Exploring school connectedness amongst Black secondary school aged students and their parents and the implications for Educational Psychology practice in the North-East

Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology
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Declaration: I declare that the work submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology is my own and has not previously been submitted or assessed for any other qualification.

Overarching Abstract

This thesis explores Black children's and parents' experiences of school connectedness and the implications for Educational Psychology practice.

Chapter 1: A thematic synthesis review was conducted using eight studies which explored Black Children and Young People's experiences of school connectedness. The synthesis suggested that experiences of school connectedness were most likely to be associated with a complexity of individual, relational, school, and societal factors, which influenced their trust in school and, in turn, experiences of connectedness to the school. Additionally, a tension between school connectedness and Racial-ethnic identity was also experienced by some Children and Young People, which seemed to be influenced by the Racial-ethnic demographics of their school. The need for further research to explore school connectedness within the UK context was highlighted.

Chapter 2: The rationale for the project was discussed, as well as the link between the systematic literature review and the empirical project. This included philosophical considerations related to a thematic narrative analysis methodology and ethically important moments.

Chapter 3: An empirical project was conducted to explore Black children and parents based in the North-East of England's experiences of school connectedness and the implications for Educational Psychology Practice. Interviews with Black children and parents about their experiences of school connectedness were conducted, which was analysed using thematic narrative analysis. The interviews were analysed using Critical Race Theory and explored through concepts such as mattering. A focus group was then facilitated with Educational Psychologists to understand their perspectives after listening to Black Children and parents' experiences of school connectedness which were analysed utilising thematic narrative analysis. Findings involved changes in EP's perspectives when working with Black children, parents, and schools and considerations about the EP role when engaging in systemic working. Limitations of the study are also discussed.

Chapter 4: A reflective account of the research process and considerations of changes in thinking resulting from engaging in the project are discussed. Implications for the research, as well as implications for my own practice, are also reflected.

Cross referencing is used throughout the thesis.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank God; this journey would not have been possible without his grace and mercy.

Thank you to Wilma and Heather, my research supervisors; this thesis would not have been possible without your ongoing support, challenging questions, and encouragement.

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Chapter 1: What does research literature tell us about Black secondary school pupils' experience of school connectedness?

Abstract

This review explores Black children's experiences of school connectedness utilising an ecological conceptualisation of school connectedness. School connectedness has been associated with a range of outcomes; however, Black children seem to experience lower levels of school connectedness in comparison to children from other racial-ethnic groups. Thematic synthesis was utilised to analyse eight papers, and the process of searching and synthesising papers is described. Black children's experience of school connectedness appeared to be associated with a complexity of individual, relational, school ethos and societal factors, which influenced their trust in school and, in turn, their experience of connection to school. These features might support an understanding of what supports school connectedness for Black children. The findings also highlighted implications for Educational Psychology practice, and study limitations were discussed.

This paper is prepared for submission to the journal of Race, Ethnicity and Education

1.1. Introduction

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) aims to synthesise studies of Black secondary school children's experiences of school connectedness. This section will discuss the definition of key concepts and rationale for the SLR.

1.1.1. Terminology

Black Students

I am aware of the use of terms such as Political Blackness' and 'Black Consciousness' to signify Blackness (Abbas, 2020; Biko, 1987). These terms are often utilised to be inclusive of members from all ethnic minoritised groups who experience racism and to show solidarity for members from all ethnicities who are politically inclined to support the cause for racial justice (Biko, 1987). However, Andrews (2016) suggested that the term "Political Blackness" homogenises differing racial groups' experiences of navigating race and racism. Andrews (2016) argued that it was important to acknowledge the nuanced experience of individuals from differing minoritised racial groups and their resultant experiences of racial inequalities. For the purposes of this study, only students who are racialised as being Black will be included in the review to avoid homogenising the experiences of minoritised groups. However, I recognise that even within this group, experiences will differ.

Cross and Cross (2008) refer to racial-ethnic-cultural identity to capture the intersectional nature of these identities. Cross and Cross (2008) suggested this reflects the beliefs and attitudes individuals have about their racial-ethnic-cultural membership and the processes by which they develop. For example, in the U.K., a child who might be ethnically of Ghanaian heritage may be influenced by cultural traditions passed down to them while also being influenced by experiences of being racially viewed as Black in Britain. In an attempt to add further nuance to the term 'Black', Black students were also defined as those who identify as being of African or of African Caribbean descent to support providing an intersecting focus of individual's experiences of racial-ethnic-cultural identity across the Black Diaspora. Throughout this review, the terms "racial-ethnic" and "racial-ethnic-cultural" identity were also utilised to acknowledge these intersecting identities.

1.1.2. Rationale for review

Why School connectedness might be important

School connectedness has been described as a factor that might support aspects of children's mental health and well-being (Carney et al., 2017; Shochet & Smith, 2012). It has been argued that increased levels of school connectedness might be associated with lowered levels of anxiety and depression (Lester et al., 2013; McCabe et al., 2022; Shochet et al., 2006) and increased resilience when experiencing difficulties in school (Oldfield et al., 2018). It has also been suggested that school connectedness is positively associated with academic engagement (Neel & Fuligni, 2013) and motivation to complete school (McWhirter et al., 2018).

Conceptualisations of school connectedness

School connectedness has been conceptualised as children's perception of their relationships with others and their connection to their school setting (García-Moya et al., 2019; Libbey, 2004). It is acknowledged that some researchers have previously conceptualised school connectedness as solely focusing on children's perceptions of their connectedness to staff (García-Moya et al., 2019; Ito, 2011; Vidourek et al., 2011). However, Thomas and Parker (2021) contended that these definitions of school connectedness do not always lend themselves to considering Children and Young People's (CYP) 'layered lives' (Pg.2). Thomas and Parker (2021), and Gaska (2012), argued some CYP's experiences of school connectedness might be influenced by wider factors such as the effects of racism experienced in their school or wider environment, or their socioeconomic status. This suggests that using an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1995) might be supportive in considering how these wider factors influence school connectedness.

Bronfenbrenner (1995) suggested that interactions within five systems might influence development. The first system, the microsystem, involved aspects such as an individual's home and school environment. The second system, termed the mesosystem described the interactions between two or more settings in the microsystem. The third system, the exosystem, involved the indirect influences that affect children's experiences in their environment, such as the school system or community. The fourth system, the macrosystem, involved social structures influencing children's experiences, such as culture or the current political system. Lastly, the fifth system, the chronosystem, involved changes that may occur over time, influencing a child, such as divorce or puberty (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). An ecological definition of school connectedness was conceptualised by Waters

(2010) as involving the structural, functional and built environment. Please see Table 1 for further information.

Table 1: Waters (2010) ecological conceptualisation of school connectedness

Aspect of school environment	Description
Structural environment	School size, resources for pastoral care, and school type
Functional environment	School behaviour policies, student involvement in decision-making, academic expectations for students and students' relationship with staff.
Built environment	Presence of green spaces and the upkeep of a school

This conceptualisation seemed to involve aspects relating to the micro and exosystem. However, this conceptualisation of school connectedness did not refer to racial-ethnic identity or aspects influenced by the macrosystem, such as the effects of experiences such as racism on school connectedness. To help understand how the different layers of Black children's lives might influence their experiences of school connectedness, an ecological perspective was utilised in the review. It was aimed that this would support understanding Black children's perspectives of their interactions with their school and wider environmental context, inclusive of aspects such as race, geographic location, and wider society (Thomas & Parker, 2021).

Implications for Black children

Research in Canada (Patte et al., 2021) and the USA (McNeely et al., 2002; Parris et al., 2018) has suggested that Black children are more likely to self-report as having lower levels of school-connectedness than students of other racial identities. The reasons for this seem complex and have been associated with factors such as the racial demographics of a school influencing whether Black children view themselves as part of an ingroup or outgroup (Turner et al., 1979; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Other reasons have included their positionality, influenced by factors such as their race, age and socioeconomic status (Nasir et al., 2011), and school factors such as relationships with staff and school policies (Gray, Hope, et al., 2020). It has also been argued that Black children's experiences of school connectedness are not often centred in research (Gaska, 2012; Neely et al., 2015). Further, Voight et al. (2015) concluded that there might not be one universal experience of school connectedness and that individuals' experiences may be influenced by factors such as race.

Taking this into account, this systematic literature review aimed to synthesise and examine research that explored Black secondary school children's perspectives on school connectedness and explored factors which might support or act as a barrier to school connectedness. The rationale for the focus on secondary pupils was because literature had argued school connectedness tended to decrease with age, from childhood into adolescence (Anderman, 2003; Niehaus et al., 2012), suggesting a need to explore how to promote school connectedness specifically during this period.

1.1.3. Review Question

What does research literature tell us about Black secondary school pupil's experience of school connectedness?

1.2. Method of analysis

Gough et al. (2017) contested that all reviews have aspects of aggregation and configuration. Configurative reviews aim to combine different studies to answer a review question to generate and explore theories (Gough et al., 2017). Aggregative studies aim to combine the findings of similar studies with the goal of answering a review question in order to test a hypothesis and understand what works (Gough et al., 2017). This review combined elements of aggregation and configuration. The review aimed to configure studies to explore Black pupils' experiences of school connectedness; while it also aimed to aggregate studies by assuming there was a reality about Black pupils' perspectives about what worked (enablers) and did not work (barriers) in facilitating school connectedness. This approach aligns with critical realism (Bhaskar, 2016) and is the positioning in which the review was conducted.

The review utilised thematic synthesis to explore the qualitative papers. This synthesis method was selected because it is described as a tool that is useful for bringing together findings from different types of research to help inform practice about what works (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009; Gough et al., 2017). The process involved coding findings into themes and then developing further analytical themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

The stages of thematic synthesis outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008) were utilised for the review:

Steps	Description
Step one	Searching

Step two	Quality assessment
Step three	Data extraction
Step four	Thematic synthesis - Stage one: coding text - Stage two: developing descriptive themes - Stage three: generating analytical themes

1.2.1. Searching

Due to the suspected scarcity of research exploring Black students' perspectives of school connectedness (Voight et al., 2015), a large number of bibliographic databases were consulted. After several scoping searches, six bibliographic databases (WebOfScience, SCOPUS, ERIC, PsycInfo, Proquest, and British Psychological Society EBCSO) were searched for relevant published literature between 2010 and 2022. Searching was conducted between December 2021 to February 2022.

Table 2, shown below, describes the syntax used for each database. Syntax was developed considering a review of terms used in literature and through adapting and refining terms for each database as suggested by Boland et al. (2017). Forward and backward chaining, as well as hand searching, was also utilised.

Table 2: Searching Syntax

Database	Syntax
Scopus, Proquest, Web of Science, ERIC,	(Black OR "African American" OR African OR Diaspora) AND ("Secondary School" OR "High School" OR Adolescen* OR teen*) AND ("School Connect*" OR "Teacher Student relationship*" OR "School Belonging" OR "Child Friendly School*")

British Psychological Society (EBSCO)	(Black OR "African American" OR African OR Diaspora) AND ("Secondary School" OR "High School" OR Adolescen* OR teen*) AND ("School Connect*") Reasoning for difference in search terms: Search terms used in other databases did not provide studies which were of relevance to SLR
PsycInfo	Search terms were mapped to Subject Headings, which were then exploded to focus on the narrowed and relevant. The terms were coded and exploded as follows: Black(s) High School Adolescent School Connectedness Belonging (Black or "African cultural groups") AND ("High School Education" OR "Secondary Education" OR "Adolescent Development") AND (School Connectedness OR "Student engagement" OR "Involvement" OR "Participation" OR "Teacher Student Interaction" OR "Social acceptance" OR "social connectedness"

Inclusion criteria

Articles were screened for relevance utilising the following inclusion criteria shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Inclusion Criteria

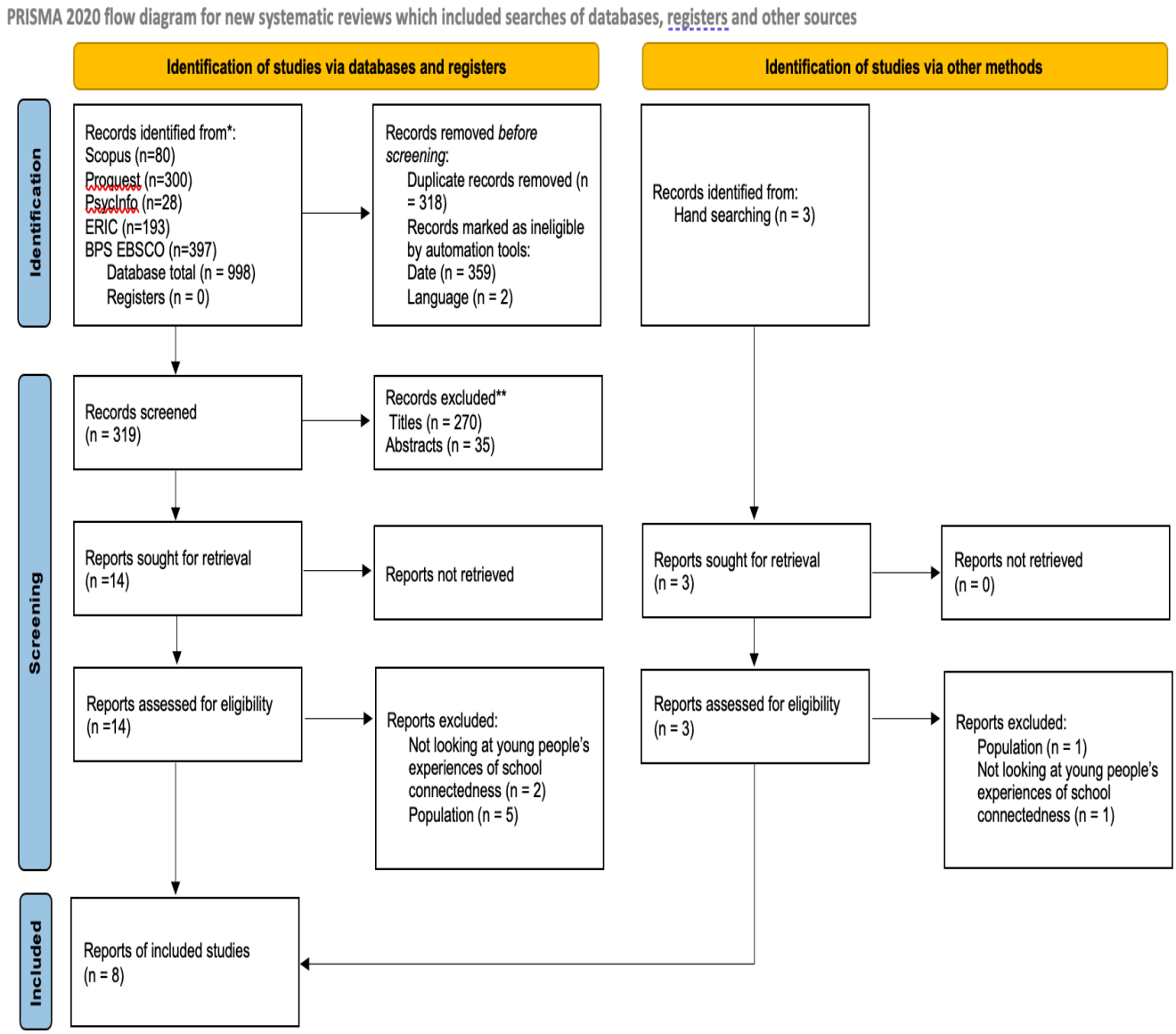
Included if	Reasoning	Excluded if
Studies explored CYP's perceptions of school connectedness to staff, peers and school setting which Libbey (2004) conceptualised as school connectedness to support with the use of an ecological perspective.	Relevance to SLR as it would support the use of an ecological perspective as Thomas and Parker (2021) discussed the importance of using an ecological conceptualisation of school connectedness when understanding Black children's experiences. Barber and Schluterman (2008) also discussed that there is a lack of consensus in school connectedness conceptualisations and emphasised the importance of researchers being specific about their conceptualisation.	Conceptualised school connectedness as CYP's connectedness to staff which has been defined as teacher connectedness by researchers (Garcia-Moya et al., 2015) and would not support with understanding CYP's perspectives about wider aspects of school such as peers, school setting.
Focused on exploring Black CYP's experiences of school connectedness while in secondary/high school	Relevance to review question. Focussed on CYP in secondary/high school as literature suggests school connectedness tends to decrease with age, from childhood into adolescence (Anderman, 2003; Niehaus et al., 2012) suggesting a need to explore how to promote school connectedness specifically during this period.	Only focussed on teachers and/or parents' perspectives
Studies published worldwide	Initially, studies published only in the U.K were	

	considered for the review, however due to scarcity with locating studies in the U.K; searching was expanded worldwide.	
Published 2010 or later	The introduction of the Equality Act where race was named as a protected characteristic. This was decided at the start of the review as it was aimed that the review would be focused on the U.K context. However, due to the scarcity of locating studies in the U.K, searching was expanded worldwide.	Pre-2010
Qualitative and mixed methods research	Relevance to review question as I was interested in Black CYP's school connectedness experiences. Quantitative research tended to look at differences in experience of school connectedness by racial identity (Anyon et al., 2016) or the associations between school connectedness and health risk behaviours (Govender et al., 2013; Handebo et al., 2018)	Quantitative research
Only studies published in English	Research that is published in English so that translation is not required	Studies published only in a language other than English
Peer reviewed	Quality of research	Not peer reviewed

PRISMA Diagram

Figure 1 (below) outlines the PRISMA flow diagram showing the identification and screening processes. Electronic searching identified 998 studies. Once duplicates were removed and studies excluded by language and date, 319 studies were screened for inclusion. 270 studies were excluded based on their titles not being relevant to the topic area and not focusing on Black children's experiences of school connectedness. 35 studies were excluded based on abstracts.14 studies were read in full, and two studies were excluded due to not being relevant to the topic area. Five articles were then excluded due to the population not being relevant. Three further articles were identified through hand searching, but two of those articles were excluded due to not being relevant to the topic area and not looking at Black children's experiences of school connectedness. Thus, eight articles were included in the SLR.

Figure 1: Prisma Diagram



*Consider, if feasible to do so, reporting the number of records identified from each database or register searched (rather than the total number across all databases/registers).
**If automation tools were used, indicate how many records were excluded by a human and how many were excluded by automation tools.

From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71. For more information, visit: http://www.prisma-statement.org/

The final eight papers included in the review are:

Paper 1: Boyd (2021)

Paper 2: Brooms (2019)

Paper 3: Carey et al. (2022)

Paper 4: Chapman & Bhopal (2019)

Paper 5: Grace & Nelson (2019)

Paper 6: McPherson (2020)

Paper 7: Slaten et al. (2016)

Paper 8: Smith & Hope (2020)

1.2.2. CASP Adapted Quality Assessment

Barnett-Page and Thomas (2009) suggested that there are conflicting views about whether the quality of qualitative studies should be appraised and how they might be appraised. Walsh and Downe (2006) explained that some researchers do not see the value of quality appraisal in qualitative research. This is because qualitative research is often associated with a perspective that views knowledge as interpretive and not discoverable by objective means, making it challenging for researchers to assess the quality of studies (Walsh & Downe, 2006). However, Popay and Williams (1998) suggested that the value of quality appraisal in qualitative research might lie in its ability to support researchers in exploring and interpreting research through the process.

Long et al's (2020) CASP tool was therefore used in the review. This tool was selected as it is recognised to support novice researchers (Majid & Vanstone, 2018). Completing quality assessment helped me gain further familiarity with the studies through a process of rereading papers which supported me in gaining an understanding of the papers when synthesising findings. A summary can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Long et al's (2020) enhanced CASP Tool

	Boyd (2021)	Brooms (2019)	Carey et al. (2022)	Chapman & Bhopal (2019)	Grace & Nelson (2019)	McPherson (2020)	Slaten et al. (2016)	Smith & Hope (2020)
1 Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2 Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3 Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4 Are the study's theoretical underpinnings clear, consistent and conceptually coherent?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5 Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Can't tell	Can't tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
6 Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7 Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Somewhat	Yes	Yes
8 Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Somewhat
9 Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

10 Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes	Yes/	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. Is the research valuable?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

1.2.3. Data Extraction

Boland et al. (2017) suggested that the data extraction process can support making sense of papers. Gough et al. (2017), who described this process as 'mapping research', discussed how it can support keeping track of studies and the decision-making regarding synthesis method.

Appendix A indicates an initial mapping of studies, including their purpose, theoretical setting, findings, and themes. The publication dates of the eight papers were between 2016 and 2022. Five of the studies were conducted in the U.S (Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020); one in the U.K (Boyd, 2021); one in both the U.K. and U.S (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019) and one in Canada (McPherson, 2020). In six of the studies, children were attending mainstream schools (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Smith & Hope, 2020); and in two of the studies, participants were attending alternative provision for children who had been excluded (Grace & Nelson, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016). Six of the studies solely focused on Black boys' experiences of connectedness in school (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020); one of the studies focused on both Black girls' and boys' experiences connectedness in school (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019), and one study focused solely on Black girls' experiences of connectedness in school (Grace & Nelson, 2019).

The racial-ethnic demographics of school settings varied across the studies. In three studies, schools were described as attended by children from diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds (Boyd, 2021; Carey, 2022; Smith & Hope, 2020). Two studies described schools as attended by children who predominantly identified as being Black (Brooms, 2019; Slaten, 2016). In one study, schools were described as attended by Black children who were the racial-ethnic minority in their school (Chapman, 2019). One study did not describe the racial-ethnic demographics of the school but that the area where the study took place was a majority-Black area (Grace & Nelson, 2019). Another study (McPherson, 2020) also did not describe the racial demographics of the school's participants attended.

