandings of the issues and of the nature of change required. Individual identities can be fragile and indeed resistant to the notion that inequalities exist at all in schools. Nevertheless, we need to draw lessons from our studies in the hope that some of what we learn might be acknowledged by governments and incorporated into official policy or adopted by schools in their attempts to meet the ever diverse challenges of schools today. We as researchers must also learn from our research in order to refine our techniques and provide information which is not only useful to those for whom it is relevant, but enhances the work of current and future researchers. Reflecting on the weaknesses and limitations of our own studies is part of this process, and it is to this that I turn next.

Directions for Future Research

If I were to do this study again, there are a number of things I would do differently which I believe would help to produce a more detailed picture of the processes and procedures in schools which lead to the higher incidence of black students being suspended and expelled from school.

I would study two contrasting schools and not three in order to allow for more time to carry out detailed observation, documentary analysis, and interviews in equal depth in both schools. A study of two London schools was, with hindsight, probably unnecessary in relation to the focus of this study, and the time spent at North City School could have been better spent carrying out classroom observations at Central City.

250

Studying two schools instead of three might also have allowed for time to explore the perspectives of South Asian and white students at Central City School. Bengali students were identified by the headteacher at Central City as a growing problem in relation to discipline. Their perspectives might have shed light on the different ways in which they related to teachers or how they thought teachers perceived them.

A golden opportunity was missed to record the referral procedures for the Withdrawal Room at Central City School. This occurred because of a certain amount of reticence on my part to press the headteacher and the school's administrator for information when they were clearly very busy and several attempts to secure an interview with the headteacher had failed or meetings had been cancelled because of demands on his time. In my anxiety to behave with tact and discretion (Woods, 1996), I avoided what I thought might be experienced as harassment by members of the school. The result was that, instead of carrying out a proper documentary analysis of the Referral Book, I relied on students to tell me who had sent them to the WR. Conscious of my guest status in the school and the need to be sensitive to the needs of my 'host', I also failed to persist with seeking information about the number of 'informal' expulsions which the deputy headteacher had brought to my attention. The deputy headteacher went on an extended sick leave before I had the chance to talk to her further about this issue.

In reflecting on these issues, I now regret that I did not pursue this information more vigorously. Apart from highlighting processes of exclusion, probing for information about 'informal' expulsions would have helped to further my understanding and insight into the theory of teacher 'orientation'. Although my interviews with teachers and the triangulation provided by students and parents were adequate in helping me understand some of the

complexities of racialised relationships in the school context, this gap in my study clearly points to areas of further study, as I discuss below.

Since carrying out this study, my own interest has been stimulated by the relationship between suspension and expulsion from school and involvement with the juvenile and criminal justice system. The human rights implications of the burgeoning prison industrial complex in the United States seems to me to need careful monitoring as the signs are that it is becoming an accepted part of the way we see prisons in Britain. My concern is the ease with which public opinion can be harnessed to support what on the surface will appear as 'good common sense' in our attempts to solve the problems of crime. So on the one hand, researching 'exclusions' draws me away from the arena of education and into that of juvenile justice. But on the other hand, there is the closely related area of finding ways to change the orientation of schools from the need to expel children, to one which considers the moral guidance of children to be part of the role of schools. A crucial area of study in this respect is the study of discipline in the primary school.

A study of 'race' and 'exclusion' in the primary school would provide a useful juxtaposition to the experience of students in secondary school. Issues which affect adolescence would be absent, as would those aspects of peer group culture which impinge so strongly on the identities of adolescents (but see Connolly, 1995). Other issues relating to identity would have to be considered. What, for example, are the main factors in the interactions of teachers with primary school black children? Are the problems related to teachers' racialised preconceptions of black children (Connolly, 1995)? What are teachers' ideological understandings of discipline in relation to young children? What are their relationships with parents of young children?

An essential area which has long been neglected, apart from a limited study by Grugeon and Woods (1990), but one which has been identified as important if we are to understand
252

the academic needs of black children, is that of transition from primary to secondary school (Blair et al, 1998). What changes are experienced by children as they transfer from being dependent children to being emerging adolescents? What are the specific ethnic dimensions of such transition?