All the studies aimed to understand Black children's experiences of education in a manner that was similar to the review's conceptualisation of school connectedness (As per Inclusion criteria). However, the studies utilised differing theoretical frameworks; four studies were guided by frameworks which critically analysed race through Black feminist epistemology

(McPherson, 2020) and Critical Race Theory (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019). Three studies were guided by psychological frameworks of belonging (Brooms, 2019), Mattering (Carey et al., 2022) and Person-centred practice (Slaten et al., 2016) and one study was guided by a Socio-political Development framework (Smith & Hope, 2020). All of the studies utilised interviews or focus groups for their data collection approach, except for Smith and Hope (2020), who utilised photovoice as well as semi-structured interviews.

1.2.4. Synthesis

Thomas and Harden (2008) describe thematic synthesis as a cyclical process involving three stages where themes are continually refined and modified to support answering the review question. Appendix B includes an extract of the thematic synthesis coding process. The first stage of thematic synthesis involves line-by-line coding; this involves reading through lines of text and coding according to meaning. Stage two often overlaps with stage one (Gough et al., 2007) and involves organising the codes into descriptive themes to support the development of analytical themes. Initially, forty-one codes were generated. These were then organised into twenty-three descriptive themes after a process of reviewing and merging themes. An inductive as well as deductive approach to synthesising themes in studies was utilised. Five descriptive themes, which were categorised as ‘individual’, ‘interpersonal’, ‘school environmental’ and ‘societal’ themes, were established deductively. An ecological perspective influenced these themes, identified after engaging in literature (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Waters, 2009). Eighteen themes were developed inductively as they emerged through the data of Black CYP’s experiences in the papers.

The third stage involves developing analytical themes; Thomas and Harden (2008) described developing analytical themes as a process that involves combining studies to answer the review question. During this stage, the themes were further reduced to ten analytical themes. The themes were organised into ‘facilitators’ and ‘barriers’ of school connectedness. Themes that CYP described as supporting school connectedness were labelled as a ‘facilitator’. Themes CYP described as negatively influencing school connectedness were labelled as a ‘barrier.’ While completing the thematic synthesis process, A further ‘tensions’ theme was included. This theme was included as there were experiences discussed by CYP, which seemed to include aspects acting as both a facilitator and barrier to school connectedness. An example of this was when a CYP discussed the perception that they must distance themselves from their Black racial-ethnic identity to gain

acceptance and connection within school. A summary of how the papers contributed to the themes generated can be found in table 5 below.

Table 5: Information about how different papers contributed the facilitators, barriers and tensions of school connectedness

Theme	Sub-theme	Study								
		Boyd (2021)	Brooms (2019)	Carey et al. (2022)	Chapman & Bhopal (2019)	Grace & Nelson (2019)	McPherson (2020)	Slaten et al. (2016)	Smith & Hope (2020)	Number of studies contributing to theme
Facili-tators	Positive interactions with school staff and peers		✓					✓	✓	3
	motivation to succeed		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		5
	School ethos supporting connectedness	✓	✓					✓	✓	4
Barriers	Negative interactions with school members (staff and peers)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
	Negative experiences in the influence of school policies	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
	Intersectionality	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			5
	Influence of negative perceptions of Blackness in wider society	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	6
Tensions	Black students having to change themselves to connect with school	✓		✓					✓	3
	Contributions by each study	6	3	6	5	5	4	3	6	

Figures showing further information on the analytical and descriptive themes are included below.

Descriptive themes have been coded in Blue.
Analytical themes have been coded in Green.

Figure 2: Mindmap of themes representing facilitators to school connectedness

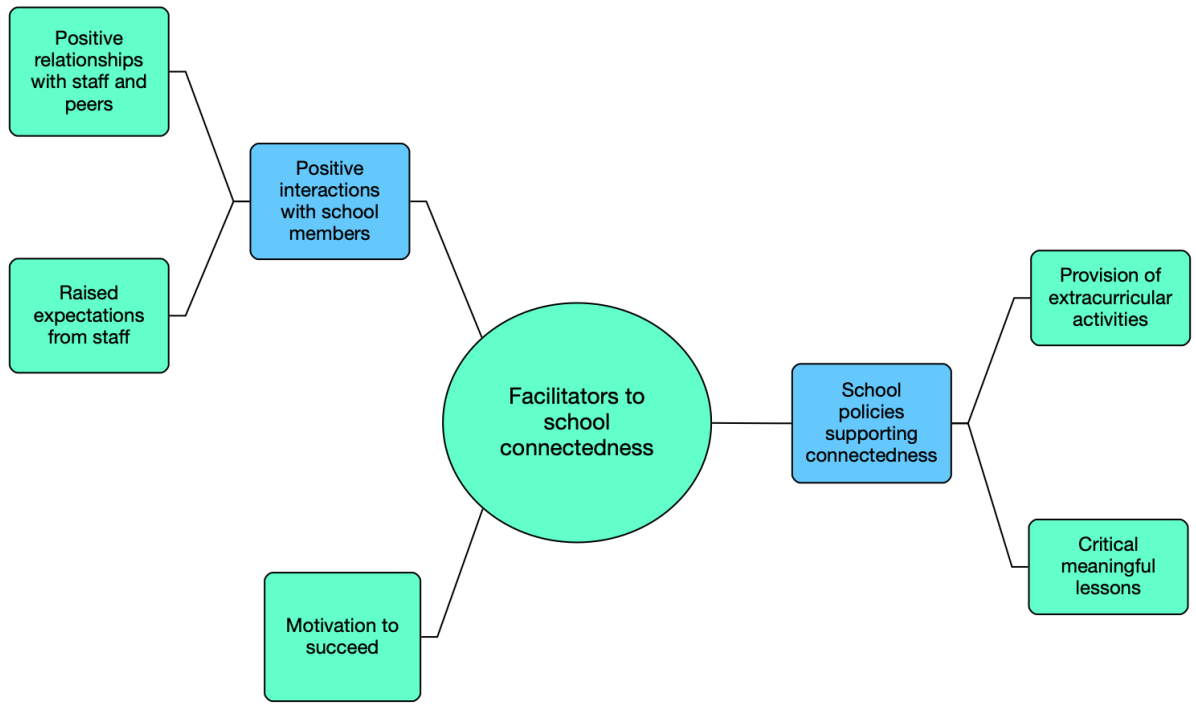


Figure 3: Mindmap of themes representing barriers to school connectedness

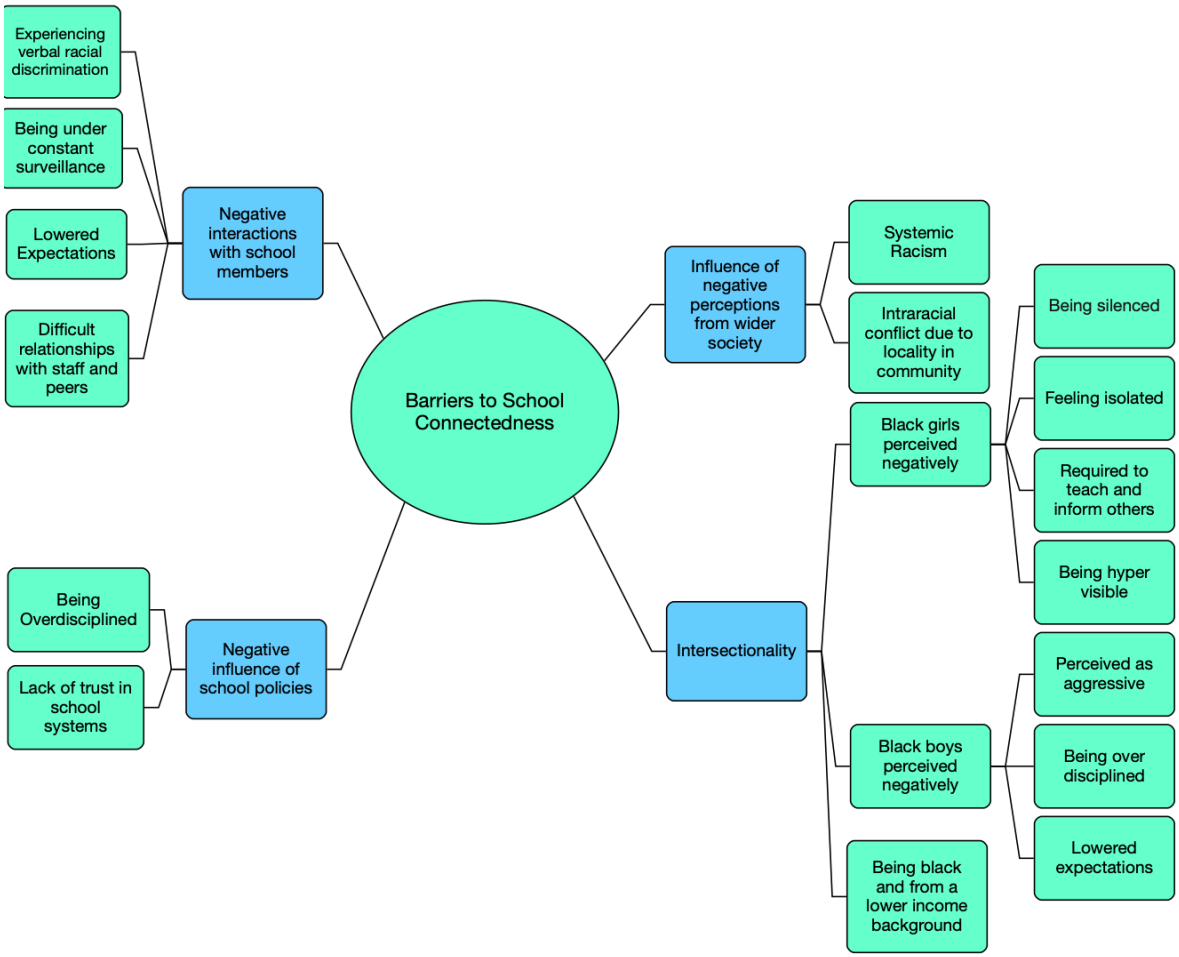
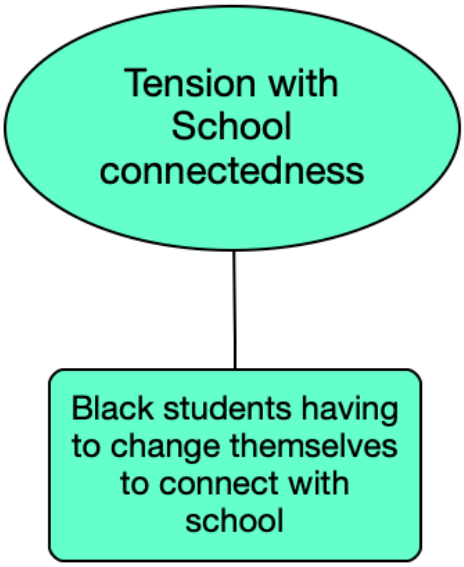


Figure 4: Mindmap of themes representing tensions with school connectedness



1.3. Findings

Here, the themes from the thematic synthesis pertaining to the facilitators, barriers, and tensions to Black CYP's experiences of school connectedness are discussed.

1.3.1. Facilitators to school connectedness

The following four themes were identified as facilitators of school connectedness.

Positive interactions with school staff and peers

The most commonly occurring facilitator of school connectedness in four studies (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016) was positive relationships and interactions with staff and peers. CYP from North America and the U.K. described school as an environment where they felt they mattered, and staff members cared for them. These experiences of care included staff supporting them unconditionally (Brooms, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019) and having high expectations regarding their academic work (Grace & Nelson, 2019), attendance (Brooms, 2019) and future goals (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019). This is consistent with research suggesting that central to positive student-teacher relationships is an 'ethic of care', which is characterised by high expectations and clear communication (Masko, 2018; Noddings, 2015).

Friendships also supported connectedness to school. Mcgraw et al. (2008) and Quimby et al. (2018) found connectedness to peers helped prevent young people from experiencing feelings of loneliness and supports their connectedness to school (Mcgraw et al., 2008; Quimby et al., 2018). CYP in the studies from the U.S. (Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016) and U.K. (Boyd, 2021) found friendships which were often described as being more of a 'familial' relationship, helped to provide emotional support (Boyd, 2021), and motivation (as they acted as positive role models for each other regarding their academic work) (Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016).

Motivation to succeed

Four studies from the U.K. (Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020) and one from the U.S. and U.K. contributed to this subtheme. CYP discussed that their motivation and determination to succeed in school were influenced by their home and community context, which positively influenced their connectedness to school. CYP in Slaten et al.'s (2016) study discussed how their community context influenced their determination to engage and do well in school, which supported their

school connectedness as it was an alternative to engaging in activities they had been exposed to in their community, such as crime. CYP in Brooms (2019) and Smith and Hope (2020) also described being internally motivated to engage and value the educational opportunities afforded to them due to the influence of family and their community who were relying on them to do well. Therefore, engaging with education was seen as a stepping-stone to success, which supported CYP's connectedness. Influenced by self-determination theory, Gray, Hope, et al. (2020) suggested that when CYP are in an environment with a strong sense of relatedness (connections with others), they might be more internally motivated to engage in activities valued by those they relate to. The relatedness that CYP held with their family and community, who placed importance on them engaging with school, might thus have supported their motivation to do well and facilitated school connectedness.

CYP in two studies from the U.S. (Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022) and one from the U.K. and U.S. (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019) also discussed how their family's reliance on them to do well influenced their engagement in school which supported their connectedness. Bradley et al. (2021) found parents' encouragement and support towards their children's engagement with school activities can support their sense of connection to school. In one study (Brooms, 2019), CYP mentioned how they did not want to disappoint their families and the community who had invested in them and supported them to attend a school which was described as being prestigious. This seemed to act as a factor which positively influenced their feelings of connection to school.

School ethos supported connectedness

The studies contributing to this subtheme were from the U.S. (Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020). These papers involved different types of schools. A mainstream school where all CYP were Black (Brooms, 2019), an alternative provision school for CYP where the majority of CYP were Black (Slaten et al., 2016) and a diverse racial-ethnic demographic mainstream school where CYP were primarily from affluent backgrounds (Smith & Hope, 2020). As opposed to other studies in the review where CYP were described as attending diverse mainstream racial-ethnic schools, Smith and Hope (2020) utilised a variety of data sources, such as interviews and photovoice, alongside a longitudinal methodological approach. This might have supported richer reflections from CYP about their experiences in school and aspects of their school ethos that supported connectedness. One study from the U.K (Boyd, 2021), where CYP attended mainstream schools with an ethnically diverse population but reflected on their experiences in a majority Black Alternative Provision for CYP who had been excluded, also contributed to this theme. CYP, in this

theme, suggested engagement in extracurricular activities positively influenced their school connectedness. CYP in Brooms (2019), Slaten et al. (2016) and Smith and Hope (2020) studies suggested that engaging in activities such as trips to universities and internships supported a positive view of their future as this supported their understanding of different perspectives and, in turn, gained an understanding of their identity.

CYP in Brooms (2019), Boyd (2021) and Slaten et al. (2016) also spoke about how school ethos supported their school connectedness. This included aspects such as a school motto which encouraged them to believe in themselves and the presence of images of Black activists on school walls. School staff verbalising their belief in children (Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016) as well as developing an intervention to support pride in their racial-ethnic identity (Boyd, 2021) also supported CYP to view school as a non-judgemental environment (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016). Additionally, CYP in Brooms (2019) and Slaten et al. (2016) mentioned how a globalised school curriculum where lessons and group discussions were academically challenging and encouraged critical thinking while also developing an understanding of their identity and culture as Black pupils supported their connectedness. These experiences corroborate with Voight et al. (2015), who suggested that when a school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) emphasise respect for diverse racial-ethnic identities from staff and through their school culture, Black CYP are more likely to feel safe and better connected.

1.3.2. Barriers to school connectedness

The following four themes were identified as barriers to school connectedness.

Negative interactions with school members

CYP spoke about negative interactions with school staff resulting in disconnection from school. CYP described experiences where they felt under constant surveillance (Boyd, 2021), their actions being perpetually negatively misinterpreted, (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019) and there were lowered expectations of them (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; McPherson, 2020). They also felt that staff members sometimes found it challenging to demonstrate care for them, discussing instances such as; staff developing an interest in them when they were performing on the sports field but not in the classroom (Carey et al., 2022), receiving a lack of support when they were finding school challenging (Grace & Nelson, 2019) and staff's language at times being characterised by racist undertones, microaggressions and stereotypes (Boyd, 2021; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Smith & Hope, 2020). Legette et al. (2022) argued that experiences of racial discrimination negatively influence

Black CYP's relationships with their teachers. This resulted in a sense of rejection (Boyd, 2021; Carey et al., 2022; Grace & Nelson, 2019), lack of trust in staff (McPherson, 2020) and withdrawal from school activities (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; McPherson, 2020) from CYP in the studies, all of which negatively influenced their sense of connection to school.

Negative influence of school policies

In all of the studies, except for two, where children were attending an all-Black mainstream school (Brooms, 2019) and an alternative provision (Slaten et al., 2016), CYP were of the view that aspects of school policies negatively influenced their school connectedness. It should be noted that in line with their research aims, Brooms (2019) was specifically interested in CYP's positive experience in school, and experiences that might have acted as barriers to school connectedness were not discussed. Additionally, Grace & Nelson (2019) and McPherson (2020) did not state the school setting CYP were attending, resulting in limitations in exploring and understanding possible associations between the type of school CYP were attending and their school policies.

Heidelburg et al. (2022) found Black CYP can report finding the school environment unsafe due to a mixture of factors and CYP described factors such as exclusionary disciplinary sanctions (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Smith & Hope, 2020) which were perceived as disproportionately targeting Black CYP (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Smith & Hope, 2020). CYP also described a lack of trust in school systems and policies perceiving these to reflect a lack of care about racial discrimination (McPherson, 2020; Smith & Hope, 2020). This led to CYP experiencing the school environment as unwelcoming, thus contributing to a sense of disconnection from school (Boyd, 2021; Grace & Nelson, 2019; McPherson, 2020).

Negative effect of how Blackness is perceived in the wider society

Racism experienced in society appeared to negatively affect CYP's school connectedness. CYP discussed how racism, stereotypes and narratives in the media about Black people negatively influenced how they were perceived by staff and peers (Boyd, 2021; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Smith & Hope, 2020) and described experiences of being mistrusted by staff and peers in school (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Smith & Hope, 2020). All of these studies were either theoretically influenced by Critical Race Theory (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019), Black feminist theory (McPherson, 2020), Socio-political Development Framework (Smith & Hope, 2020) or utilised a Decolonial theory lens

to support analysis (Carey et al., 2022). These theories view issues centred on race and racism as occurring at a structural nature. Using these theorisations might have supported discussions of how CYP's experiences of disconnectedness might be influenced and understood on a structural and societal level.

Intersectionality

Five studies (Boyd, 2021; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Smith & Hope, 2020) contributed to this subtheme. For some, their gender resulted in differing experiences in school. Intersectionality aims to explain how people's multiple identities (Race, Gender, Class etc.) intersect when experiencing the world (Crenshaw, 2006). Both Black boys and girls spoke about experiences of adultification, where children are viewed and treated as adults (Dancy, 2014). Adultification can result in Black boys being perceived as violent and less innocent; and Black girls as dominant and mature (Epstein et al., 2017; Gilmore & Bettis, 2021). Both girls and boys reported Black boys being disproportionately targeted by disciplinary procedures as well as being considered aggressive, threatening and low achieving by staff (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019). Black girls in McPherson (2020) and Chapman and Bhopal (2019) reported having to deal with microaggressions in school with silence to avoid being stereotyped as angry. They also felt invisible, overlooked by school staff, and overshadowed by Black boys. Paradoxically, they further described experiences of hypervisibility regarding the application of school uniform rules, resulting in feeling othered in school.

In one study by Carey et al. (2022), it was discussed how family income level influenced CYP's experiences of connection to school. CYP discussed how being from a lower family income level to other Black pupils sometimes resulted in being stigmatised by staff and peers as they were perceived as more threatening, which resulted in a sense of disconnection from school.

1.3.3. Tensions with school connectedness

The following theme highlights the tensions involved for Black pupils in trying to be connected to school.

Perception of having to distance themselves from Blackness to gain acceptance and connection to school

In two of the studies from the U.S (Carey et al., 2022; Smith & Hope, 2020) and one from the U.K (Boyd, 2021), CYP perceived that to form a connection to their school; there was an implicit expectation that they had to change aspects of their Black identity. Fordham (1988) described this as employing a strategy of racelessness which occurred when Black individuals were navigating spaces where they were viewed as being a minority. Fordham (1988) argued that to assimilate into spaces dominated by other groups; Black individuals can try to disaffiliate with characteristics associated with Blackness. CYP in the studies described how this included aspects such as subduing the tone of their voice (Smith & Hope, 2020), their personality (Boyd, 2021), and distancing themselves from Black peers to avoid being associated with stereotypes (Smith & Hope, 2020). CYP also described changing aspects of their identity to connect with and gain acceptance in school. This implied that they felt the onus was on them to change if they were to experience connection, implying a tension between being themselves and feeling connected. It has been argued that the long term use of racelessness has been associated with experiences of ostracization from Black peers (Durkee & Williams, 2015), an increase in levels of anxiety (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Durkee & Gómez, 2022) and negative views towards individual's Black identity (Jones, 2016). Exploring Black CYP's school connectedness experiences has supported a more nuanced understanding of the concept as although school connectedness has been associated with wellbeing (Carney et al., 2017; Shochet & Smith, 2012), CYP's experiences suggest the use of racelessness to support school connectedness might negatively influence wellbeing.