The question of primary schools raises another interesting direction for study, namely the kind of education which potential teachers undergo. Does this 'training' equip teachers to adjust to new and changing situations, and what is the ideological orientation towards children which is promoted in teacher education colleges?

We also need to explore the experience of discipline in schools which are predominantly black or predominantly South Asian in their intake. Do similar stereotypes of students exist? Are teachers more 'in tune' with different ethnic groups in such schools? If so, what can be learnt from them? In a recent discussion with a teacher in a school whose intake is over 80% Pakistani, the teacher described the boys as having a tendency to 'show off, to be over confident, to be macho, to walk around in intimidating groups', language which has been used about black (Caribbean) students. Is what she described merely a feature of adolescence as I have argued in my thesis?

Our studies also need to take into account strategies of analysis which help us engage with the more complex nature of individual personal and professional identities.
The MacPherson Report (1999) which contained the findings of the investigation into the racist murder of Steven Lawrence, a young black student, provided evidence of institutional racism in the police force. The report illustrated in graphic terms, the manner in which institutional factors can affect different groups in society. The notion that schools as institutions might be similarly discriminating against minority ethnic groups was greeted at worse by denial, at best defensively by teacher unions and by some members of the

253

press (Blair et al, 1999). This was despite the years of research into issues of 'race' and ethnicity which has generally pointed to racism as a significant element in the educational experiences of black and other minority ethnic group children and their communities. What this tells us, is that accusations of racism, whether or not directed at individuals, have a profound effect on the professional identities of teachers.

In my study, I took into account the absence of racist intention in most teachers' dealings with black students (Mac an Ghaill 1998; Troyna and Williams 1986). What seemed to me to be important, was to consider the complex ways in which teachers experience the world of schools and their interactions with the students they teach. The notion of teachers' *orientations* to questions of discipline, the curriculum, pedagogy, students, parents, and so on, created a way of analysis which acknowledged teachers as complex beings who are products of different and contradictory influences (Rattansi, 1992), and whose actions can result in unknowingly discriminating against students whom they care about. This kind of analysis would seem to be important in studying the suspension and expulsion of black children from primary schools, an area of obvious research in helping to illuminate further the processes of 'exclusion' from school. This kind of analysis does not discount racism, and indeed blatant forms of racism would need to be named for what they are. But to talk about teachers being 'racist' goes against their own sense of who they are and what kind of people they are. The notion of 'orientation' seems to me to acknowledge that teachers may hold many different and sometimes contradictory views, but that their own education and cultural/historical upbringing *inclines* them more in one or other direction. This applies to any values or beliefs held by individuals. This removes the implication of intentionality which creates such barriers to communication, raises people's defenses and stymies attempts to institute change in schools. To conclude, it is not the fact that we alert teachers to racism that is the problem, but rather the manner in which we do it. It is more important, it seems to me, that we get teachers willing to listen and learn about how

254

injustices operate and how our histories implicate us, than to 'name the evil' which could

lead to 'business as usual' in schools, and a continued uphill struggle in black and minority

ethnic group communities. I hope that this thesis is a small contribution to finding new

approaches which enable schools to examine their own practices more honestly without

feeling the need to hide behind their own professional defenses.

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256

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACE	Advisory Council for Education
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CCRE	Camden Council for Racial Equality
DES	Department of Education and Science
DFE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
MORI	Market and Opinion Research Institute
NACRO	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NASUWT	National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit

Can't Find workers?

A willing workforce waits.

We're looking for businesses in need of a willing and productive workforce. New legislation has created an *exciting new opportunity* for private businesses to work in partnership with Wisconsin's prison inmate work program. Consider low risk expansion of your business with the help of the Department of Corrections labor, management support and quality control resources.

Wisconsin's inmate population needs jobs to contribute toward the cost of their incarceration. (My italics). The Department of Corrections - working with private business and state labor unions - are looking beyond the conventional prison industry program to find new ways to achieve this goal.