This experience of racelessness can also be examined by utilising acculturation theory. Acculturation theory examines the process of change which might occur when an individual comes into contact with a different culture and has typically been utilised in research pertaining to people who have immigrated to a different country (Bartlett et al., 2017; Karim et al., 2021). Ozer (2017) suggested that a process of stress might occur where individuals might utilise strategies such as preferring the culture of their host country as a form of adaptation. Through utilising an acculturation theory lens, Black CYP in the studies contact with children and staff where they were minoritsed culturally in school might have resulted in the use of strategies such as distancing themselves from their identity as a form of adaptation to school.

1.3.4. What does school connectedness look like for Black CYP?

To answer the SLR review question pertaining to Black CYP's experiences of school connectedness, the following model was used. The model was influenced Bronfenbrenner's (1995) ecological system theory.

Figure 5: What school connectedness might look like for Black CYP

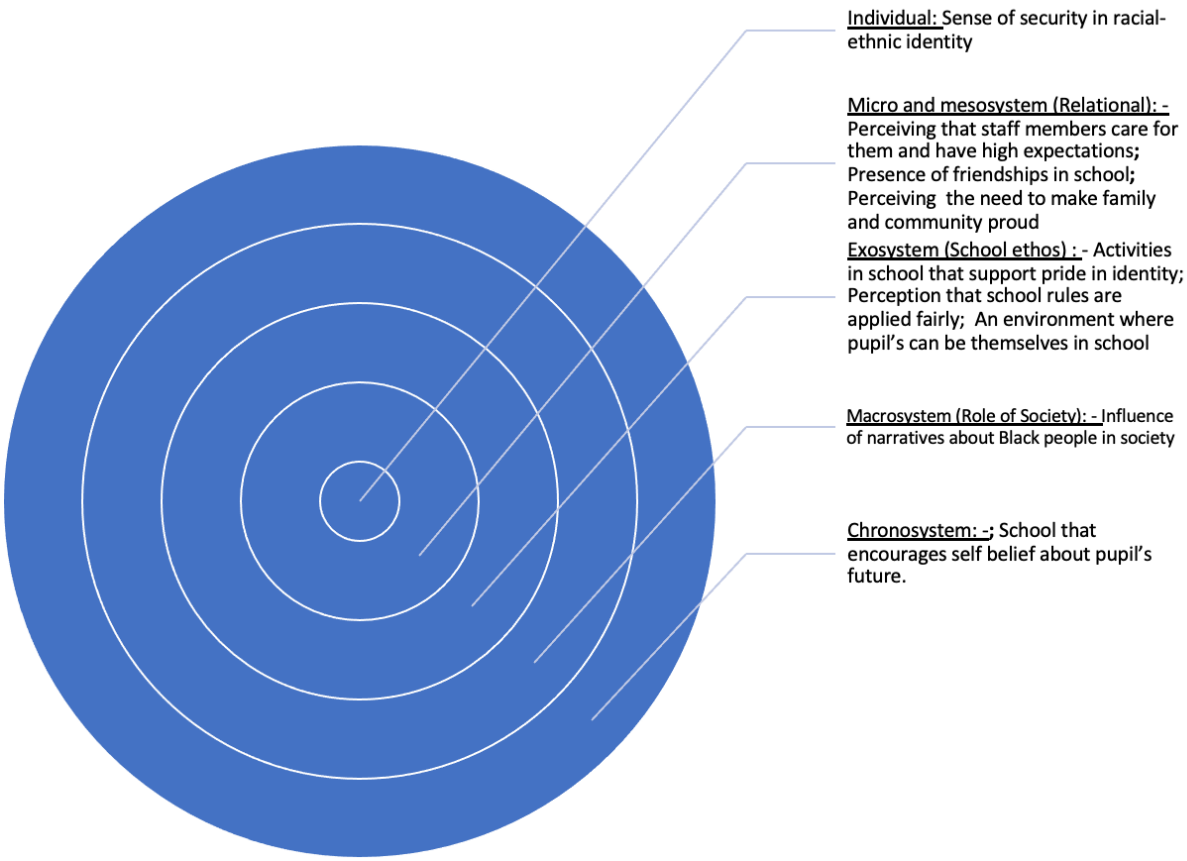


Table 6 below indicates how Black CYP's school connectedness experiences were influenced by the different systems within their ecology.

Table 6: An ecological understanding of Black CYP's school connectedness experiences

System	Description
Individual	Racial-ethnic Identity - School connectedness was supported by CYP's connection to their racial-ethnic identity. This seemed to be influenced by schools' racial-ethnic demographics and the activities schools utilised to support CYP's security in their racial-ethnic identity, which acted as a protective factor

	against discrimination and supported school connectedness (Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016). - A lack of security in CYPs' racial-ethnic identity seemed to be influenced by being viewed as a racial-ethnic minority in their school, resulting in some CYP employing racelessness (Boyd, 2021; Carey et al., 2022; Smith & Hope, 2020) and was a point of tension in being connected to school.
Microsystem and Mesosystem	<u>Relational influences</u> - For some CYP, the positive relationship and influence of their family and community within and between microsystems supported their engagement and experiences of connection to school (Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). - Positive interactions and relationships with teachers and peers where they felt that they mattered and were cared for also seemed to positively support experiences of connection to school (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016).
Exosystem	<u>School Ethos</u> - Schools that prioritised supporting pride in CYP'S racial-ethnic identity through activities such as facilitating discussion and interventions to develop CYP's understanding of their racial-ethnic identity (Boyd, 2021; Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016) supported instances of connection to school. - School disciplinary policies, which were viewed as implemented fairly for children of all racial-ethnic groups, supported instances of connection to school (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; Smith & Hope, 2020).
Macrosystem	<u>Societal influence</u> - Stereotypical narratives of race negatively affected CYP's school connectedness. Narratives about Black people in the media negatively influenced staff and peers' attitudes towards them (Boyd, 2021; Carey et al., 2020; Chapman &

	Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Smith & Hope, 2020), resulting in adultification (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Grace & Nelson, 2019) and disconnection to school.
Chronosystem	<u>Supporting a positive future perspective</u> - Schools supporting a positive perspective of CYP's future supported school connectedness. CYP shared that schools which supported motivation and a positive perspective about their future through trips and providing internships (Brooms, 2019; Slaten et al., 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020) supported school connectedness.

1.4. Limitations of the systematic review

There are some limitations in the conduct of this review which need to be considered. It is acknowledged that as I completed the research alone, the judgments made regarding aspects such as search strategies, selection of papers, and quality appraisal were subjective and influenced by my own worldview and conceptualisation of school connectedness.

A further limitation of the study is its generalisability, given the samples used to gather data in the studies reported. In six of the studies, only Black boys reflected on their experiences of school connectedness, and the review might be more representative of Black boys' experiences of school connectedness. Additionally, as I only included studies fitting my conceptualisation of school connectedness, this influenced the papers included in the review. The inclusion of studies which conceptualised school connectedness as solely focusing on 'teacher connectedness' might have resulted in the inclusion of more studies which explored Black girls' experiences.

1.5. Implications for research and practice

Only two of the studies included participants from the U.K. To further increase an understanding of CYP's experiences of school connectedness and the enablers and barriers of school connectedness, research exploring the perspective of young people in the U.K. might be beneficial.

The findings of this synthesis have also suggested that Black CYPs' experiences of school connectedness in secondary school are affected by aspects such as relationships with family, teachers and peers; the school ethos and how this supports security in children's

racial-ethnic identity; and the influence of societal factors such as narratives in the media about Black people. In their role, Educational Psychologists (EPs) work within school systems supporting children, parents and school staff (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006) as well as supporting inclusion within school systems (Farrell, 2006). EPs might find it helpful to explore the concept of school connectedness with school staff and how the context of their school and the wider environment influence Black CYPs' experiences, taking into account intersectional lenses (Crenshaw, 2006). In their work with children, EPs might also find it beneficial to explore Black CYPs' views of school connectedness and the different factors that affect their experiences in school to help guide their own practice while supporting them.

1.6. Conclusion

This review has aimed to explore Black Young People's experiences of school connectedness in secondary school and the factors that might act as enablers, barriers and tensions. The review was guided by Thomas and Harden's (2008) steps for conducting a thematic synthesis. The study findings suggested that Black CYP's experience of school connectedness was influenced by a complexity of factors requiring an intersectional lens involving aspects such as their security in their racial-ethnic identity, relationships with their teachers, how welcoming they view their school environment, and the influence of the wider society. However, the notion of being connected to school was also a point of tension for some CYP when they were a racial-ethnic minority in their school as they perceived that they had to utilise racelessness to support school connectedness.

Chapter 2: Bridging Document – Moving from the Systematic Review to the Empirical Study

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the link between the systematic review and empirical study. I will also discuss my personal motivations and philosophical assumptions that influenced the research. I will then discuss the rationale behind the methodological decisions made while designing the empirical study and the ethical considerations involved.

2.1.1. Focus from Systematic Literature Review to Empirical Research

Findings from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) utilised an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Waters, 2009) to understand Black CYP in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K.'s experiences of school connectedness (See Chapter 1, p. 34). The findings from the review suggested that positive relationships with school staff and peers and the positive influence of CYP's parents and community in their mesosystem were central to supporting experiences of connectedness to school (Brooms, 2019; Carey et al., 2022; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019). The findings also highlighted that some CYP employed racelessness by trying to disaffiliate from characteristics they associated with being Black to help navigate being a racial-ethnic minority in their school. This suggests that some CYP experience tension between being themselves and feeling connected.

Warmington et al. (2018) highlighted that there is a scarcity of research with an explicit focus on race in British education, and the systematic review also suggested that the majority of studies aiming to understand Black CYP's perspectives of school connectedness were conducted in the U.S. with a limited number of studies conducted in the U.K. In five of the studies included in the review (Boyd, 2021; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; McPherson, 2020; Slaten et al., 2016; Smith & Hope, 2020), researchers suggested the need for further research aiming to explore the nuanced experiences of Black CYP in school. In considering the empirical project, I was therefore interested in further exploring this through researching the perspectives of Black children and parents in the North-East of England, an area in which I am on placement in. Nayak (2008) argued that a focus in research on geographically multi-racial areas ignores how race is grappled with in relatively monoracial areas. The Office for National Statistics (2021) census data indicates that of all regions in England, the North-East of England has the lowest percentage of people identifying as Black (1%). Given

Nayak's (2008) argument, this suggests that exploring Black children's and their families' experiences in the North-East of England is important.

Rowe et al. (2007) suggested that it is important to recognise the role of families and communities in influencing school connectedness. As discussed in the SLR Findings (See Chapter 1, p. 28), the positive influence and encouragement of CYP's parents and community in their mesosystem supported their experiences of school connectedness. Mngaza (2020) also considered Black parents' views and experiences of navigating the education system as 'untapped stories' (Pg.110). For this reason, I decided to explore Black children and their parents' experiences of school connectedness.

2.1.2. Personal Rationale

I was interested in the experiences of Black children and parents who are a minoritised group within the North-East of England with a less ethnically diverse population, as my own school experience was different. I attended a majority Black school that celebrated diversity, a factor that supported my sense of pride and connectedness to school and acted as a protective barrier against instances of racial discrimination. When I moved to the North-East of England to pursue a doctorate in Educational Psychology, I was struck by the lack of Black people in the region. I was curious about their experiences as they may differ from those living in culturally diverse cities such as London or Birmingham.

I was also influenced by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement in the U.S., as well as the protests that ensued in the U.K. and around the world to demonstrate solidarity and encourage reflection about the U.K.'s own history of colonialism and racism (Joseph–Salisbury et al., 2020; Weine et al., 2020). I have worked as a Teaching Assistant in the U.K. and have, at times, witnessed instances of Black Children and staff being viewed through racially stereotypical lenses by school staff and children. Additionally, conversations with friends and family members from minoritised backgrounds about their experiences in the English education system as pupils and parents suggested that racial inequalities and discrimination were still a present feature of their experiences in school. In these situations, there seemed to be a lack of clarity about what support is available for Black children, staff, and parents when instances of racial discrimination occurred and how a sense of disconnection from school might be avoided. As a TEP, I am interested in exploring how EPs might support CYPs' experiences of school connectedness and support schools with creating an ethos where CYP do not view that they need to employ racelessness to experience school connectedness. The British Psychological Society (2017) states that

psychologists should be able to work with and support individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds, and in their role, EPs support students, parents and school staff in education settings (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006). Thus, I intended to utilise this empirical project to explore the school connectedness experiences of parents and children and then to take these experiences to a team of EPs to support their exploration of the implications for their practice.

2.2. Ontology, Epistemology and philosophical positioning

Willig (2013) described ontology as a positioning which aims to understand what there is to know and is interested in the nature of the world. Fryer (2020) described ontology as the belief that there is a world that exists independent of the researcher conducting research. The ontological positioning of this study was one of realism as I believe that there is a reality consisting of aspects such as structural racism, school, and school connectedness.

Willig (2013) described epistemology as a philosophy concerned with knowledge and attempting to understand “how and what can we know” (Pg. 4). The epistemological positioning of this study was subjectivist. Fryer (2020) discussed that subjectivism believes that research is fallible and dependent on aspects such as the theory used to conceptualise concepts and engage in research. As will be described later, this study was influenced by theories such as critical race theory.

The empirical study drew upon a critical realist positioning. My understanding of critical realism is that it assumes that there is a reality and that reality can be understood by individuals in how they make meaning of their experiences and perspectives (Easton, 2010). In relation to the empirical project, Black children and their parents will have their own unique experiences and perspectives on their reality of school connectedness, which will be explored. In critical realism, individuals' theories about reality influence their interests and methods of understanding reality (Bentall, 1999). The empirical study then attempted to utilise my own interests influenced by my current view of the world, utilising theories such as Critical Race Theory to explore Black CYP’s and parents’ views of school connectedness and EP’s reflections on these experiences.

This study also aimed to go beyond centring the voice of Black children and parents. Boykin et al. (2020) argued that there is a danger of fatigue that might occur when individuals from minoritised communities continually discuss instances of racism and inequalities with no

form of action occurring afterwards. In an attempt to avoid this, I aimed to use Black children and parents' school connectedness experiences to contribute to dialogue with EPs about their own practice, and in doing so, I espoused a transformative worldview. The transformative worldview aims to support change by centring the experiences of marginalised groups (Mertens, 2010). Mertens (2010) discussed that it aims to create change for individuals involved in the research by acknowledging that although people have their own experience of reality, this reality is influenced by aspects such as power and social positioning. Van der Riet and Boettiger (2009) further suggested that change is more likely to be effective if the people for whom change might occur are involved in the process. However, given the potential difficulties with having EPs, children, and parents meet to engage in dialogue, I aimed to mitigate this by facilitating dialogue between them using the perspectives of parents and children. It was aimed that centring the experiences of Black parents and children while engaging EPs in dialogue would support EPs with understanding Black parents and children's experiences and also reflect on the possible implications for their practice.

2.3. Methodology of the study

Willig (2013) argued that qualitative researchers are often interested in understanding people's experiences of the world. In the study, I utilised a qualitative methodology as I was aiming to understand Black CYP and parents' experiences of school connectedness as well as EPs' perspectives about the implications of these experiences. In the first stage of the study, which explored the experiences of Black children and their parents, semi-structured interviews were utilised with children to support exploring their school connectedness experiences. Due to their potential commitments, parents were offered two options between semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. In the second stage of the study, which aimed to support dialogue with a group of EPs based on the analysis of data collected in stage one, a focus group was conducted with EPs to explore changes in thinking and possible implications for their practice. Considerations pertaining to the decision-making underlying interview, questionnaire and focus group data collection methods are discussed below in Table 7.

Table 7: Considerations of interviews, questionnaires and focus groups for research

Utilising semi-structured interviews for research with children and parents		
Benefits	**Risks**	**Approaches to mitigation**
- Able to flexibly follow an interview schedule while also follow up and delve deeper into discussions that are important to participants (O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017) about school connectedness - Participants who are more comfortable expressing themselves verbally might prefer utilising interviews - Inexpensive method	- There is a risk of limited responses from participants if they feel uncomfortable sharing their responses with an unfamiliar individual (Kakilla, 2021)	- The use of toolbox visual methods (Clark et al., 2013) to support with reducing power imbalances and supporting children's agency - Interview questions were sent to participants before the interview took place to enable participants time to consider the questions and avoid the discomfort of being asked questions about issues they were unprepared for - To support with promoting a sense of familiarity, participants were provided with information sheets (See appendix C and F) which provided information about myself, and the aims of the research - Participants were informed that if they were uncomfortable, they did not have to answer any questions and could terminate the interviews - Nonverbal communication skills, such as active listening, were supportive in developing trust and rapport, as well as supporting participants with feeling comfortable when discussing their experiences of school connectedness
Utilising virtual interviews for research with children and parents		
Benefits	**Risks**	**Approaches to mitigation**

- Virtual interviews might support participants being more comfortable during the process as interviews are held in a location convenient for participants (Gray, Wong-Wylie, et al., 2020) - Participants will not have to travel for interviews (Gray, Wong-Wylie, et al., 2020) - Inexpensive method	- Difficulties with developing rapport due to the virtual medium - Technical difficulties might be experienced during interviews - Limitations in using visual 'toolbox' activities together due to virtual medium - Some participants might not be comfortable using virtual methods for interviews (Sah et al., 2020)	-Researcher developing familiarity with Zoom and tools that might support with completing visual 'toolbox' activities (Clark et al., 2013) virtually such as the 'whiteboard function before interviews - Providing participants with the option of in-person or virtual interviews
Utilising open-ended questionnaires for research with parents		
Benefits	**Risks**	**Approaches to mitigation**
- In open-ended questionnaires, participants might be more comfortable sharing as much as they want (Albudaiwi, 2017) about their perspectives on school connectedness through writing - Participants can complete questionnaires at a time and space convenient for them - Inexpensive method	- Low completion rates - Participants can be deterred by extensive and confusing questionnaire items (Bartram, 2019) - Unable to delve deeper into participants' responses (Bartram, 2019)	- If participants consented to research, discussions about mutually convenient timescales of research during the information meeting took place - Providing contact details so that participants could contact me if any items were unclear - Piloting questionnaires to gain feedback about questionnaire items

Utilising focus groups for research with EPs		
Benefits	**Risks**	**Approaches to mitigation**
- Focus groups can support with understanding the views and perspectives of a group of people (O. Nyumba et al., 2018). In this study, I am interested in understanding changes in EP's thinking after listening to Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness. - Inexpensive method	-Discussions can tend to be dominated by some voices (Smithson, 2000) - Individuals might be hesitant about expressing their viewpoints in focus groups due to power imbalances as focus groups were conducted with some participants having managerial responsibilities over others - Individuals might not be comfortable engaging deeply in discussion due to the perceived sensitivity of the topic - Difficulties finding a time that is convenient for all EPs in LA	-Use of diamond ranking activities during focus group as activity oriented focus groups are described as supportive for facilitating discussion about sensitive topics (Colucci, 2007) which in this study pertained to racial-ethnic identity - Engaging in focus group discussions in two smaller groups as opposed to a large group to support EPs with viewing that they might be better able to express their viewpoints - The use of anonymous pre- and post-focus group questionnaires to support EPs in expressing their views without the influence of dominant voices, concerns about power imbalances or other EPs' views about their opinions - Facilitating focus group during team meeting, a time that is convenient for most EPs, and informing them about focus group date in advance - To support focus group discussion, questions, as well as discussion points, were sent to EPs before the focus group took place

2.3.1. Thematic Narrative Analysis

Thematic narrative analysis was utilised for my data analysis method. Riessman (1993) suggested that Thematic Narrative Analysis is an approach that is useful for understanding "the told – informants' reports of events and experiences" (Pg. 54). This approach was chosen due to its focus on understanding individuals' narrative as well as understanding what might influence these experiences in relation to factors such as the social, political, cultural or structural context (Riessman, 1993; Ronkainen et al., 2016; Sandberg, 2022). In this study, thematic narrative analysis supported with understanding how participants made meaning of experiences while considering wider structures such as school systems, race or socioeconomic status. In considering a wider context that might influence Black children and parents' experiences, Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) was utilised to support with providing an analysis of race in relation to education.

2.3.2. Critical Race Theory

Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2016) suggested that CRT could be used as an explanatory tool to support with deepening understanding of the barriers marginalised groups might experience in education and how these barriers can be overcome. CRT was utilised in the study as I viewed it as a helpful tool for structuring an analysis of race in education in relation to Black parents' and CYP's experiences of school connectedness.

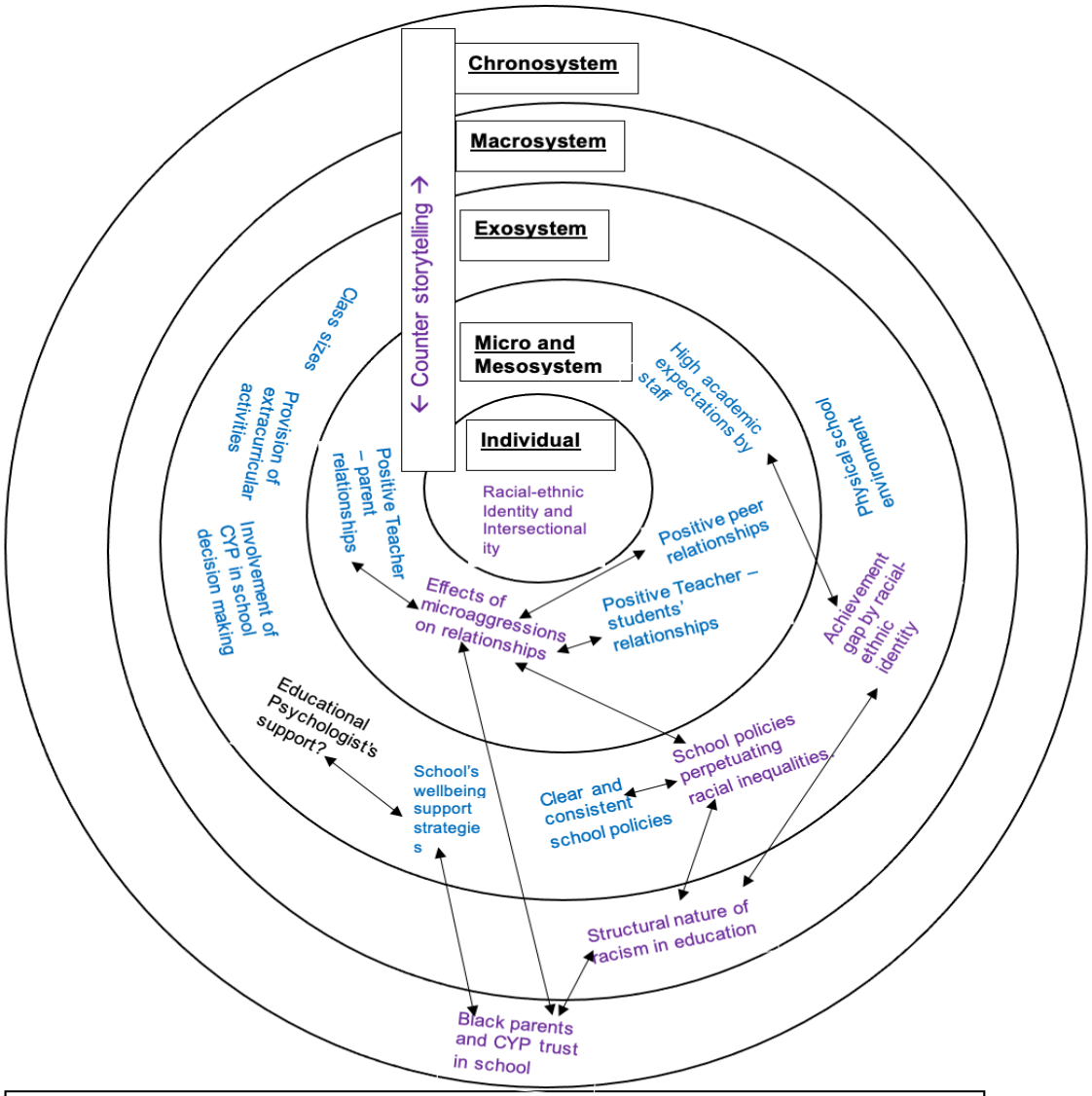
The CRT themes which influenced the study involved:

- *The permanence of racism,* this theme is based on the assumption that racism (racial inequalities and discrimination) operates on a structural level through policies and institutional practices and is embedded within political, economic, and educational spheres (Delgado, 2017; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018)
- *Counter storytelling*, this theme aims to centre the experiences of marginalised groups with the aims of shifting dominant perspectives and support the creation of new, alternative perspectives (Delgado, 2017). It was aimed that this would enable a thickening of the stories of Black parents and children in the North-East of England. The second aim of counter storytelling involves aiming to begin redressing the inequalities which have been shared by individuals (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2016). It was aimed that in this study, engaging in discussion with EPs would support considerations of the implications of these narratives to their practice in potentially beginning the process of change.
- *Intersectionality* is a term which was coined by Crenshaw (2006). Crenshaw (2006) discussed how intersectionality denotes how an individual's varying identities, such as race, gender or class, intersect to shape their experiences. Ahmed (2012) also

discussed how intersectionality can act as a tool to support with thinking about power relations. Intersectionality was utilised to support an understanding of how Black boys' and Black girls' experiences of school connectedness might differ and how gender identities might influence this difference.

The figure below indicates how CRT influenced by Delgado (2017), and Gillborn and Ladson-Billings (2016) was used alongside the influence of Waters (2010) ecological conceptualisation (See Chapter 1, p. 11) of school connectedness to understand Black parents and children's experiences of school connectedness, and EPs perspectives about implications for their work.

Figure 6: Model showing an application of CRT to support an understanding of school connectedness experiences.



2.4. Reflexivity

Willig (2013) argued that reflexivity involves the researcher being conscious of and acknowledging how their values, beliefs, identity, and experiences have influenced the research process. Willig (2013) also argued that reflexivity involves the researcher considering how their own views might have changed during the research process and how their reactions, thoughts and feelings during the research process have influenced their understanding.

My current views about racial inequality have shaped the decision-making pertaining to the use of CRT to inform my analysis of race and racism in education. I view racial inequalities and racism as operating on a structural level through policies and practices in society. This perspective was influenced by my upbringing in South Africa, where the process of redressing racial inequalities created as a result of Apartheid and colonialism is viewed as a societal process (Badat & Sayed, 2014; Kamsteeg, 2016; Ndhlovu, 2019). Thus, I did not consider personality or familial influences (Sewell, 1997; Sewell, 2010), which other researchers have when discussing factors which might influence experiences of racial inequalities and racism in education.

Throughout the research process, my own positionality of being an insider, as a Black woman, as well as being an outsider, as a researcher and TEP, was a source of personal tension which I navigated. When completing interviews with parents and children, I was often referred to through terms such as ‘we’ and ‘us’. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) described this as the insider-outsider perspective. This meant that although I am not from the North-East of England, I was at times able to relate to some of the experiences of being Black in the North-East of England, such as having to navigate interactions whilst being the only Black person in a space, a term which has been referred to as being a space invader (Puwar, 2004). Ahmed (2012) proposed that this sense of being in-between is associated with a sense of estrangement, which shifts the researcher’s perspective to consider new viewpoints they had not considered before. Throughout the interview as well as the analysis process, my own perspectives of being Black in the North-East of England were enriched and shifted through interactions with participants and through engaging with different theorisations such as adultification and CRT.

Further, in reflecting on the experience of completing research with participants with whom there is a shared identity, I was cognisant that a form of self-inflicted pressure might occur (Limes-Taylor Henderson & Esposito, 2019). Limes-Taylor Henderson and Esposito (2019)

discussed that aspects of Blackness have historically been viewed through the lens of Anti-Blackness influenced by the effects of events such as colonialism and slavery (Busey & Dowie-Chin, 2021; Day, 2015; Limes-Taylor Henderson & Esposito, 2019; Mbembe, 2017); and that this can result in a sense of weariness of the research process from Black participants and pressure from Black researchers. I experienced this sense of pressure, alongside a sense of motivation, during the data collection and analysis process. I feared how I would represent the experiences of participants with whom I had related with during interviews in a manner which might prevent participants from possibly perceiving that they were being judged for their experiences and views. Further reflections on the data collection process are also discussed in Chapter 4, p. 89.

2.5. Ethics

The project received ethical approval from Newcastle University. Central to my study was an awareness of the power imbalance between myself as a TEP, and participants, particularly children. Consent was continually negotiated throughout the research process as well as during interviews. Meetings with parents and children to discuss the project's aims were held, and opportunities to withdraw were provided during this meeting as well as at the beginning and during interviews. Interview questions were also provided before the interviews to support with informed considerations about whether they choose to participate. The ethicality involved in utilising gatekeepers to support with recruitment was also reflected on due to the potential power imbalance between gatekeepers and participants (Davies & Peters, 2014). In consideration of this, potential participants were informed that participation was voluntary through the provision of an information sheet as well as discussion during research information meetings (See Appendix C, F and I).

Additionally, I reflected on the possible harm that might have occurred from participants sharing personal experiences regarding sensitive topics such as race, and the interviews were structured in a manner that aimed to also support discussions about the positive aspects and what they enjoyed about the school environment. In discussions with parents as well as children, positive views were shared about the experience of discussing and exploring their experiences of school connectedness through interviews. I further reflected on aspects such as considerations regarding aftercare and my contact details, as well as those of relevant organisations who might support this was signposted in the debriefing sheet (See Appendix E, H and K). Families and organisations that had participated in the research raised that the research findings being shared with them at the end of the project were important to them, and reflections on dissemination can be viewed in Chapter 4, p. 92.

Considerations regarding my physical and psychological safety were also continually reflected on. One of my interviews was a home visit, and my physical safety was maintained by making my supervisor aware of the visit. The founder of the organisation which supported recruitment was also kept informed of and remained in contact with me before and after the home visit. As discussed by Mitchell and Irvine (2008), in interviews where sensitive issues might be discussed, researchers might benefit from sharing their emotions and thoughts in a sensitive and confidential manner with others to support their own emotional well-being. My emotional well-being was maintained by engaging in debriefs about the interviews and research with my supervisor during supervision, confidentially engaging in discussion with fellow TEPs who were involved in research about a similar research area, as well as engaging in discussion with friends who had lived experience of the research area.

My own positioning as a TEP on placement in the EPS (Educational Psychology Service), in which I was facilitating a focus group, was a source of tension during the data analysis phase. As previously discussed, the decision to facilitate the focus group in the service in which I was on placement was taken as it was viewed that it would be supportive in creating an atmosphere of trust during the focus group. However, factors such as power imbalances between myself as a TEP who was facilitating a focus group with EPs more senior than myself, as well as the relationships I had formed with individuals in the service were aspects that I was cognisant of during the data analysis process as well as the reporting of findings. Råheim et al. (2016) discussed how power relations can influence research when researchers are conducting research with individuals who might have expertise in knowledge or possess a superior role to the researcher, a term described as "studying up" (p. 2) and I often considered how the EPs who participated in the focus group might interpret my own interpretation of the focus group while writing up findings. I then often had to reflect on and centre the wider purpose of the research, such as aiming to understand EP's perspectives about Black children and parents' school connectedness experiences within the wider context of race and education, which Aydarova (2019) discussed was important when engaging in research with individuals who might possess higher positions of power than the researcher.

Chapter 3: A study exploring sense of school connectedness amongst Black parents and secondary school aged children and the implications for Educational Psychology practice in the North-East of England

Abstract

This research explored the school connectedness experiences of Black children and their parents in the North-East of England. It also aimed to explore Educational Psychologists' perspectives about the implications of Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness on their work. In the first stage of the research, interviews with four children and their parents were conducted to understand their experiences of school connectedness. Data was analysed using thematic narrative analysis, influenced by Critical Race Theory. Themes that emerged from Black children's experiences of school connectedness involved: an ethic of care from staff, having to search for connection outside the classroom, searching for acceptance while embracing their difference, and the structural nature of racism. The themes that emerged from Black parents' experiences of school connectedness involved children having to harness connection outside the classroom, a sense of ambivalence about whether school staff care for their children, and that more could be done to support parent-school relationships. The importance of relationality and mattering were central concepts which supported children's and parents' experiences of school connectedness. In the second stage of the research, a focus group was facilitated with Educational Psychologists to explore changes in thinking and practice upon listening to Black children's and parents' experiences of school connectedness. Data was analysed using thematic narrative analysis. Findings involved changes in Educational Psychologists' perspectives when working with children, parents, and schools and considerations about the EP role in engaging in systemic work.

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3.1. Introduction

The aim of the empirical project was to explore Black Children and their parents' experiences of school connectedness in the North-East of England as well as Educational Psychologists' (EPs) perspectives on the implications of these experiences for their own work. The introduction will discuss the background of the study focussing on Black children's experience of racial inequalities in education, the importance of school connectedness and the aims of the project.

3.1.1. Background

The importance of this project was based on the current socio-political context, research, and U.K law. In 2020, footage of the murder of an unarmed American Black man, George Floyd, went viral, and protests led by the Black Lives Matter movement ensued in the U.S. and globally (Dreyer et al., 2020). Protests were also held in the U.K. to demonstrate solidarity and encourage reflection on the U.K.'s own history of colonialism and racism (Joseph–Salisbury et al., 2020; Weine et al., 2020). It was felt that despite the introduction of the 2010 Equalities Act, providing legal protection for people on the basis of protected characteristics such as age, race and gender (Government Equalities Office, 2010), continued racial inequalities remained present (Joseph–Salisbury et al., 2020).

The Timpson Review found that students of Black Caribbean heritage, as well as those of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage, were more likely to be permanently excluded from education (DfE, 2019). Additionally, we know from the seminal work of Coard (1971) to more recent evidence (Strand, 2012) that low expectations of Black students from school staff are considered to influence their academic success. Burgess and Greaves (2009) found that in comparison to blind marked assessments, teacher assessments in SATS were five times lower for Black Caribbean pupils and six times lower for Black African students. Although explanations for these inequalities are complex, Demie and McLean (2017) suggested this might be due to the role of factors such as institutional racism within education, low expectations of staff about students as well as a lack of leadership from headteachers on equality issues. Experiences of racial inequalities in school might result in Black children perceiving that they are not treated fairly in school, which has been found to negatively influence experiences of school connectedness (Neely, 2020; Waters, 2010).

3.1.2. School connectedness and why it might be important.

There have been differing conceptualisations of school connectedness. School connectedness has often been described as the presence of an academic environment where students believe that adults care about them as individuals and their academic progress (Blum, 2005; Kim et al., 2022). García-Moya et al. (2019) suggested that school connectedness definitions often refer to an individual's feelings towards school and their relationships with school members, or it can be used to specifically refer to an individual's perception of their relationships with others in school. School connectedness has also been conceptualised as occurring at the interpersonal level through relationships with staff and at the institutional level through engagement with aspects of school such as school policies (Thomas & Parker, 2021; Whitlock, 2006). Although there are different definitions of school connectedness, the commonalities amongst the different conceptualisations seem to focus on relational factors on how children's relationships with others influence connectedness (García-Moya et al., 2019; Gowing, 2019; Whitlock, 2006).

School connectedness has been described as a factor that might support aspects of children's mental health and well-being (Carney et al., 2017; Shochet & Smith, 2012). Supporting CYPs' (Children and Young People) mental health and well-being in school is also an area that has been prioritised by the Department for Education (Department for Education, 2017). It has been argued that increased levels of school connectedness might be associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression (Lester et al., 2013; McCabe et al., 2022; Shochet et al., 2006) as well as increased resilience when experiencing difficulties in school (Oldfield et al., 2018).

It has further been suggested that school connectedness is positively associated with academic engagement (Neel & Fuligni, 2013), well-being (defined as children's satisfaction and feelings towards their life) (Han, 2021), and motivation to complete school (McWhirter et al., 2018). However, there seems to be differing experiences of school connectedness influenced by racial-ethnic identity (See Chapter 1, p. 9 for definition) (Anyon et al., 2016; Jones & Lee, 2022; Wilkins et al., 2023).

3.1.3. Black children's experiences of school connectedness

Research in Canada (Patte et al., 2021) and the U.S. (Parris et al., 2018) has suggested that Black children report having lower levels of school connectedness in comparison with children of other racial-ethnic identities. The reasons for this seem to be complex, with Nasir et al. (2011) suggesting that patterns of connection and disconnection to school vary

depending on student factors such as their positionality, involving aspects such as their age, racial or academic identity, and institutional factors, such as stability of administrative and teaching staffing. However, Thomas and Parker (2021) argued that definitions of school connectedness do not always lend themselves to consider the complexity of children's lives. Thomas and Parker (2021), as well as Gaska (2012), argued how some students' experiences of school connectedness might be influenced by wider factors such as the effects of racism experienced in their school, their socioeconomic status, or their experiences in their home and community environment. This suggests that using an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) (See Chapter 1, p. 10) might be beneficial when considering children's experiences of school connectedness to help consider the interplay of these systems that pupils inhabit and the impact of structural factors such as racism.

An ecological definition of school connectedness has previously been conceptualised by Waters (2010) as involving the structural, functional and built environment. Please see Table 8 for further information.

Table 8: Waters (2010) ecological conceptualisation of school connectedness

Aspect of school environment	Description
Structural environment	School size, resources for pastoral care, and school type
Functional environment	School behaviour policies, student involvement in decision-making, academic expectations for students and students' relationship with staff.
Built environment	Presence of green spaces and the upkeep of a school

However, this ecological conceptualisation of school connectedness did not refer to racial-ethnic identity or the impact of experiences such as racism on school connectedness. Researchers have also suggested that there is a need for further research exploring the nuance of Black children's experiences of school connectedness (Eugene et al., 2021; Wilson, 2017) and the impact of wider factors such as how racism experienced in school or in their wider home and community context might impact school connectedness (Gaska, 2012; Thomas & Parker, 2021). Using an ecological perspective in the study might support understanding Black children's perspectives of how interactions with their school and wider

environmental context, including aspects such as race or socioeconomic status, might influence school connectedness.

3.1.4. Rationale

Rationale for the focus on the North-East of England

Nayak (2008) discussed how the tendency to focus on areas of England with higher multiracial populations contributes to the view that more monoracial areas do not grapple with topics such as the issue of race. The Office for National Statistics (2021) census data indicates that the North-East of England as a region has the smallest percentage in England of people identifying as Black (1%). However, Vickers et al. (2016) discussed that this region is also experiencing rapid change in migration patterns resulting in increased racial-ethnic diversity. Alongside this increase in migration into the North-East of England, the U.K Government has prioritised reducing net migration through the introduction of the illegal migration bill (Home Office, 2023) and plans to implement restrictions on international students being able to bring dependants while completing their studies (Morgen, 2022) which might result in anti-migration views in the region. It has also been suggested that an increase in diversity due to factors such as migration can negatively impact community cohesion (Neal, 2017; Rochira, 2018), which might impact children's experiences of connection to their community and school. Thus, this study aimed to focus on school connectedness experiences of Black parents and secondary school children in the region. Secondary school children were focussed on as literature argued school connectedness tends to decrease with age, from childhood into adolescence (Anderman, 2003; Niehaus et al., 2012) suggesting a need to explore how to promote school connectedness specifically during this period.

Neely (2020) also suggested there is a need for research into school connectedness to capture the views of Black students and families due to there being a limited understanding of how racial-ethnic identity might influence school connectedness experiences. This project aimed to understand school connectedness from the perspectives of Black secondary school students and parents based in the North-East of England. The reason for the focus on Black parents' experiences of school connectedness is because Rowe et al. (2007) suggested that further clarity about school connectedness can be gained by recognising the role of families and communities in influencing experiences of school connectedness. These experiences were then utilised as a basis for exploration of EP practice and shifts in thinking.

Rationale for the Focus on Educational Psychology Practice

The Educational Psychology profession is described as predominately White, with 83% of EP's currently registered to the HCPC identifying as being White (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2021). The British Psychological Society's competencies for practice also state that EPs should be able to "demonstrate knowledge and understanding of race, religion or belief, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social class and their intersection as relevant to professional practice" (British Psychological Society, 2022, p. 20). However, Sleeter (2017) suggested that one of the functions of Whiteness, a term used to describe how White people's understanding of race might be influenced by aspects such as power and privilege, is that White people are not always aware of practices that sustain racial inequalities. Wright (2020) suggested that making the experiences of people who are racialised such as Black visible, might support with providing opportunities for reflection and creating possibilities of change. It was aimed that centring the school connectedness experiences of Black parents and children might be utilised as a basis for exploration of EP practice.

3.1.5. Aims of the study

The study aimed to address the following questions:

- What are Black secondary school students' perspectives of the barriers and facilitators of school connectedness?
- What are Black Parents'/carers' perspectives of school connectedness in light of their child's experiences?
- How might Educational Psychologists support Black secondary school students' sense of school connectedness?

3.2. Method

3.2.1. Methodology and Design

Qualitative researchers are interested in people's understanding and experiences of the world (Willig, 2013), befitting the nature of the research questions of this study. A critical realism positioning (Please see Chapter 2, p. 40) influenced an understanding of Black children and their parents' unique differing experiences and perspectives with regards to their reality of school connectedness. A transformative positioning (Please see Chapter 2, p. 41) also influenced an understanding of EPs' changes in thinking and their perspectives about implications for their work after listening to the experiences of Black parents and children.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) influenced the study in three ways (See Chapter 2, p. 45, for an outline of CRT themes which influenced the study). A cognisance of CRT informed interview questions about how children's racial-ethnic identity influenced their experiences of school connectedness (See Appendix L). CRT also influenced the analysis of interviews as a lens through which to understand participants' voices. Boykin et al. (2020) discussed the dangers of, as well as the fatigue that might occur when individuals from minoritised communities continually discuss instances of racism and inequalities with no form of action occurring afterwards. Thus, CRT influenced the choice to record Black children's and parents' counter-narratives, and then use these counternarratives to explore EPs' perspectives as a form of action.

3.2.2. Research Design

Design of children and parent research method

In the first stage, semi-structured interviews were utilised as a research method for exploring the views of Black secondary school children and parents. O'Reilly and Dogra (2017) suggested that semi-structured interviews might support researchers by flexibly using a schedule of interview questions while also being guided by participants' views. The interview schedule for children was informed by Waters et al. (2010) ecological definition of school connectedness and CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023) (See Appendix L). For detailed methodological considerations, see Chapter 2, p. 42.