New legislation permits "....three private businesses to employ prison inmates to manufacture products or components or to provide services for sale on the open market". Companies establishing operations within a correctional institution can now *create inmate jobs to help build private businesses -not compete with them or organized labor.* (My italics)

Call today

To receive the information packet for this new program, contact........

An Equal Opportunity Employer (sic)

(taken from Paul Wright, (1997, p.106).

Space does not permit a detailed analysis of this advertisement. However, it provides a graphic example of the operation of discourses in the 'normalisation' of popular attitudes to specific issues. The appeal to 'good citizenship' and to both the rehabilitative and punitive sense of 'justice' of the public in the line *"Wisconsin's inmate population needs*

jobs to contribute toward the cost of their incarceration" is a clear case in point. The message is that prison labour is 'good for business, good for the prisoners and good for society'. Prison appears as the 'humane' solution to the problems of crime, and most importantly, society no longer has to pay so much for it as prisoners are turned into useful, self-financing 'citizens' albeit without any citizenship rights. It is presented as the 'just' solution all round. In the meantime, a squeeze on welfare ensures that more children are born into poverty and a squeeze on schools ensures that more juveniles drop out or are expelled from school and made vulnerable to crime. The solution is to place these 'criminals' into prison where they can cease to be a drain on the society and learn responsibility without the accompanying rights of citizens.

MB Do you think in inter-relations with their peers that black boys are involved in fights more than white boys?

CS It's very, very difficult to make that kind of....

MB It's not a clear cut picture.

CS Because not all fights are reported and they're reported differentially and different strategies are used on different occasions. It's very difficult to isolate the effects but there are some embedded fear of black male violence that may lead people in school to over-react and to misinterpret or to escalate the exclusion procedures more quickly when there might be other ways of resolving it and I mean you can get (anecdotal evidence of this) but I've been in a situation where I can see because a boy is big and black that a member of staff might adopt a completely different attitude in terms of the sense of security they convey and it very quickly escalates but I mean (I'm going on anecdotal) effect I'm not sure how you would systematically.....

MB I suppose if you have...there's a pattern (of anecdotes) I'm not sure one can kind of draw some conclusion even if it isn't entirely one hundred percent accurate. This thing about size, are black boys bigger or are they perceived to be bigger?

CS It's interesting, isn't it. They're certainly perceived to be bigger and it's quite interesting that because of the visibility, I mean there will be a group of black boys here who would be perceived to be difficult because of the way that they conduct themselves around the school in terms of their kind of behaviour which is loud and boisterous and all the moods of that group would be considered to be potentially difficult and you break that group down and they're not, they're okay but there's a collective aura about them that staff react to and you can actually watch members of staff on duty be quite wary about what's going to happen, it's almost an expectation and prediction....

MB That if black boys are in a group together there's going to be trouble.

CS Yes, there's going to be trouble, yes.

MB And you're saying that that might not be the case with a group of white boys together?

CS I think there might be a more diffused range of expectations and I'm not sure that's so much the case with groups of black boys. Again, that's a hunch but I mean I've certainly been involved with local schools where a whole series of myths and assumptions have been cobbled together to legitimise concern about kids. There's a particular kid, there was an allegation that he'd been involved in a rape, an allegation that he was intimidating other children, absolutely not a shred of evidence.

SS Have you talked to him, a French teacher.

MB No, I haven't actually, I don't think I know him.

CB Well yesterday a girl come in late.....

SS No, it was   it was

CB Yes and .   --

SS R   's always coming in late.

CB He didn't do anything. We go, Sir, look she's late, what you going to do about it, he goes, I'll talk to her after the lesson. We go, why can't you talk to her now, you embarrass us in front of the whole class.

MB And did he respond to that?

SS No.

CB No.

SS This girl, .   ., she's late literally every day and just because I live five minutes up the road it doesn't mean I haven't got reasons, things happen in the morning, let's say your alarm don't go off, let's say you're just late for excuses that you know are true and have held you back but he thinks they're excuses and not reasons and this girl, Rachel Nelson, she'll bring a note in and just because she brings a note in she's alright, she gets away.....

CB But she doesn't always bring a note in.

SS I know and he lets her off. I think because she's.....

CB She doesn't get any detention, we get detentions and pink slips and it's just really horrible, it's really horrible.

SS I mean even though we do get in little bits of trouble this year, I'm really thankful that I don't get into trouble as much as I did last year because last year was just the worst year out.

CB Yes but it's yet to come, it's yet to come.

MB Do you know what sorts of things you get into trouble apart from being late?

SS Rudeness basically.

CB Rudeness to teachers.

MB What does rudeness mean?

CB Well if we do something and it's not that bad, we don't think it's that bad, they'll try to make a really big thing out of it. There are so many

UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH STUDENT

examples that I can pick up but they're just out of my head at the moment and they'll try to make a really big thing out of it and letters will go home and things like that and that gets me angry and I will shout at the teacher for it. I'll say, why did you do that and they'll just say whatever.

SS They try to brainwash you as well.

CB There's another French teacher called Mrs.   , she gave me a detention for nothing and my name was on the blackboard, detention tonight. I said, Mr.   what's this about a detention tonight with Mrs.   , he goes, you have a detention tonight with Mrs.   I said, no I haven't, I go, what did I do, he goes, I don't know. I stormed out of the classroom, he goes, C   , calm down. I went to see her, I go, Miss, why have I got a detention tonight. She goes, oh there must have been some kind of mistake. I got a detention for nothing.

MB You had to stay for that detention even though Mrs. H   had said it was a mistake?

CB Yes and that was most probably because I stormed out of the classroom, this was after school. What was what detention for in the first place, I had done nothing.

SS What I was going to say is they also really sort of like drum in your head that you actually have done something wrong....

CB Until you start to believe that you are doing something wrong, when you're not.

MB Can you think of an example?

SS Yes, it as yesterday, weren't it, we didn't do anything drastically wrong that we had to stay for a detention till quarter past four today.

CB And we finish school at half past three.

MB What did you do, because I just want to see what it is that teachers think is very bad which you think is probably innocent?

SS Right there was this practical, yes, it was for our GCSE exam, the class was split up into two and me, C   and another pupil were the second lot. They were doing....

CB And M   was sort of really kind of going, really whispering like this and other people talking, people like S   F   and that they were talking with their friends and laughing and she kept looking at us. Silence, I'm not telling you again and the next thing we knew she brought in the Head of Science and we were taken out without assess practical which is part of our work for future life. We were taken out of it and we didn't get to do it.

MB Did you have an opportunity to explain that you were actually talking very quietly about your work?

INTERVIEW EXTRACT — ABUSE OF A STUDENT

P   Yes, I rememeber now, thinking about it now.   Yes Mr. H   this teacher right....

MB Secondary school?

P   No this school, yes, that was this year, what was it now, we were in the CDT room and I can't remember what I done and he goes, I can't remember what I done now, right and he goes, just get out you little black shit and I go, don't call me no little black shit and I started giving him my mouth and stuff and I was going, you know....

MB Is he still in the school?

P   Yes, he's still in the school, yes and I started giving him my mouth and that and then another teacher come, right and I go did you hear what he called me and he goes I didn't hear nothing and the other teacher was in the same room.

MB The teacher heard it.

P   Yes, the other teacher.

MB Who was the other teacher?

P   Mr., I can't remember his name, B   or something, I don't know. He heard but he just said I didn't hear nothing, because he didn't want to have nothing to do with it, you know what I mean and I was just giving him all the names under the sun, I was telling him why don't he shut his face and all this stuff and he just said, get out.   I said, I'm going and I just told him (   ) and walked out and then he didn't bother saying nothing, he didn't bother doing nothing like I thought he might, because he knew deep down that he was in the wrong.

MB Yes, you didn't call him any racial names?

P   Well I just sort of just told him about himself.

MB I mean you didn't call him a white shit, for example?

P   No, I just called him sort of shit and stuff like that, you know.

MB But it was nothing about him being white?

P   No and then when I see him on the corridor I always just make sure he moves out the way of me.

MB So what happens when a teacher is racist like that, is there anything you can do about it?

P   Not really, no, there's nothing you can do about it, is there, you can just tell another teacher and they just say, oh, that's about it.