Parents were offered two options in view of their commitments (open-ended questionnaires or semi-structured interviews). Gendall et al. (1996) contended that questionnaires might act as a convenient data collection method as participants can respond at a time and pace of their convenience. The interview and questionnaire items were informed in the same way as children's interviews.

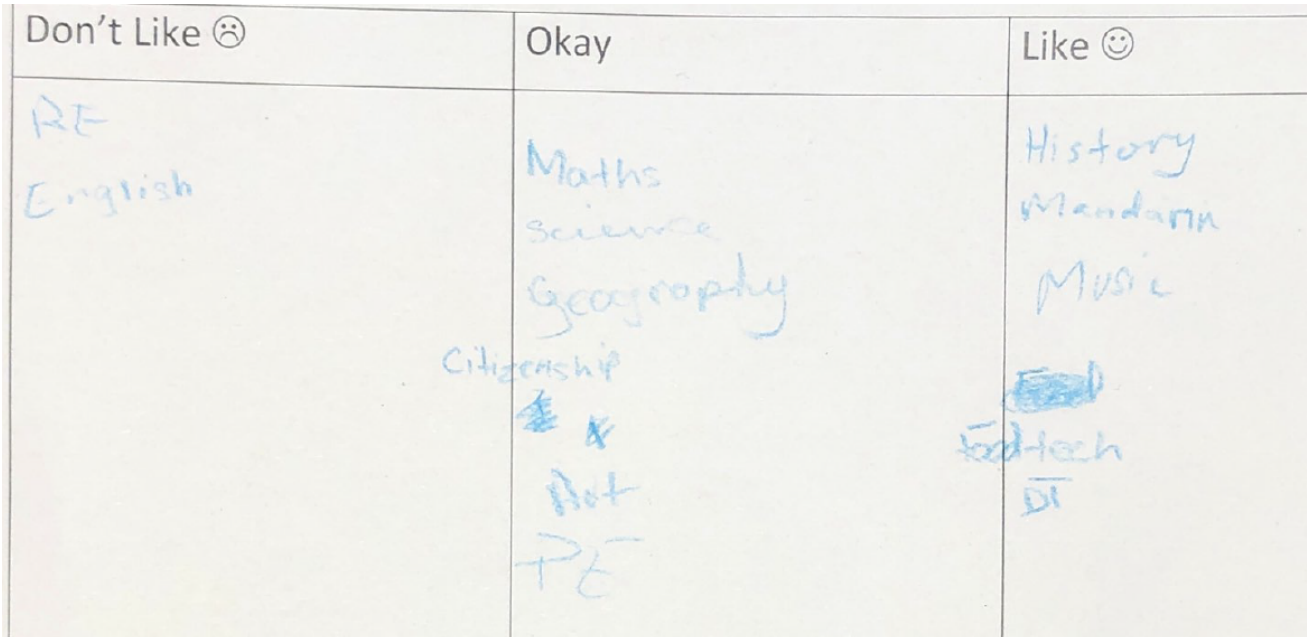
The children's and parents' interview schedules were first piloted with a Black child and their parent from my own social network. Upon receiving feedback from the parent that the questions about school connectedness sometimes encouraged binary responses, I adapted the questions to encourage more open-ended responses. The final interview schedules for children and parents can be viewed in Appendix L and M.

Use of Visual thinking skills method

Alongside the interviews, visual methods were utilised in children's interviews. Haaken and O'Neill (2014) and Lomax (2015) argued that using visual methods might support researchers in working with individuals who might not often engage in research or whose

voices might not often be heard and that this method might support providing a rich understanding of individual's lives (Haaken & O'Neill, 2014; Lomax, 2015). An adapted version of the 'plus, minus, interesting' (Clark et al., 2013) thinking skills method supported discussion regarding initial themes from the SLR synthesis and whether any themes related to their experiences in school. See Appendix N, which also includes an explanation of the method. An adaption of the 'plus, minus, interesting' method was also used to understand children's views about how school lessons affected their experiences of school connectedness. This involved the use of 'like, don't like, okay' and can be viewed in the figure below.

Figure 7: Use of "Don't like, Okay, Like" method relating to aspects of school lessons



Design of focus group for Educational Psychologists

In the second stage, a focus group was conducted with EPs to help form a bridge between insiders' (Black parents and children's) experiences and outsiders' (EPs) perceptions. Focus groups are described as a helpful method when a researcher is interested in the shared insights of participants who have something in common (Goss & Leinbach, 1996), and I was interested in the shared insights and collective reflections of EPs. This was to support in deepening their understanding of Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness and the implications for EPs' work.

During the focus group, EPs completed a Diamond Ranking activity where they ranked the different constructed themes from Black children's and parents' experiences of school connectedness into aspects which they viewed as most relevant for their role. Questions to

understand EP's perspectives about Black children's and parents' experiences of school connectedness were asked at the beginning and end of the focus group to understand if there had been any change in their perspectives. At the end of the focus group, EPs were also asked their perspectives about whether Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness had implications for their practice. Focus group questions and completed diamond ranking activities can be viewed in Appendix O and P.

Table 9 below outlines the research process that was followed.

Table 9: Description of research process

Stage	Research Question addressed	Step within process	Key Activities
1	- What are Black secondary school students' perspectives of the barriers and facilitators of school connectedness? - What are Black Parents'/carers' perspectives of their child's school connectedness?	Step 1.1: Preparation *March – April 2022*	-Gaining ethical approval -Gaining project approval -Considerations of research method and interview questions
		Step 1,2: Recruitment (parents and children) *April 2022 – November 2022*	- Emailing organisations and charities that support Black youth and parents for expressions of interest - Sharing research aims within my social network to support research being shared through referrals -Emailing organisations, charities and groups that expressed interest
		Step 1.3: Pilot Interviews (Parent and child) *July 2022*	-Piloted interview questions with Black child and parent within my social network -Reviewed and revised interview questions and implemented feedback

		Step 1.4A: Introductions (Parent and children) *May 2022 – August 2022*	-Initial information meetings with children and parents to discuss aims of the research, information sheets, consent forms and any questions they might have
		Step 1.4B: Gatekeeper Introductions (Gatekeeper) *May 2022 – July 2022*	-Initial meeting with gatekeepers. Discussed research aims, initial possible disseminations plans, shared information sheets with gatekeepers who then discussed research and passed on information sheets to parents and children. -Upon receiving expressions of interest, engaged in discussion with parents and children about the aims of the research. Also discussed information sheets, consent forms, right to withdraw and any questions they might have
		Step 1.5: Interview planning (children and parents) *July 2022 – September 2022*	-Upon receiving consent forms from (Appendix D, G) children and parents. Contacted children regarding their preference for in-person or virtual interview. Contacted parents regarding their preference for interview or questionnaire.

			-Four children and their parents consented to participate
		Step 1.6: Data collection (children and parents) *September 2022 – October 2022*	-Followed interview schedule with children (Appendix L) -Followed interview schedule with parents (Appendix M) <u>Interview settings</u> 1. Lola's interview was carried out in person, together with her parent (Mother). Lola opted for her parent to be present during interview. Lola's parent opted for an in-person interview. Lola's parent opted for Lola not to be present during her parent interview. 2. Malcolm's interview was carried out in person. Malcolm opted for his parent (Father) not to be present during the interview. Malcolm's parent opted to complete an open-ended questionnaire. 3. Imani's Interview was carried out virtually. Imani opted for her parent (Mother) not be present during the interview. Imani's parent opted to complete an open-ended questionnaire.

			4. Monica's Interview was carried out in person. Monica opted for her parent (Mother) not to be present during the interview. Monica's parent opted for an in-person interview. Monica's parent opted for Monica not to be present during her parent interview
		Step 1.7: Analysis (Children and Parents interviews) *October 2022 – May 2023*	- Analysing data utilising thematic Narrative analysis, influenced by Critical Race Theory (Appendix Q, R)
2	How might Educational Psychologists support Black secondary school students' sense of school connectedness?	Step 2.1: Recruitment (Educational Psychologists (EPs)) *May 2022 – January 2023*	-Emailing Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) and Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist (DPEP) about the research's aims. Enquired about possibility of recruiting participants in EPS (Educational Psychology Service) where I was on placement. - Emailing EPs and TEPs (Trainee Educational Psychologists) in EPS about research aims, sharing information sheets and consent forms
		Step 2.2: Focus group planning (EPs) *December 2022 – January 2023*	-Upon receiving consent forms (Appendix J), emailed DPEP to negotiate date for focus group

		Step 2.3: Focus groups (EPs) *January 2023*	-Followed focus group question schedule (Appendix O) -Followed Diamond Ranking Activity (Appendix P)
		Step 2.4: Analysis (EPs) *January 2023 – May 2023*	-Analysing transcriptions utilising thematic narrative analysis (Appendix R)
		Step 2.5: Next Steps *January 2023 – August 2023*	-Writing up project To be done: -Feeding back to participants and organisations/charities that supported recruitment

The project received ethical approval from Newcastle University and adhered to the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2021). Information, informed consent and debriefing sheets were shared with participants (Please refer to Appendices B-J). Further ethical considerations are discussed in Chapter 2, p. 48.

3.2.3. Thematic Narrative Analysis Process

In the first stage, Thematic narrative analysis was used to support an understanding of how Black children and parents made meaning of their experiences while also considering wider structures such as school systems, race or socioeconomic status. In the second stage, Thematic narrative analysis was utilised to support an understanding of EPs' perspectives about the implications of Black children and parents' narratives in their work while also situating EPs' perspectives in the wider structural context, including their professional, Local Authority and societal contexts.

Walumbe et al. (2016) and Riessman (2008) described the Thematic narrative analysis process as first utilising the thematic analysis process to gain familiarity with the data and construct patterns and themes and then utilising Narrative inquiry to support further interpretation of themes in consideration of wider contexts.

In the study, Braun and Clarke's (2021) six stages of reflexive thematic analysis and Ronkainen et al.'s (2016) process of thematic narrative analysis were followed. This involved

an interactive process as the steps were not always followed in a linear process, and I, at times, had to move between different stages throughout the process, reviewing themes and codes, as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2022). The analysis process is described in table 10 below:

Table 10: Thematic narrative analysis process

1.Data familiarisation	This involved reading and rereading the dataset transcriptions while making notes about any insights about the data (Clarke & Braun, 2021).
2.Data coding.	This involved systematically labelling segments of the data transcript that were interesting or relevant to the research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2021). A codebook extract can be viewed in Appendix Q.
3.Initial theme generation.	This involved identifying shared patterns of meaning in the dataset by combining clusters of codes that had shared meaning and might support answering the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2021).
4.Theme development and review.	This involved returning to the data transcript and reviewing whether there was coherence in the themes in relation to the coded data and transcript. It also involved reviewing themes and their core focus – (central organising concept) in relation to the relationship between each theme, and the context of the research (Clarke & Braun, 2021).
5.Theme refining and naming	This involved refining each theme to ensure that they were centred around a concept (Clarke & Braun, 2021)
6.Narrative analysis	Here, themes were then interpreted through the lens of narrative inquiry with a specific

	focus of exploring the themes in consideration of wider social contexts (Ronkainen et al., 2016)
7.Writing up	This involved telling the story of the dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2021)

A hybrid (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), inductive and deductive approach was utilised during data analysis. A deductive approach was utilised as theorisations such as CRT were used as a lens through which to understand the role of race and racism in Black children's and parents' experiences of school connectedness. For detailed considerations of Critical Race Theory, see Chapter 2, p. 45). An inductive approach was also utilised as theme development during data analysis was driven by the dataset regarding Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness and EPs' perspectives about these experiences (Please refer to Appendix Q for codebook extract). Additionally, Braun and Clarke's (2022) 15-point for good reflexive thematic analysis checklist was utilised to support reflexivity and rigour during the data analysis process.

3.2.4. Research Context

This research took place in three areas of the North-East of England with varying levels of racial-ethnic diversity. Due to the small sample of participants who participated in the research, the areas where the interviews took place will not be named.

3.2.5. Sampling

In the first stage of the study, snowball and purposive sampling were utilised as I was interested in understanding the experiences of individuals I did not have access to. Snowball sampling involves recruiting participants through referrals (Sadler et al., 2010). This approach was utilised as Atkinson and Flint (2001) suggested that in contrast with more formal recruitment methods, informal referrals from acquaintances and peers might better support the development of trust when engaging in research.

Participants were recruited using referrals from my social networks, and through this approach, one child and their parent consented to participate in the project. A Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) networking association was also contacted to support recruitment, and through this approach, one child and their parent consented to participate in the study. Additionally, a community racial justice group was contacted to support recruitment, and through this approach, one child and their parent consented to participate in the project. Bonevski et al. (2014) suggested contacting youth and community groups when

working with minoritised groups might support the development of trust and participation. A youth charity described as an organisation supporting BAME children was also contacted to support recruitment. With the assistance of a gatekeeper who founded the charity, one child and their parent consented to participate in the study. Ethical reflections regarding the impact of using a gatekeeper can be found in Chapter 2, p. 48).

In the second stage of the research, purposive sampling was utilised. Purposive sampling is used when researchers are interested in understanding the views of a specific group of people (Palinkas et al., 2015). In acknowledgement of my insider-outsider positioning (See Chapter 2, p. 47), I purposefully recruited EPs in the Local Authority (LA) I was on placement. This approach was utilised as Tatum (2017) described that discussions around race can sometimes become uncomfortable as individuals might be fearful of causing offence. It was aimed that my existing relationship with EPs would help provide a more supportive atmosphere for dialogue.

3.2.6. Participants

I am aware that Secondary school children are at times referred to as Children or Young People (CYP). However, in an attempt to counter adultification (Epstein, 2017), where Black children are sometimes viewed as adults older than their age, participants will be referred to as Black children throughout the study. Four children and their parents consented to participate in the research project. Only one male child and his father participated in the study. It is acknowledged that the findings might then be more reflective of the experiences of female children and their mothers.

Twelve White EPs who worked for one LA Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in the North-East of England consented to participate in the focus group. This consisted of eight EPs and four Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs).

Further information about the children, their school, their interests as well as their parents is described in Table 11 below. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the research.

Table 11: Summary of participants characteristics

Pseudonym	Year	Gender	School Racial-ethnic demographics	Interests	Children and parent further information	Interview setting

1.Lola	Year 8	Female	Lola described their school as one where the majority of children identified as being white	Enjoys playing clarinet and is passionate about learning mandarin.	Opted for an In-person interview. Their parent (Mother) also opted to participate in an in-person interview.	Opted to complete interview with parent in the room. Parent opted for separate interview
2.Malcolm	Year 9	Male	Malcolm described their school as being diverse with the majority of children being from Asian, Black and White backgrounds	Loves football and would love to become a footballer when he is older	Opted for an In-person interview. Their parent (Father) opted to complete an open-ended questionnaire	Opted to complete interview without parent in the room.
3.Imani	Year 11	Female	Imani described their school as one where the majority of children identified as being white	Enjoys social media such as TikTok and would like to be a doctor when she is older	Opted for a virtual interview. Their parent (Mother) opted to complete an open-ended questionnaire	Opted to complete interview without parent in the room.
4.Monica	Year 11	Female	Monica described their school as being diverse with the majority of	Enjoys dramatic theatre and fashion, would like to work	Opted for an In-person interview. Their parent (Mother) who held a	Child and parent opted for separate interviews

			children being from Asian, Black and White backgrounds	with children when she is older.	position of higher authority in the school and works the youth charity that supported recruitment opted for an in-person interview	

3.3. Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion section will now be presented together, exploring children, then parents' experiences of school connectedness and finally, the findings from the EP focus group.

3.3.1. Children's experiences of school connectedness

Table 13 below provides an overview of the organising themes constructed through the process of analysis. Further information on the theming process can be viewed in Appendix R.

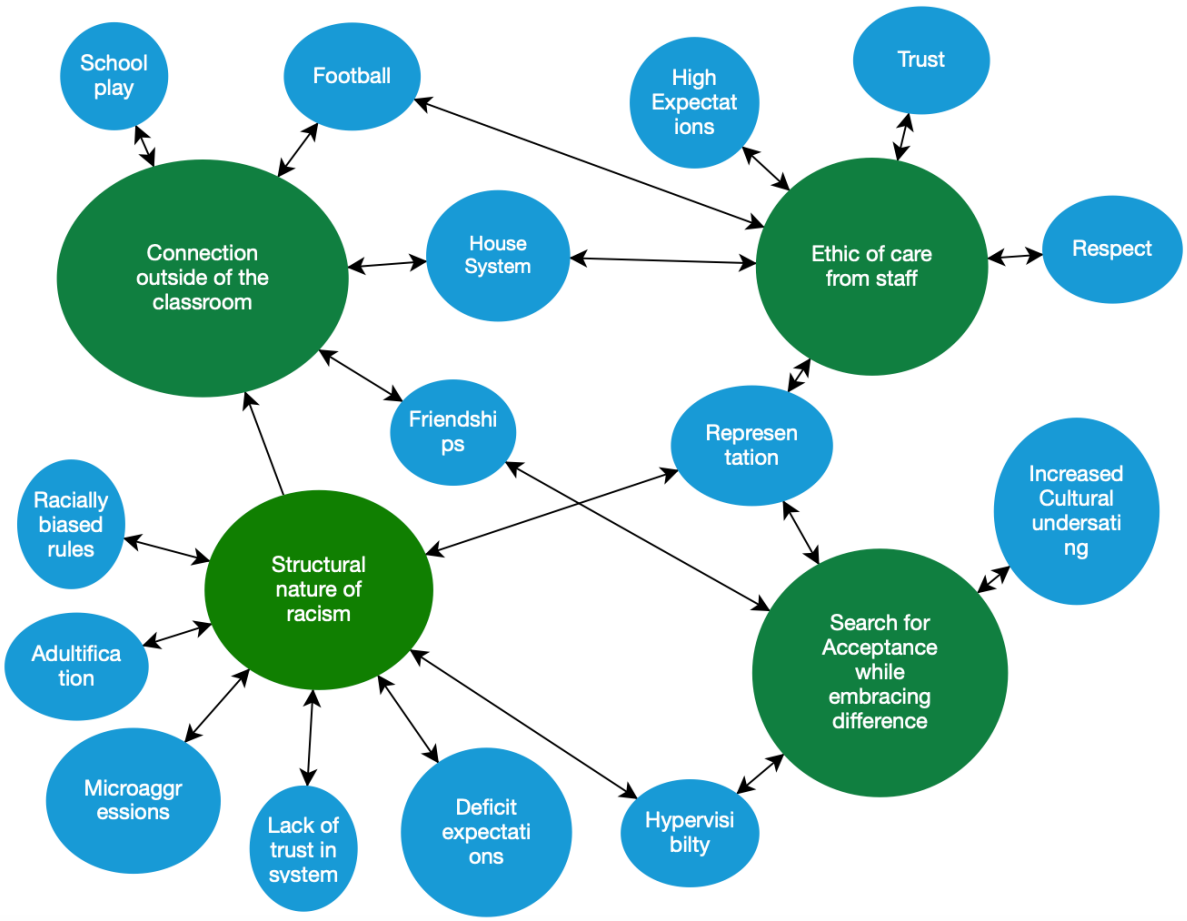
Table 12: Theme summary of children's experiences of school connectedness.

Theme	Characteristics
Ethic of care from staff Description: Staff employing an ethic of care seemed to support school connectedness	Care supported experiences of relationality in interactions with staff which supported school connectedness
Searching for connection outside the classroom Description: Experiences outside of the classroom identified as promoting school connectedness	Experiencing connectedness outside the classroom where there were reduced power imbalances through engaging extracurricular activities, friendships with peers, activities in school's house system

Searching for acceptance while embracing difference Description: School environment where children can see themselves represented and that embraced difference, supported connectedness	Looking for school connectedness through representation and increased racial-ethnic affirmation in school
Structural nature of racism Description: Experiences of structural racism resulted in school disconnectedness	Experienced through perceptions of being targeted by school rules, lowered expectations from staff, microaggressions and being adultified, resulting in a lack of trust in school and disconnection in school

The concept map of children's experiences of school connectedness can also be viewed below in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Concept map of children's experiences of school connectedness



3.3.1.1. Ethic of care from staff

In this theme, all children described how experiencing an ethic of care from staff supported their sense of school connectedness. For example, Imani explained how the way teachers show respect or disrespect in interactions can impact on relationships.

> *“Just be nice? I'm like a person. If you're nice to me the first time I meet you, it is calm, but, if you're not nice to me, then we have no common ground. So if you are rude then I am rude. End of really.” Imani*

In contrast with some understandings of care which view the responsibility for promoting care being placed on adults (Spratt, 2016), Noddings (2015) and Owens and Ennis (2005) suggested that an ethic of care based on a relational foundation where both the child and teacher contribute to the interaction supports mutual recognition and growth. Children suggested that an ethic of care was demonstrated through relationships, which in turn supported engagement in lessons and relationships with other staff. Lola discussed how her science teacher noticing and engaging with her during lessons demonstrated care.

> *“They talk to me because my science teacher barely knows anybody. Just talking to me during lessons (shows that they care)”* Lola

Discussion of how care from staff seemed to be influenced by home-school contact also occurred. Monica shared how her parent's role in school. where she held a position of higher authority resulted in her teachers becoming more positive in their perceptions of her which supported her experience of connection in school. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological perspective helps explain how interactions between the home and school systems, termed the mesosystem, can influence experiences in school.

> *"Well, for example, like some teachers, I never really was a fan of them before. But then obviously, my mom met them because she went to the school and now the teachers like, know me as her daughter. So like, now they just know me." Monica*

3.3.1.2. Searching for connection outside the classroom

In this theme, children shared how their involvement in activities outside of the classroom supported school connectedness.

Engaging in extracurricular activities

Children discussed how engagement in extracurricular activities supported their connectedness to school. Monica recalled how participating in the school musical was an experience where she felt most connected to her school as it was the first event of its kind. She discussed how she perceived that she was contributing to the history of the school which supported her connectedness.

> *"I did take part in a musical, so that made me like more part of the school because we took part in the first musical in, I think like 25 years. That made me feel more part of the school because it was the first one, and it could also be my last one in that school" Monica*

Covay and Carbonaro (2010) and Bayat (2015) suggested that engagement in extracurricular activities might offer children experiences of success and increased positive interactions with peers and adults through engaging in this activity of shared interests. Monica seemed to also experience a sense of mattering. Carey (2020) contended that children's perception of mattering occurs by being recognised, valued and perceived as significant, which in turn supports them to value and engage with aspects of school.

Imani also discussed how her involvement in a school leadership role supported her school connectedness.

> *"I'm part of like a group of lead leaders that represent the school at different things, we organise different events. And it just means that we have like a different tie to everyone and we have our own form at the start. It's like all the people that are lead learners" Imani*

Organising events and being a representative of her school seemed to give her a sense of control. Waters et al. (2009) suggested that the level of involvement in decision-making in school can affect children's experiences of school connectedness, as it might make them feel more autonomous. Children's engagement in activities outside the classroom might also positively influence relationships with school and teachers as there are reduced power imbalances (Bayat, 2015). This might have supported Imani's experiences of school connectedness.

Friendships in school

Gowing (2019) and Mcgraw et al. (2008) discussed how friendships in school could support children's experiences of school connectedness, and this was reflected in the findings from

the study. Some children suggested that the racial-ethnic identity of their friends was a factor which influenced their experiences of school connectedness. Malcolm, whose friends were predominantly Black, discussed how all the Black students in school seemed to form a community and provide a sense of mutual social support.

> *"It's a boys' school, but every single Black person, even if you are in year seven. Every single Black person helps each other. We're all friends, even if you are in year seven." Malcolm*

Tatum (2017) suggested that this propensity to befriend Black pupils may happen as Black children become older and their experience and understanding of their racial-ethnic identity develops. These experiences might result in them seeking and beginning to identify with peers with whom they share similar identities, as they might perceive that they are better able to understand the unique intersection of how their racial-ethnic identity influences their experiences.

3.3.1.3. Searching for acceptance while embracing difference

In this theme, children shared how being better able to connect with aspects of their racial-ethnic identity in school would support their experience of school connectedness.

Searching for representation

Monica, Lola and Malcolm shared a longing for increased racial-ethnic representation among staff. Lola illustrated this example.

> *"SB: Do you think that you're treated fairly at your school?*
> *Lola: I feel like if there were more like Black teachers then yes but there are not a lot like I am used to… I don't think I have any Black teachers."*

Children perceived that the presence of Black staff might result in them being treated more fairly and therefore help them feel better connected to school. Egalite et al. (2015) suggested that the presence of Black staff members might reduce Black students' sense of being viewed by staff through stereotypically negative lenses. However, the North-East of England has been described as having the lowest proportion of Black teachers in England in comparison to White teachers (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2022). This lowered presence of Black staff might have influenced Lola's view that the presence of Black staff might have resulted in her being treated more fairly in school.

Searching for increased cultural understanding in school

Children discussed how increased experiences of racial-ethnic affirmation, described as an individual developing a positive view and valuing their racial-ethnic identity (Derlan & Umaña-Taylor, 2015), in school, would support experiences of connection. Imani reported an experience in school where a bracelet which represented her ancestral heritage was cut off her wrist by a staff member as it was viewed as jewellery, thus contravening school policy.

> *"I went to Kenya to see my dad's family, and they made like one of these permanent bracelets, like, you could only get it off if you like, cut it off. And I went to school… this one teacher came and saw me and she's like, that needs to be off and I was like, Oh, well, I genuinely can't take it off… and then she cut it off my hand and mate when I tell you, my dad went ballistic. They cut it off. I was like, trying to tell them like, it's cultural, it's meaning…they (schools) need to be a little bit more cultured." Imani*

Imani suggested that school policies which were inclusive of different cultural heritages might support connectedness in school.

Monica also described her school's ethos, which emphasised allyship amongst all students through whole-day workshops about racism and difference and provided children with a more balanced perspective of history, supporting her connectedness in school.

> *"With history, like, when they focused on slavery, it was just like, about the slavery… but then on the drop-down days, they showed like, all those Black people, like the first scientist… we recently we had a drop-down day and it was on like racism… they were just showing us visuals of like interviews…and then we were able to see other people's perspectives of knowing how not to treat others differently and how it feels for other people." Monica*

Gillborn et al. (2012) argued that CRT can be used to understand how to disrupt racial inequalities in school by focusing on Black people's experiences. In utilising this lens, Monica's experiences of curricular development in school providing a sense of racial-ethnic affirmation through drop-down days appeared to disrupt the impact of deficit racial narratives focussing on slavery and seemed to support a sense of connection in school.

> *I'm kind of happy that we don't (have initiatives such as Black History Month in school) because it's better when you have more diversity in your school but when you're like the only one. It's like I'd rather like… have like a lot more Black people so we can actually like talk about it. But when it is just you, it's like everyone is looking at just you. Eei, no thank you!." Imani*

Lander and Santoro (2017) stated that hypervisibility could occur when the spotlight is placed on individuals who are not part of a predominant group and are othered. There were differing views among the participants on how schools might promote children's racial-ethnic identity, which seemed to be influenced by the racial-ethnic composition of children's schools. Unlike Monica, Imani and Lola considered initiatives in school centred on celebrating their racial-ethnic identity would lead to hypervisibility as they were attending predominantly White schools, which would result in experiences of disconnection in school. This suggests that there needs to be sensitivity to the composition of class and schools in planning such initiatives (Waters et al., 2009).

3.3.1.4. Structural nature of racism

One of the tenets of CRT is that racism is institutional and embedded in social structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). In this theme, children discussed how the structural nature of racism in school negatively affected experiences of school connectedness. A CRT lens will influence the findings and discussion section of this theme and has been generated from the deductive part of the analysis. See Chapter 2, p. 46, for discussion on aspects of CRT which influenced analysis.

Experiences of discrimination and deficit perspectives in school

Lola, Malcolm and Imani described how racial discrimination in school negatively affected school connectedness.

> *"I wasn't really fitting in and then again, there's like, out of three Black people in the whole school, I was one of them. And it was just like, first of all, it wasn't like racism at the start. Well, I didn't recognise or like take it like that, like bullying. Like I didn't even want to go into school anymore. And it was just like... my mental is too much for me to handle. So my parents were like fine. We're just like moving to a school outside closer." Imani*

Imani described the subtlety of structural racism, sharing how experiencing racial abuse from peers affected her emotional well-being and negatively influenced her connection to school. Anyon et al. (2016) argued that school connectedness could be impacted negatively if children perceive that their school is discriminatory toward their racial identity. Imani's experience seems to illustrate the subtle nature of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023), which began with microaggressions, which are defined as routine and subtle exchanges or insults towards minoritised groups and have significant impact resulting from their cumulative effect (Lewis & Neville, 2015). This then progressed to what was characterised as bullying and then overt racism, which contributed to a sense of isolation and disconnection, resulting in her leaving the school.

Malcolm and Imani also suggested that teachers' deficit perspectives resulted in experiences of disconnection in school. Malcolm discussed an example of this.

> *"I will say in my class in my set four class, it was half Black people and White people. So it was mixed. Some people in year seven got moved up to set one… they were all white that moved to set one and they said it was because of their behaviour. Strangest thing. I still don't understand... they separated us so that we could avoid each other… why didn't they go to the other class? Why set one? (the top set) that's what I don't understand." Malcolm*

For Malcolm, decisions about ability grouping seemed to be influenced by children's racial identity. This resulted in a sense of distrust and negative relationships with staff, as well as disconnection from school. CRT views experiences such as these as indicative of the permanence of racism, characterised by the racial achievement gap (Taylor et al., 2023), where school staff hold deficit academic perspectives towards children, which can affect their sense of self (Coard, 1971; Wallace & Joseph-Salisbury, 2022), academic achievement (Demie, 2022) and relationships with teachers (Andrews & Gutwein, 2017).

Lack of trust and ineffective policies that address racism in school

Malcolm, Imani and Lola described a lack of trust in their schools' policies to act against racial discrimination. An example from Lola is shared below:

> *"SB: so why was it important for you to get that going (Say no to Racism Club)?*
> *Lola: because... my friend, he had somebody from school say a racist comment to him. So I was like, this is the final straw, and I thought we need to do something… but I haven't been able to actually do it because the school hasn't said I am allowed to and I have been waiting for a while. My friend, she's able to do her club. She's White…she is still a friend like I get it. It is fine but I think I asked a long time before her, and she asked probably a few months ago" Lola"*

Children expressed this lack of trust and disconnection in a variety of ways. Lola seemed to express dissatisfaction with her school's antiracism policies by taking matters into her own hands and trying to start her own antiracism club. Malcolm and Imani did so by not reporting instances of racial abuse, preferring to receive emotional support from parents and friends as opposed to school staff. For Waters et al. (2009), clear and consistent behaviour policies may support experiences of school connectedness. Lola's account suggested a sense of hesitancy and inaction from schools in having clear policies acting against racism. Demie (2022) suggested that schools can respond defensively and fail to acknowledge institutional

racism when concerns are raised by parents or children. Such lack of action on the part of schools might be justified in light of a recent Government report which concluded that racism in education is not structural (HMG, 2021). Schools might have taken the view that clear and consistent policies against racism acknowledge the permanence of racism and that racism is an issue for them. Instead, schools might have preferred to view racism as being seen as rare and isolated incidents, therefore finding policy development in this area as considered unnecessary by some. This could then result in inaction from staff when instances of racism arose.

However, Monica considered her school to have clear and consistent policies when racial discrimination occurred. *"Like a couple days ago, there was an incident where there was racism but like the teachers are quick to go to it. And they call out the students for it."* As discussed in earlier sections, Monica's school was different. Unlike the schools attended by other participants, her school had a diverse population and some Black staff. Her school also seemed to be proactive in prevention by valuing engaging students in discussion about the impact of racism and the importance of being allies in school. Monica's parent, who held a position of higher authority in the school, also worked for an antiracist organisation. This might have influenced the development of these policies in school.

Adultification

Adultification is described as a form of bias where children are viewed as being older than they are (Epstein et al., 2017). Lola, Imani and Malcolm discussed how adultification affected their school experience and how their intersecting identities of gender and race resulted in differences in how this was experienced. An example from Lola is illustrated below.

> *“Adults and teachers think that you are supposed to be mature. Some adults think that you are supposed to be this one thing. Like you know everything... because I had said that I went to this Black students only camp, one of the adults, he automatically said oh (Name) you are going to be talking about antiracism this term. In my head I said I never said anything about that. Now I am roped into giving a talking a talk about antiracism which I partly do and don't want to do.” Lola*

Lola and Imani shared experiences of being perceived as more knowledgeable and mature than other children. Epstein et al. (2017) argued that adultification could result in Black girls being perceived as independent and less in need of support in school, and they both found this uncomfortable, which negatively influenced their experiences of connection in school. Malcolm perceived that staff members were scared of Black children, and for Lola, school

staff sometimes perceived Black boys as aggressive. Gillborn et al. (2012) described that Black boys can be perceived as being hypermasculine with tendencies towards aggression. Malcolm discussed how these stereotypical views resulted in disconnection from school.

3.3.1.5. Summary of theme

Within children's microsystem, described as the direct systems children interact with (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), school connectedness seemed to be supported by positive relationships with staff and peers based on an ethic of care. Engagement in extracurricular activities where they experienced mattering and increased autonomy also seemed to support school connectedness. Within children's mesosystem, described as the interaction between the different systems in children's lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), the influence of a parent's role which involved them having a higher position of authority in the school supported the development of positive relationships with staff, and one school's emphasis on preventing and acting against racism in school, which supported connectedness to school. Within children's exosystem, described as the indirect influences which might affect children's experience in school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), children sought clear and consistent policies against racism in school, which would support their trust and connectedness in school. Within their macrosystem, described as social structures which influence their school experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), children described how the structural nature of racism consisting of experiences such as racism, microaggressions, and adultification resulted in experiences of disconnection. Additionally, school's racial-ethnic composition affected school connectedness, with children describing experiences of hypervisibility. They expressed a desire for more Black staff as this was felt to enable trust and the fair application of school rules, resulting in increased school connectedness.

3.3.2. Parents' experiences of school connectedness

Table 13 below provides an overview of the organising themes constructed through the process of analysis.

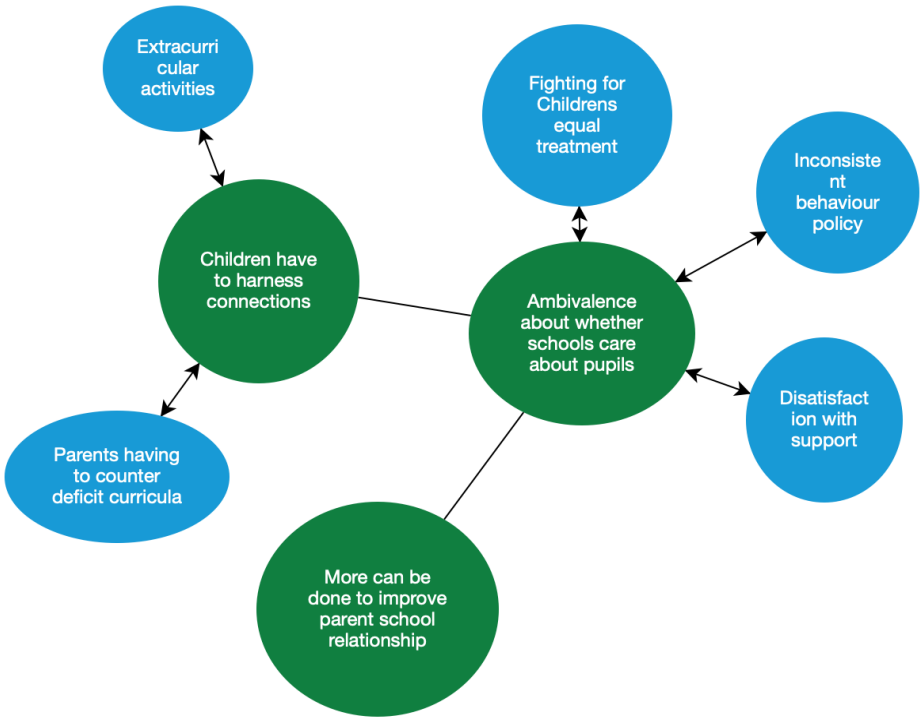
Table 13: Theme summary of parents' experiences of school connectedness.

Theme	Characteristics

Children having to harness experiences of connection in school Description: Perception that their children experienced school connectedness outside of the classroom, and parents viewed their role as supporting children by harnessing these experiences	Through engagement in extracurricular activities, parents having to counter deficit expectations from school to support connection
Ambivalence about whether schools care for children Description: Uncertainty about whether schools cared for their children	Uncertainty about whether school staff care for children, experiences of fighting for equal treatment of their children, inconsistent implementation of behaviour policy
More can be done to improve parent-school relationships Description: Perception that better relationships with school staff would support their children's school connectedness	Parents discussed that this could be achieved by better communication about their children and increased efforts to engage with parents

A concept map of parents' experiences of school connectedness can also be viewed below in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Concept map of parents' experiences of school connectedness



3.3.2.1. Children having to harness connections outside the classroom

Consistent with children's experiences of school connectedness, parents described how they perceived that their children often had to harness connections outside the classroom to support pride in their racial-ethnic identity due to deficit perceptions in school and not seeing themselves reflected in the curriculum. Parents also discussed having to actively counter these deficit narratives from school as part of their roles as parents. An example from Monica's parent is shown below.

> *“I think that's just an issue that we're fighting with all the schools… We've had issues because the things that they teach about slavery it's sad, because, Black history, there's more to it than that. They're actually hiding the real truth behind it all because people will actually say, oh, my God, is that how this country treated Black people? There's nothing we can do about it because it's coming from the top. So that's why we’re just in our corners. Just doing as much education as we can do” Monica’s parent*

Doharty (2019) suggested that school curricula can tend to frame Black history through deficit perspectives. Parents in this study had to counter this by supporting their child’s connection to school through peers, helping them see themselves positively in the curriculum, and engaging in extracurricular activities. This might suggest that the presence of a globalised curriculum (Mansfield, 2022), where multiple, nuanced accounts of topics such as slavery, the British empire and Black history beyond slavery might support Black children with seeing themselves positively reflected, countering deficit perspectives and supporting school connectedness.

3.3.2.2. Ambivalence about whether schools care for children

Perception of lack of care in implementing school policies

All of the children's parents described uncertainty about schools’ ability to act against racism. There seemed to be a perception that there was a lack of care in implementing school rules fairly and consistently with regards to Black children when racial discrimination occurred. Lola’s parent shared.

> *“They're quite strict on behaviour. There is generally a no tolerance policy for behaviour. I think my daughter has come home and shared issues around racism, which is not necessarily something we've encountered before and not towards her. As much as they have no tolerance, the ramifications for the impact on the students and the need to support them. I personally don't think that's there.” Lola’s Parent*

Parents discussed difficulties in holding schools to account after instances of discrimination. Monica's parent described her experience as having to "fight with the school." The presence of clear and consistent behavioural policies can influence children's experiences of school connectedness (Waters et al., 2009). However, the seeming preference of schools to utilise a colour-blind approach (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) by not acknowledging children's differences when producing school policies resulted in the perception that school policies were ineffective in acting against racial discrimination. Parents saw this as influencing their children's disconnection to school.

3.3.2.3. Sense that more can be done to improve parent school relationships.

Although they discussed that they were satisfied with their relationship with schools, parents shared that more could be done to develop home-school communication and relationships, particularly communication about their children (which tended to be negatively framed). Monica's parent also explained how their town in the North-East of England, which was described as an area with a high number of Black families from Asylum-seeking backgrounds, affected parent-school relationships as parents often had to prioritise providing for their children financially through working long hours over engaging in school activities.

> *"Even with the schools where we have meetings… the head teachers have mentioned, you know, we tried sometimes to engage with some of the Black parents, but they're always working. All the time, they're working, they never have time, they're always working. And I just felt bad." Monica's parent*

Waters et al. (2009) argued that home-school involvement is important for supporting children's school connectedness. The perceptions of parents were that children may feel disconnected from school due to the need for better relationships between home and school. Parents suggested this might be achieved by schools sharing more balanced (positive and negative) information about their children and schools centring the development of relationships with parents as strategies to school connectedness. An intersectional view (Crenshaw, 2006) suggests that when considering how to support parent-teacher relationships, there might be a need for schools to develop their understanding of how parents' intersecting race, class, and asylum-seeking identities might act as a barrier to engagement, as opposed to viewing that some Black parents are difficult to engage.

3.3.2.4. Summary of theme

Consistent with their children's views, parents reported that their children often had to harness experiences of connection outside of the classroom. This seemed to be influenced by a myriad of factors linked to structural racism, such as the prominence of deficit perspectives of Black history in the curriculum and the perception that school policies are ineffective in acting against racial discrimination. This resulted in perceptions of their children's disconnection in school, with parents turning outside of school provision to counter deficit narratives children were exposed to in school. Lastly, parents discussed a sense that schools could do more to engage with and develop relationships with parents to support children's experience of connection in school. However, this needs to be considered through an intersectional lens.

3.3.3. Educational Psychologists views regarding changes in their thinking after listening to Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness.

Table 14 below provides an overview of the organising themes constructed through the process of analysis.

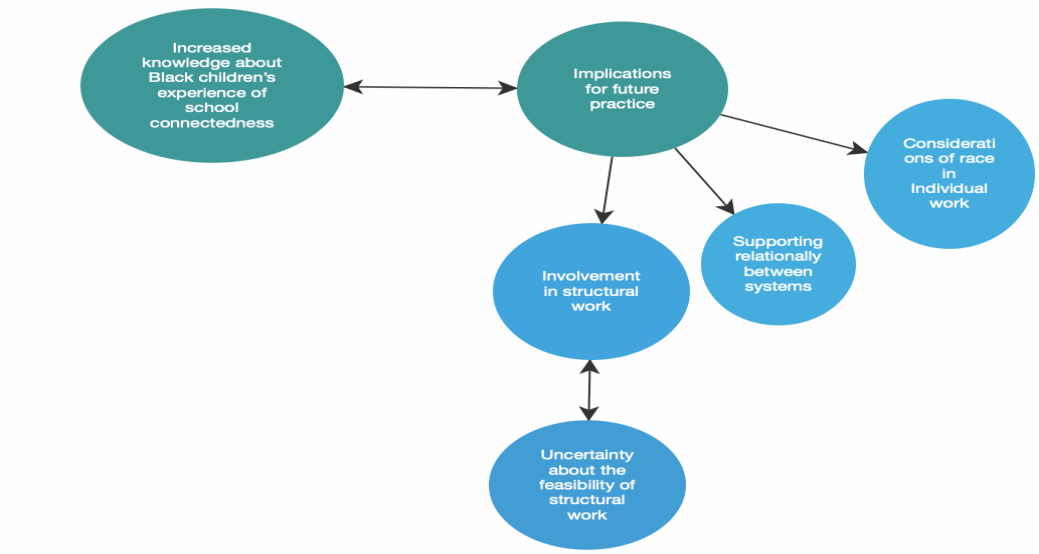
Table 14: Theme summary regarding EPs' views of changes in their thinking after listening to Black children and parent's experiences of school connectedness.