MB So they never really do anything about it?

LETTER FROM A PARENT

Dear Mr

1. Against better judgement, we have allowed D   to attend school today when in hindsight, I do not think it was such a good idea after all, for him to go back either today, tomorrow or ever.

2. Given the propensity for mutual aggravation at school, he came home and told us, reproachfully, that he had been put on yet another special report.

3. My wife and myself, quickly realised that a potential confrontation was looming. The accumulation of pressure both at school and at home, gave way to an explosive reaction during which D   has expressed, in shocking terms, his frustration and unhappiness with those charged in administering a system which has brought intolerable pressure to bear on him, in their pursuit of absolute obedience, absolute compliance and absolute conformity.

4. My son is reaching breaking point. At this stage, I wish to place on record, my feelings and those of my wife's, about the miserable situation. I am terribly angry and sad that D   education has been so badly disrupted, through inconsistent and haphazard handling of certain situations over the past eight months.

5. It began in November of last year when the cack-handed manner in which Mr W   , head of year, dealt with an incident with a racial flavour. Subsequent action taken, meant that D was punished, but the culprit let off.

6. This episode had badly dented D   confidence and sense of fair-play about the system. The lack of trust that ensued and his poor relationship with Mr W: brought him into conflict with his class teacher, Miss   .

7. A certain amount of collusion between these two, has been partly responsible for a deterioration in the situation.

8. Like any other pupil, D   mis-behaved, broke rules, tested boundaries, to the limits sometimes; but unlike any other pupil, he had, in next to no time, accumulated a great number of reports, enough to compile into a dossier.

APPENDIX 5

LETTER FROM A PARENT

-2-

Those to whom we had offered total support, felt they had gathered sufficient evidence, and mustered enough courage to start making noises to the effect that we ought to be seeking professional help, to facilitate what their flawed perception saw as a one-sided situation- ie. D   is the problem. Absolute silence, about the part teachers could have played in it.

Such a measure was contemplated because common sense had become a dirty word; teachers had completely run out of ideas, and those at the sharp end of the class-room situation wanted a quickie solution to the problem.

I must condemn any suggestion that D   has been wholly responsible for what is happening. While I appreciate that life in the class-room is never easy for either pupil or teacher, I must also support my son, whenever he seeks further explanations, (which is interpreted as insubordination, in the teaching circles), about the nature, reasons and grounds for actions taken by certain teachers.

This is done in the knowledge that D   had become confused by the perverse lack of communication among some teachers, eg. the magazine incident, to name but a few. Unfortunately he has exploited these shortcomings, like any other pupil and was deemed, subsequently, to have behaved inappropriately.

Inevitably, he has become locked in a vicious circle of rule breaking accompanied by punishment.

I am beginning to feel rather nervous and uneasy because the pattern of the situation seems to be changing, in that Mr   and Miss   have now become prominent faces, while Mr   and Miss   , temporarily, adopt a low profile. I can foresee what is likely to happen. Somehow, events beyond D   control are going to dictate, one way or another, what the eventual outcome will be.

I could not tolerate the idea of seeing him walking down the road that will eventually lead to his formal exclusion from   - with its dire repercussions for both parties.

Some teachers, may be covertly assisting him along that road already, but to pre-empt such a crisis, we have taken a firm decision to support D   by keeping him at home, until a vacancy is available at   School.

In the meantime, we shall be taking appropriate actions to ensure continuity of his education.

LETTER FROM A PARENT

I understand that you will have to supply statements regarding
D.   transfer. I do hope that the contents of this letter
will be used as a base-line to appraise the facts presented on
behalf of   about pupil D.

I would appreciate it, if you could let me have a copy of your
letter, pertaining to the actual transfer, when it takes place.

Finally, I wish to emphasise that the intrinsic lack of
understanding coupled with insensitive handling of certain
situations, on the part of Mr   and Miss
particularly, during the last eight months, have culminated in
this awesome explosion of anger and frustration yesterday
evening.

We have been savaged and emotionally traumatised by that
experience. D   will look back and say that school has had
to be endured rather than to be enjoyed.

Yours sincerely

(Parent)