Theme	Characteristics
Increased knowledge about Black children's experiences of school connectedness Description: Changes in thinking about Black children's and parents' school connectedness experiences	Increased knowledge about adultification, need for increased racial-ethnic affirmation in school practices and policies
Implications for their practice Description: Changes in thinking about the	EP role in supporting Black children, parents and schools in individual as well as systemic work, sense of hesitancy about engaging in systemic work in relation to challenging structural racism

EP role in supporting Black children's school connectedness experiences	

A concept map of EP's perspectives can also be viewed below in Figure 10

Figure 10: Concept map of EPs perspectives after listening to the experiences of Black children and parents



3.3.3.1. Increased knowledge about Black children's experiences of school connectedness

Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2018) and Twyford et al. (2022) discussed that an aspect of CRT in education involves using counter stories that centre Black people's experiences to deepen an understanding of the mechanisms in educational practices that perpetuate racial inequalities. This is with the aim of supporting considerations about changes to redress these practices. EPs shared that listening to the experiences of Black children and parents increased their knowledge about the difference in experience for Black children in school. An example from EP 8 is shared.

> *"The example given about the YP having to cut off her bracelet was a really powerful example that encouraged me to think about strict school policies, how something seemingly small to a school can have a huge impact and how increased awareness for schools and professionals working with schools is essential." EP8*

Frantell et al. (2019) discussed that engaging in cross-racial dialogue might lead to changes, such as increased knowledge about the perspective of the other. Engaging in a form of

cross-racial dialogue seemed to lead to new thinking and awareness about the impact of biases such as adultification and how school policies utilising a colourblind approach can restrict children's expressions of their racial-ethnic identity.

3.3.3.2. Implications for future practice

From the focus group, EPs also discussed implications for their practice on differing levels.

Individual level

On the individual level, EPs discussed how they might aim to centre the lived experience of Black pupils and parents in their work. An example from EP2 is discussed

> *"I feel it has helped me to realise (being outside of this minority group in the North-East of England) just how important it is to listen to children and parents' lived experiences." EP2*

EPs seemed to indicate that the Whiteness of the profession and the LA resulted in difficulties in seeing how racism might operate in school, affecting Black children and parents' experiences. This suggests that counter-stories (Delgado, 2017) with an explicit focus on understanding Black children and parents' experiences might act as a tool for change by highlighting deficit narratives such as adultification and therefore informing EPs' work with schools, children and parents.

EPs discussed that a further implication for their work involved promoting relationships amongst the different systems in their work. An example is illustrated from EP5

> *"To try and support schools and families to understand one another more." EP 5*

As EPs work with school staff, parents and children (Farrell et al., 2006), they seem well-placed to support this. However, as discussed earlier, it will be important for EPs to develop an understanding of how parents' intersecting identities might act as a barrier to engaging with schools when considering how to support with developing relationships.

Organisational level

On the organisational level, there was a sense of hesitancy and tension about the practicalities of EPs engaging in systemic work informed by an understanding of the structural nature of racism in education due to the perceived lack of influence in the EP role. An example from EP8 is included.

“All themes have relevance to our role but some link more closely to day to day aspects of our work than others…Structural nature of racism' while relevant to our role, very important and possible for us to influence, is more difficult for us to have influence over due to the systems nature of this particular theme.” EP8

The framing of racism as structural might have influenced this source of tension, resulting in a sense of uncertainty about how EPs might act against structural racism. Roffey (2013) argued that although EPs might not perceive that they can enact change at the macro level, they might support systemic change in their role by working with schools. For EPs, this might involve engaging schools in reflections about whether there are clear and consistent policies regarding racial discrimination, as parents and children's counter-stories discussed that this was a source of disconnection.

3.3.3.3. Summary of theme

Listening to Black children's and parents' counter-stories arguably supported EPs in developing an awareness and new thinking about how racial-ethnic identity might influence school connectedness, particularly in an area in which only less than 1% of people identified as Black (Office for National Statistics, 2021). EPs suggested using counter-stories to guide their practice and their role in promoting relationships among Black children, parents and schools. The framing of racism as being structural resulted in some uncertainty about the influence of the EP role, with suggestions about how EPs might use their influence in schools to support action against racism in schools discussed.

3.4. Implications of research

For most children and parents, the role of school policies was discussed as an aspect resulting in disconnection from school. School policies sometimes resulted in an othering of children's racial-ethnic identity and were ineffective in acting against instances of racial discrimination. These findings suggest that when supporting Black parents and children, schools might benefit from guidance from organisations with expertise in racial justice to support an understanding of the impact of the structural nature of racism and how they might affirm children's racial-ethnic identity in school. Smith and Lander (2023) also suggested that Initial Teacher Training centred around exploring aspects such as Whiteness and racism

might support teachers in developing an understanding of the impact of racism in schools. This might also benefit EP training courses.

Additionally, the research drew upon the counter-stories of Black children and parents to encourage EP reflection on their own practice in schools. EPs shared experiences of deepening their knowledge about Black children and parents' experiences, which was important given that the LA was predominantly White. Possible changes in thinking in their work at the individual and organisation levels were also discussed. To support initial reflections on the implications for EP practice guided by the findings from children and parents' counter-stories, the Currie matrix, which sets out the role and functions of the EP role (Currie, 2002), will be utilised (See Table 15). However, it is important to note that given the previously discussed Whiteness of the profession, EPs might benefit from the use of tools such as Aston et al.'s (2022) decision-making guide to support self-reflection of how their own biases might influence their thinking when working with Black children and parents.

It is acknowledged that this research focused on the experiences of four children and their parents, and further research exploring Black children and parent's experiences of school connectedness will be supportive in developing a richer understanding. Future research might involve researchers utilising methodologies such as case studies to understand and explore school settings such as Monica's, who shared more experiences of connection than disconnection in school during her interview. This might support gaining an in-depth understanding of how aspects of the school ecology influence connectedness, inclusive of aspects such as school policies, the values of the senior leadership team and its influence on school ethos, staff's perception of their connectedness with children, and children as well as parents experience of connectedness.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, a common theme shared during the EP focus group was that listening to the experiences of Black children and parents supported an increased understanding of how taken-for-granted practices in schools, such as school policies, might conflict with children's cultural identity and expression. Future research might benefit from researchers exploring the Whiteness of schools. Clarke and Watson (2014) suggested that a starting point for this might be engaging with White parents, staff and learners to reflect on Whiteness and how it might be normalised in settings. Researchers might benefit from exploring how aspects of the curriculum, school policies, staff and children's views towards difference might result in a difference of experience for students and families that do not identify as White.

Table 15: Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

EP Role	Implication for practice
Consultation and Assessment	Consultation involves EPs engaging in collaborative problem-solving with children's parents/carers and schools (Wagner, 2008). EPs might: - Aim to act as a critical friend to schools by offering alternative perspectives when biased or deficit narratives of Black children are expressed. - Utilise counter-stories to support with centring Black children's and parents' perspectives about factors which influence connection and disconnection to school. - Utilise consultation to provide a space for schools to listen to Black parents' and children's concerns about aspects such as the need for policies against racial discrimination - As suggested by Jones and Atkinson (2021), EPs might benefit from reflecting on how they communicate information and work collaboratively with others when engaging with a diverse range of people (inclusive of aspects such as race, profession and ethnicity). This might occur through reflecting on factors such as their use of language, how they create an atmosphere where parents and staff feel open to express themselves and how they are prepared for the consultation process (Jones & Atkinson, 2021). During assessment work with children, EP's might: - If viewed appropriate, aim to counter deficit academic expectations of Black children through the use of dynamic assessment (Haywood & Tzuriel, 2002), which aims to understand strategies which support children's learning (Green et al., 2005), and has been argued as being a culturally fair method (Hilliard & III-Baffour Amankwatia, 2004; Tzuriel, 2021), that supports children with exhibiting what they know and highlighting strengths.

	- Centring aspects such as racial-ethnic identity when exploring Black children's experiences of school in order to understand how to promote school connectedness
Intervention and Training	This study found that Black children and parents valued relationships based on an ethic of care. Relational approaches are based on a foundation of connection and care to support children's individual needs (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). EPs might: Utilise training to support schools in developing relational policies in schools and reflecting on how they might develop relationships with Black children and parents. Utilise training to encourage reflection and develop staff knowledge about biases such as adultification, lowered expectations, the institutional nature of racism in school and its effects on Black children's experience of connectedness. This might involve engaging in multiagency work with organisations that possess expertise in supporting Black children and parents. Utilise tools such as PATHS (O'Brien et al., 2010) to engage in intervention work with schools by encouraging reflection on their preferred hopes about areas such as their relationships with Black parents, as well as reflection on how policies such as racial discrimination policies might better support connectedness in school. Utilise their role working in schools to signpost schools to organisations and charities similar to those which supported recruitment for the study, who might have an increased understanding of practices that support with affirming children's racial-ethnic identity in school, as well as supporting schools with reflecting on their policies and practices and whether there might be biases inherent. This is important as the majority of EPs in the UK identify as White (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2021).
Research	EPs might utilise research to understand Black children's experiences of school connectedness and parents in their own LA.

	EPs might use approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry (Gregory & Ripski, 2008) to support sharing stories of hope about how different schools within their LA have managed to support children's experiences of school connectedness and racial-ethnic affirmation (such as in the school which Monica attended). Given the demographics of the LA and the North-East of England, EPs might utilise research to understand the impact of the Whiteness (Gillborn, 2005) of the region in schools and the EPS. This might support with exploring how taken-for-granted practices might result in a difference in experience for children and parents of different racial-ethnic identities.

3.5. Limitations

The findings of the research should be viewed with caution. The number of participants means that the findings cannot be generalised to the experiences of school connectedness of all Black children and parents in the North-East of England and Educational Psychologists. Abdi (2015) and Wright (2020) argued that Black people share and negotiate multiple versions of their racial identity in differing contexts. Another researcher on another day or from a different background might have related to participants differently and used different methods, resulting in differing discussions of their experiences of school connectedness.

It is also acknowledged that my own relationship with the Educational Psychologists who participated in the focus group might impact their responses through a form of response bias (Van de Mortel, 2008). My analysis of their responses and that of a researcher who might have utilised different methods might have resulted in different perspectives from EPs.

Additionally, the variation in the parent interview methods might have affected data quality.

3.6. Conclusion

This study aimed to understand Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness and to draw upon these experiences to EPs to consider how their own practices and thinking might shift in response. The findings suggest that Black children experience instances of connection to school when engaging in experiences outside of the classroom, such as with their friends or when engaging in extracurricular activities. For Black children and parents, positive relationships with staff and pupils seemed central to supporting school connectedness. The findings also suggest that children sought connection and representation through school staff to support school connectedness. Examples of structural racism were reported by participants, which led both parents and children to feel disconnected from school.

The findings further suggest that although EPs discussed limitations in their agency in the face of structural racism, EPs valued the opportunity to hear Black children's and parents' experiences and that this provoked new thinking in their work with children, parents and schools.

Chapter 4: Reflective Synthesis

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will provide a reflective account of academic and professional learning gained from engaging with the research process. First, I will reflect on changes in my thinking that have arisen from engaging in the research project. Next, I will discuss the implications for my practice as a qualified researcher-practitioner, and lastly, I will reflect on my immediate next steps regarding the research project.

4.2. Reflexivity

Palaganas et al. (2017) discussed reflexivity as involving researchers reflecting on changes they might have experienced in their thinking due to engaging with the research process and how this has affected their research. In Chapter 2, I reflected on how my positionality as an insider-outsider influenced my experiences during the recruitment and data analysis process. I will now reflect on my experiences and changes in thinking from engaging in the research.

I realise that although I intended to engage in the research with an open mind, I went into the research with assumptions that there would be experiences of school connectedness consistent with my SLR findings and from personal discussions I had with Black adults who were raised in the North-East of England (See Chapter 2, p. 39). These experiences were primarily characterised by feelings of disconnection in school due to how children were negatively perceived and stereotyped in school by staff and peers. Instead, children in my empirical research discussed nuanced experiences of school connection and disconnection, with their experiences of school connectedness positively influenced by their relationships with staff and peers and experiences of feeling that they mattered (See Chapter 3, p. 70). Engaging in this research has helped me realise the importance of holding back my assumptions and being curious and open to being surprised while engaging with others. I found using narrative principles (Morgan, 2000), such as acknowledging participants' expertise in their own lives, being collaborative and open to being guided by participants by asking them if they want to discuss more about a topic or move on to discussing something else, helpful in supporting this sense of curiosity. The use of this approach supported exploring participants' stories about their lives, their relationships with others in school, and the meanings they attach to these experiences in school. In future practice, I am interested in exploring narrative approaches further and will aim to utilise this sense of curiosity and open-mindedness while listening to people's stories and experiences in school to help counteract assumptions I might hold.

Crenshaw's (2006) intersectionality was also helpful in supporting my thinking about how the intersection of race and nationality influenced the research. During the initial stages of research, I was concerned about possible difficulties I might experience in relating with participants as I was not raised in the UK and had not attended school in the UK. A part of me was also conscious of my incompetence (Burch, 1970), having not worked with any Black children and parents as a TEP, and I was uncertain how this might influence my interactions during interviews. I was relieved to receive positive feedback from parents and children after interviews, who expressed how the interview experience resulted in a sense of catharsis as they were able to express and reflect on their school experiences in a manner they had not previously. I wondered whether my nationality, which might have been associated with a sense of difference and estrangement, intersected with my race which might have initially been associated with a sense of assumed sameness (Oguntokun, 1998), resulting in participants feeling a sense of trust and safety during interviews. This also made me consider the role of racial affinity groups in schools. These are described as groups involving people of the same racial group being provided space to discuss and reflect on their experiences navigating aspects such as racism in an organisation (Blitz & Kohl Jr, 2012; Pour-Khorshid, 2018). The creation of these groups might support parents and children with the provision of space to share experiences as Black children and parents in school and considerations about change regarding aspects and practices in school that might lead to experiences of disconnection.

Throughout the study, I found the use of aspects of CRT helpful for supporting and framing an analysis of the institutional nature of racism in education. However, I am aware that the theory originated in America in response to a specific legal civil rights historical context (Taylor, 2023). I heard from a Black parent in the study who spoke about the history of the town in the North-East of England where the interview was conducted and how the majority of Black families moved to the area as asylum-seekers (See Chapter 3, p. 79). This was discussed as being due to the impact of colonialism in their country of birth as well as how colonialism was suggested as a factor which influenced the deficit framing of Black history in the curriculum (See Chapter 3, p. 78). This led me to consider postcolonial theory (Hook, 2005), which focuses on understanding the effects of colonialism to support countering its impact in a postcolonial world. Postcolonial theory might support furthering an understanding of the impact of racial injustices taking into account the historical context of colonialism, which, as earlier referred to, influenced aspects of participants' school connectedness.

4.3. Implications for practice

As discussed earlier, participants' views during the research were complex and filled with experiences of connection and disconnection in school. I had previously only associated the concept of mattering with the Black Lives Matter Movement, but it was suggested by children that mattering supported school connectedness. Carey (2019) and Cook-Sather and Kaur (2022) suggested that mattering is supported by positive interactions with staff that are free from biases such as adultification and lowered expectations. They also discussed how mattering in school is supported by interactions where teachers aim to understand Black children's unique selves, interests and ambitions to help them feel valued. Flett (2018) suggested that mattering is based on relationships in children sensing that they are valued, which supports a sense of security in their interactions with adults and peers, then adding value to their interactions with others (Prilleltensky, 2020). Children in the study discussed experiences of mattering which only seemed to occur outside of the classroom; during activities where power dynamics with staff were more egalitarian, they were able to express themself, and they viewed that they were contributing to the school's legacy through activities such as participating in annual school plays and sports days. I am interested in developing my understanding of mattering as a relational concept and working with schools, both staff and pupils, to further understand how relationality and mattering for Black children might also be promoted in the classroom as part of my future practice.

At the beginning of the research project, I was also slightly hesitant about facilitating the focus group with EPs. This was influenced by instances of microinvalidations, where the experiences of Black people are minimised (Sue et al., 2007), and which I had experienced while engaging in personal discussions with individuals based in the North-East of England. This left me slightly fearful and hesitant about engaging in cross-racial dialogue. I had assumed that this might be due to the racial demographics of the North-East of England which is not as diverse as other regions in the U.K, and I was aware that in the LA where the focus group occurred, 0.5% of people identified as Black (Office for National Statistics, 2021). However, having now experienced the process of facilitating a focus group with EPs in the region, I am now more hopeful about the use and impact of cross-racial dialogue as a tool for supporting changes in thinking. This is due to the EPs in the service’s openness to listen, reflect and engage in discussion about Black children's and parents' experiences, which then supported considerations of perceived changes in thinking and implications for their work. Leonardo and Porter (2020) suggested that when cross-racial dialogue is paired with clarity in purpose and solidarity, it can support shifts in thinking and learning about the other. As discussed in Chapter 3, p. 88, it is acknowledged that my familiarity with the EPs

who engaged in the focus group might have influenced the dynamics and dialogue during the focus group resulting in a sense of solidarity regarding the purpose of the focus group, which was focused on listening and considering shifts in thinking. However, this experience of facilitating the focus group has influenced my future practice as a research practitioner, as even though I am still fearful of experiencing microinvalidations, I am more hopeful about the use and impact of cross-racial dialogue when engaging with EPs in discussions centred around race in supporting possible shifts in thinking. In the EPS where I will be practising when I qualify, I am interested in sharing the research to explore what EPs might view as relevant in their practice, as well as any shifts in thinking given that this service will be working with a more diverse population than services in the North-East of England.

4.4. Next steps as a research-practitioner

During the initial information meetings and research interviews, parents and the organisations that supported recruitment shared their belief and interest in the project with me. Van Blerk and Ansell (2007) discussed the ethical importance of researchers returning research to participants through dissemination. Limes-Taylor Henderson and Esposito (2019) also discussed how research could be oppressive when researchers engage in research for their own advancement without considering how it might be used to give back to participants' communities. In attempts to counter this, my immediate next steps will involve disseminating a summary of findings from the interviews and questionnaires to young people and parents. Additionally, as agreed with the organisations (An antiracist youth organisation and community racial justice group) supporting recruitment, findings will also be shared with them. Initial discussions about what dissemination might look like have involved engaging in discussion with children and organisation staff about the findings to support discussion about what the next steps might look like for their own work in supporting children in their community.

Working with a charity and community organisation has also resulted in personal considerations about my role as a research practitioner based not only in schools but also in the community. I am interested in developing my knowledge of community psychology to support my practice. Hammond (2013) and MacKay (2006) suggested that one of the aims of community psychology involves psychologists engaging in multiagency working to address inequalities and support an understanding of community needs across different settings. Engaging with an antiracist youth group organisation during the research process enlightened me on how their work focused on redressing the difficulties children experienced in school. This involved aspects such as affirming Black children's identity to support

redressing deficit narratives which children experienced in school. This further involved advocating for and supporting children and parents when racial discrimination occurred in school. I am interested in collaboratively exploring how I might continue working with these organisations as a research practitioner. It is acknowledged that there are barriers that have prevented EPs from working in communities outside of school contexts. Hammond (2013) suggested that a lack of funding and schools preferring for EPs to engage in individual work with children in schools instead of engaging in wider systemic work might act as barriers. Further barriers with mounting EHC pressures for EPs are also present (Department for Education, 2023). Still, as a next step, I am interested in exploring how EPs might engage in joint work with organisations and charities when supporting children, parents and schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data Extraction table

Study	Country	Purpose	Theoretical Framework	Setting	Sample	Design/ Method	Analysis	Themes	Findings
Boyd (2021) *Journal of Educational and Child Psychology*	U. K.	Exploring how Black secondary male pupils perceive their experiences of exclusion and reintegration into school Exploring what is perceived to be difficult	Critical Race Theory	3 mainstream schools from 2 London Local authorities. Boyd (2021) described the Racial Ethnic demographics of school 1 as being “Over 60%-Asian 10%- White.” (Pg.58). School 2 as	6 participants (aged 12 - 15). Purposive sampling (Male, of African Caribbean descent, had experienced 1 or more exclusion and been reintegrated	Semi-structured individual interviews	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis	Relationships with teachers and staff Self-Identity and navigating adults’ perceptions. Inclusive environments	Negative relationship with teachers (over monitoring) Tension between expectations of their race and gender versus self-identity Friendships (in AP/PRU) supported sense of belonging

		and helpful about this process		being “Over half Black, Less than 10%- White” (Pg.58). School 3 as being “Largest ethnic group from an Asian background“ Pg.58.	into mainstream education, knowledge of English)				
Brooms (2019) *Journal of Urban Education*	U. S	Exploring how students construct meaning from their school experiences and their	Sense of belonging	Urban, all boys public charter school 100% of students attending the school were Black	20 Black male students (aged 20-23). All students were in college at the time of	Semi-structured individual interviews	Phenomenological methodological analysis.	School culture Relationships with teachers Succeeding at school	Inviting and uplifting school climate and positive relationships with staff and peers “brothers” was important for their self-belief and

		efforts for academic success			interview Purposive and convenience sampling utilised.				sense of mattering Participation in academic and non-academic activities supported their sense of "family" like school connectedness
Carey et al. (2022) *Journal o Journal of Research on Adolescence*	U. S	Examining the interactions that affects Black males perceived sense of mattering in school	Mattering	Racially and ethnically diverse High school in the Mid-Atlantic united states	17 Black male students (Aged 15 - 18). Purposive and snowball sampling	Semi-structured individual interviews	Asset-based, decolonised inquiry	Experiencing and resisting interpersonal marginal mattering Mattering partially through selective love	Anti-Black relational experiences from teachers and peers diminished their perceived mattering and self-concept Perceived partial mattering from peers and

									teachers due to athletic skills, and not in other domains Distancing from each other to foster perceived school mattering
Chapman & Bhopal (2019) *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies*	U.S and U. K	Exploring the experiences of students in mixed-race schools	Critical Race Theory	Six schools where Black children were the racial minority in school and two rural secondary schools where Black children were the racial minority in school.	US: 74 male and female African American participants (Aged 14 – 19) UK: 8 Black Caribbean participants (Aged 13 – 16)	US: focus groups with African American students from 6 districts UK: In-depth individual interviews	Focus group: Le Compte (2000) analytic sequence Interviews: Constant comparative analysis	Racial stereotyped as academically inferior and/or problems with behaviour	Negative relationships with teachers (deficit perspectives, over monitoring) Perceptions of students being overdisciplined in school Intersectionality – perceptions by

									teachers, school policies - Valued by school when "colourless"
Grace & Nelson (2019) *Journal of Leadership and policy in schools*	U. S	Exploring Black males' perceptions of race and racism in society, school and teacher expectations How this relates to to the school to prison pipeline	Critical Race Theory	School setting is not discussed. Participants are described as being from New Orleans (Majority Black, Low Income area) who have been expelled from public school settings and have experience in	10 Males participants aged 15 - 18	Semi-structured individual interviews	Phenomenological analysis	Pervasiveness of racism "tryin to survive" Impact of teacher perceptions	Tension between perceived deficit expectations of others and their own identity in school Teachers viewed as barriers to success and engagement School viewed as unwelcoming

				the school to prison pipeline.					
McPherson (2020) *Journal of Curriculum Inquiry*	Canada	Exploring Black girls social, pedagogical and social accounts of school What challenges do Black girls face in high school	Black feminist epistemologies Intersectionality, Black Girlhood	School setting was not described. all participants were attending a youth organisation which supported recruitment.	11 participants (13 – 19) 1 participant had recently completed high school	Focus Groups Open-ended individual Interviews	Critical discourse analysis	Teacher microaggressions Differential treatment	Teacher Microaggressions prevent engagement in school, creating feelings of exclusion Intersectionality
Slaten (2016) *Journal of Person-centred and Experiential*	U. S	Examining the experiences of male youth in an alternative school	Person-centred educational practices	Alternative school for students who were previously expelled and are now	6 male participant aged between 17 – 19.	Semi-structured individual interviews	Phenomological and consensual qualitative research	Staff and student relationships Self-awareness Pedagogy	Positive relationships supported academic and personal development

Psychotherapy (Canada)		(PRU) utilising person centred and culturally relevant practice		transitioning back to mainstream education. 99% of children identified as being African American					School as a non-judgemental, safe space Globalised Curriculum supported self-awareness, awareness of others and engagement
Smith & Hope (2020) *Journal of Educational Psychology*	U. S	Exploring the meaning Black boys make of race, identity, and oppression in school	Socio-political Development Framework Critical Social Analysis Multidimensional model of racial identity	School setting described as a racially diverse high school situated in a suburban, affluent, mostly White area. Participants attended an	5 male participants aged 16	Youth Participatory Action Research – photovoice Semi-structured individual interviews	Modified van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data	Tensions between critical social analysis, racial identity and respectability politics Tension between photovoice and deficit framing	The importance of personal achievement to support their engagement in school, in spite of lowered expectations. Anxiety in school about fulfilment

				afterschool programme which supported recruitment.				Counternarrative of Black youth Value choice mismatch	of negative stereotypes

Appendix B: Facilitators of school connectedness coding extract

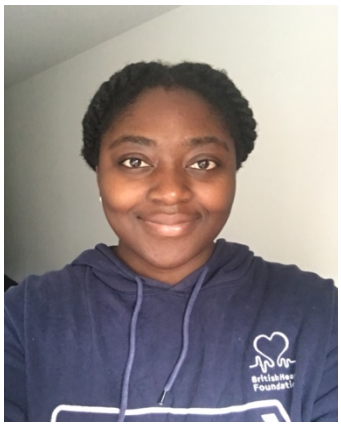
Analytical theme	Descriptive theme	Description
Facilitator- Positive Interactions with school members	Positive relationships with peers	*"But, even beyond that, I had the brothers. We had each other's back and them dudes helped me to succeed in high school. And that just ties into my fear of failure"* (Brooms, 2019). Young Person discussed how their relationships with friends were familial in nature. He also described how his engagement in lessons and aim to strive for success in lessons was driven by the need to not let his peers down because of all the support they had provided him with
Facilitator- Positive Interactions with school members	Positive relationships with staff	*"And the teachers, at the same time, work with you to make that happen. I mean, so not only do you got the teachers working with you, tell you like. . .its ok, you got the students here to help you, some in the same predicament that you in, to help encourage you and everything"* Slaten (2016). A child described how the support from teachers positively supported their sense of safety and reassurance in school, and also supported their academic learning. Child also discussed how support from peers in school also supported their connectedness.
Facilitator- Positive Interactions with school members	High expectations from staff	*"with Mr Davis, we used to talk about, like, 'cause I was, I was ge[tt]ing in trouble, he was telling me that I only have one path and it's a good one"* Boyd (2021) Child discussed how relationship with staff member seemed to involve a mentoring relationship, and that high expectations from staff supported his view about himself and his future.
Facilitator – Influence of Family and Community	Preparation from family about the importance of doing well in school	*"My parents always tell me that if people want to judge me, I have to have something that they can judge me from. So I have to ensure that I do well at school and get a good education, because then that means I will be in stronger position to be judged against someone who is richer than me, from a better background."* (Chapman & Bhopal, 2019) Child discussed how their engagement in school was influenced by discussions with parents about how Black children need to do well in school to counter the negative perceptions people might have based on aspects such as their race or class.

Appendix C: Child Information sheet

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Young Person Information Sheet



Hello, my name is Sam, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I'm excited to invite you to take part in my research study. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like some more information. Take your time to decide whether you want to take part. ***Thank you for reading this***!

What is the aim of the research?

I am interested in understanding how secondary-aged students who identify as Black experience a sense of connectedness in school. I hope this information will help inform Educational Psychologists about what makes school enjoyable and challenging for Black young people.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

- I will invite you to an interview with myself which will last approximately 40 -60 minutes. This will take place before or after school.
- I will ask you some questions related to your experiences of connectedness in school.
- If the interviews are in person, you will have access to an adult you are familiar with during the interview if you wish. If not, I will interview you via Zoom or Microsoft teams
- The interviews will be recorded so that I can analyse them.
- Your parent(s)/carer(s) will also be provided with the option to participate in this study and complete a questionnaire if they wish.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be analysed by myself. All the interviews will be audio-recorded. The data will be written and submitted to Newcastle University as a thesis in 2023. The information from the interviews will also be shared with Educational Psychology Services. All information will be anonymous, and you will not be identifiable. Data will be destroyed once the research is completed. If you reveal information during the interview that may put you at risk of harm to yourself or others, this information will be shared with relevant individuals.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you whether you would like to take part. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Who can I contact for further information?

I will be happy to answer any additional questions you may have about this research. You can contact me, Samantha Baloro via email at: s.l.b.baloro1@newcastle.ac.uk

Thank you very much for considering taking part in this research!

Appendix D: Child Consent form

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Child consent form

		Yes/No
1.	Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?	😊 / ☹️
2.	Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study?	😊 / ☹️
3.	Have all your questions been answered? (if applicable)?	😊 / ☹️
4.	Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason?	😊 / ☹️
5.	Do you understand that the interview will be audio recorded?	😊 / ☹️
6.	Do you understand that the findings from this research will be published in a thesis and maybe in a presentation or peer reviewed journal?	😊 / ☹️
7.	Do you know that if you tell me something that makes me worried you might be in danger, I will have to tell somebody else?	😊 / ☹️
8.	Are you willing to participate in this research?	😊 / ☹️

Name of child _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Name of Researcher_____ Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Child Debriefing Sheet

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Dear ,

Thank you for taking part in this research! You have helped me find out more information on how Black young people experience a sense of school connectedness. This research may help other Trainee Educational Psychologists like me, as well as Educational Psychologists to understand what it is like for you, and what we can do to support you better in school.

If you feel you or someone you know would like more information or support, here are some organisations and contacts:

- www.samaritans.org – *Telephone consultation line, run by volunteers*. Call 116 123 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year) for mental health support.
- https://theblackcurriculum.com/ - For thinking about education, identity and social change

What will happen to the results of the research study?

- You can request to meet with me to meet with me, or request a written summary of the findings.
- The results will be written in a doctoral thesis with the potential for future publications. You will not be identified in any report or publication.
- Results may also be shared with the organisation that might have supported with your recruitment into the study, as well as Educational Psychology Services. You will not be identified in the delivery of this information.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact me:
Researcher: Samantha Baloro
Email: s.l.b.baloro@newcastle.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this research project, please contact my research supervisor Dr. Wilma Barrow, Joint Director DAppEdPsy Programme (w.barrow@newcastle.ac.uk)

Appendix F: Parent Information sheet

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

A study exploring the factors that facilitate and act as a barrier to a sense of school connectedness amongst secondary aged students and parents who identify as being Black.

Dear Parent/Carer,

Who is doing the research?

My name is Samantha Baloro, and I am a trainee Educational Psychologist in my second year of studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology. I am carrying out this research as part of my course.

What is the purpose of the research?

School connectedness is a concept that looks at children's connection to their school and if they feel that the school community cares for them and their learning.

This research aims to understand how a sense of school connectedness in secondary school is fostered amongst secondary school pupils who identify as being Black. It is hoped that information from this study will help inform Educational Psychology practice by enhancing an understanding of factors that contribute to and might act as a barrier to a sense of connectedness. This may lead to understanding what makes school enjoyable and challenging for young Black people so that Educational Psychologists and other professionals can support pupils better.

Why have I and/or my child been invited?

Your child meets the criteria for participants taking part in this study as they are currently in Years 7-13. Your child may provide helpful information that can support answering questions about the development of a sense of school connectedness in Black pupils.

You have also been invited to participate as your views on school connectedness will help provide a parent's perspective about what factors might contribute to or act as a barrier to developing a sense of school connectedness.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in the study.

What about my child?

If you and your child are happy to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to return a signed consent form granting your permission for them to take part. Your child will also receive an information sheet that they can read and will be asked to return a signed consent form.

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw, all data collected about you and your child will be removed.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be contacted using a mode of communication that you are comfortable with (email or phone). Your child will also be offered an interview that will take place before or after school. If you have chosen to take part, dependant on your choice. You will either be provided with a timeslot for an interview or a questionnaire which will take 5 - 10 minutes to complete to understand school connectedness from a parent's perspective. The interview with your child will last approximately 40 - 60 minutes, but they can ask to stop at any time. The researcher will ask your child questions about their experiences of connectedness in school. The interviews will be recorded on audio tapes and transcribed. If you change your mind about participating later, you can ask for the transcript to be removed from the study. All information will be completely anonymous, and your child and yourself will not be identifiable.

What are the possible benefits and risks?

It is hoped that young people will benefit from this study as the research will contribute to the knowledge base relating to supporting Black pupils' school connectedness needs. The researcher realises that your child may find it upsetting thinking about their sense of connectedness in school. Therefore, it is important that there is support available which is as follows:

- The researcher will establish a contact person that your child names as someone they are familiar and comfortable with, and who will be made available should your child show or indicate distress during the interview session. Your child will be made aware that this

person is available to them should they want to see them. If your child would like that person to remain during the interview, that can also be arranged.

• The researcher also realises that participating in this research may bring up themes that you and your child might not have thought about before, which may be distressing. Should you and your child be interested, the researcher will meet with you before consenting to any involvement for a discussion about the study and any concerns you might have about your child taking part, if you feel necessary.

Will taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected during the research will be kept strictly confidential. Names and personal details will be removed from all information so that no one can be recognised from it. The transcripts, audio files, questionnaires and any other data will be destroyed when the research is completed. All data will be stored in accordance with the Local Authority and Newcastle University Data protection policy and in line with British Psychological Society guidance.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A summary of findings from the interviews and questionnaire will be sent to you and your child. A summary of the overall findings of the research will be available on request. A summary of the overall findings will also be shared with the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service and the organisations that took part. Participants will not be identified in any report or publication.

Contact for Further Information

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Samantha Baloro, Trainee Educational Psychologist, for more information: s.l.b.baloro1@newcastle.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about any other aspect of this research project, my research supervisor can also be contacted, Dr. Wilma Barrow, Joint Director DAppEdPsy Programme (w.barrow@newcastle.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this information.

Regards,

Samantha Baloro

Appendix G: Parent Consent Form

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Parent consent form

Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO

Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable) YES/NO

Do you understand that your child is free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason? YES/NO

Do you understand that the interview will be audio recorded? YES/NO

Do you understand that the findings from this research will be published in a thesis and potentially in a presentation or peer reviewed journal? YES/NO

Do you agree for_____ to take part in the study? YES/NO

I am willing to participate in this research? YES/NO

This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I give my consent for my child to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.

Parent signature:
Date:

Researcher signature:

Appendix H: Parent Debrief Sheet

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

A study exploring the factors that facilitate and act as a barrier to a sense of school connectedness amongst secondary aged students and parents who identify as being Black.

Thank you for your time and contributions to this research. This sheet contains information about what will happen next and what support is available if you have been affected by your participation in this research.

What happens if I do not want mine or my child's data to be included anymore?

Please contact the researcher no later than _____. Your data will be withdrawn from the study and will not be included in the subsequent analysis and write up. After the proposed date, you will not be able to withdraw your data.

I feel uncomfortable by some of the issues discussed in the questionnaire and am concerned about my child, what support is available for us?

- There will be a key person who your child can speak to following the interview.
- If uncomfortableness persists, the researcher will signpost to relevant agencies of support.
- You may wish to contact the following organisations for further support:

  British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – *Professional association for counsellors and therapies.* Visit www.bacp.co.uk

  Samaritans – *Telephone consultation line, run by volunteers*. Call 116 123 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year) or visit www.samaritans.org

What will happen to the results of the research study?

- You can request to meet the researcher or request a written summary of the findings.
- The results will be written in a doctoral thesis with the potential for future

  publication. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

- Results may also be shared with the organisation that supported with your child's recruitment into the study, as well as Educational Psychology Services. You will not be identified in the delivery of this information.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact me:

Researcher: Samantha Baloro

Email: s.l.b.baloro1@newcastle.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this research project, please contact my research supervisor Dr. Wilma Barrow, Joint Director DAppEdPsy Programme (w.barrow@newcastle.ac.uk)

Appendix I: Educational Psychologist Focus Group Information sheet

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

A study exploring the factors that facilitate and act as a barrier to a sense of school connectedness amongst secondary aged students and parents who identify as being Black and the implications for Educational Psychology practice in the North-East of England

What is the purpose of the research?

School connectedness is a concept that looks at children's connection to their school and if they feel that the school community cares for them and their learning.

This research aims to understand Black secondary school children and their parent's experiences of school connectedness, as well as Educational Psychologist's views about this. It is hoped that this information will be used to help inform Educational Psychology practice through developing more of an understanding of the factors that contribute or act as a barrier towards a sense of connectedness.

Why have I been invited?

You have also been invited to participate as your views will help provide an Educational Psychologists perspective about the school connectedness experiences of Black children and parents, as well as its possible relevance for Educational Psychology practice.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be offered a date to take part in a focus group with other Educational Psychologists. The focus group will last approximately 40 - 60 minutes. The researcher will share themes that have arisen from interviews conducted with Black parents and children in the North-East about their experiences of school connectedness. After engaging in discussion, you will then be asked to provide written responses to a set of questions which will be shared with

you before the focus group. If you change your mind about participating later, you can ask for your responses to be removed from the study. All information will be completely anonymous, and you will not be identifiable.

What are the possible benefits and risks?

- It is hoped that the research will contribute to the knowledge base relating to supporting Black pupils' school connectedness needs.
- The researcher also realises that participating in this research may bring up themes that you might not have thought about before, which may be distressing. Should you be interested, the researcher will meet up with you before consenting to any involvement for a discussion about the study and any concerns you might have about taking part, if you feel necessary.

Will taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected during the research will be kept strictly confidential. Names and personal details will be removed from all information so that no one can be recognised from it. The transcripts, audio files, questionnaires and any other data will be destroyed when the research is completed. All data will be stored in accordance with the Local Authority and Newcastle University Data protection policy and in line with British Psychological Society guidance.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

A summary of findings from the focus group will be sent to you. A summary of the overall findings of the research will be available on request. Participants will not be identified in any report or publication.

Contact for Further Information

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher, Samantha Baloro, Trainee Educational Psychologist, for more information: s.l.b.baloro1@newcastle.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about any other aspect of this research project, my research supervisor can also be contacted, Dr. Wilma Barrow, Joint Director DAppEdPsy Programme (w.barrow@newcastle.ac.uk)

Thank you for reading this information!

Regards,

Samantha Baloro

Appendix J: Educational Psychologist Focus Group consent form

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO

Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily (if applicable) YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason? YES/NO

Do you understand that your views will be collected in a written format for the research YES/NO

Do you understand that the findings from this research will be published in a thesis and potentially in a presentation or peer reviewed journal? YES/NO

Are you willing to participate in this research? YES/NO

This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I give my consent to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.

Signature:
Date:

Researcher signature:

Appendix K: Educational Psychologist Focus group Debriefing sheet

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

A study exploring the factors that facilitate and act as a barrier to a sense of school connectedness amongst secondary aged students and parents who identify as being Black and the implications for Educational Psychology practice in the North-East of England

Thank you for your time and contributions to this research. This sheet contains information about what will happen next and what support is available if you have been affected by your participation in this research.

What happens if I do not want my data to be included anymore?

Please contact the researcher no later than 24/01/23. Your data will be withdrawn from the study and will not be included in the subsequent analysis and write up. After the proposed date, you will not be able to withdraw your data.

I feel uncomfortable by some of the issues discussed in the questionnaire and am concerned about my child, what support is available for us?

- You may wish to contact the following organisations for further support:

  British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy – *Professional association for counsellors and therapies.* Visit www.bacp.co.uk

  Samaritans – *Telephone consultation line, run by volunteers*. Call 116 123 (available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year) or visit www.samaritans.org

What will happen to the results of the research study?

- You can request to meet the researcher or request a written summary of the findings.
- The results will be written in a doctoral thesis with the potential for future

  publication. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

- Results will also be shared with the organisations that supported recruitment into the study, as well as Educational Psychology Services. You will not be identified in the delivery of this information.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, please contact me:

Researcher: Samantha Baloro

Email: s.l.b.baloro1@newcastle.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about any aspect of this research project, please contact my research supervisor Dr. Wilma Barrow, Joint Director DAppEdPsy Programme (w.barrow@newcastle.ac.uk)

Appendix L: Interview Schedule – Children

Interview question	Literature that guided Interview question development

School environment
- Can you tell me about your school?
  o What is the size of your school?
  o How many year groups in each year?
  o What type of school is it?
  o How do you feel about physical environment?
  ▪ Are there open spaces?
  ▪ Does this influence your feelings of connection to your school?
  o Have you been at your school since year 7?
  o How did you find the transition into your school?
  ▪ What do you think helped your transition?
  ▪ What did not help your transition?
- Can you tell me about the behaviour policy/expectations?
  o Does the behaviour policy influence how you feel about your school?
  o How do you feel about the hair rules? Uniform rules?
  o Do you think that the school rules are applied fairly?
  o Is there an exclusion? Isolation policy? Does this affect your experiences?
- What pastoral support is there at your school?
  o Is there anything offered by the school to support your physical or emotional wellbeing?
	Questions influenced by Blum (2005) and Waters (2010) ecological model of school connectedness in the structural (Class size, school environment), Functional (School policies, Pastoral support, built environment (Physical school space)

○ Do you feel comfortable talking to staff members about any issues you might have? ○ Do you have a house system at your school? - Do you feel a part of your school? ○ What do think has helped? ○ What do you think has not helped you feel a part of your school?	
School day (Will use the 'toolbox visual approach' for this section) - Can you tell me about a normal school day? - Are there any lessons you enjoy the most? - Do you feel connected to what you learn in lessons? Eg: history, PSHE - What is school like outside of lessons? Breaktime, lunchtime	Questions influenced by Blum (2005) and Waters (2010) ecological model of school connectedness in the structural environment (School)
Peers - Do you have people you view as your friends? - Can you tell me about them? - How did you find the process of developing friendships when you first arrived?	Questions influenced by Waters et al. (2009) ecological model of school connectedness (relationships with peers)
Teachers - Can you tell me about your teachers or other staff members? - Do you think the adults in school care for you? - Do you think that the adults in school want you to do well? - How do you feel about ability groupings? Has this influenced your views about engaging in school? - Have you developed positive relationships with any staff members?	Questions influenced by Blum (2005) and Waters (2009) ecological model of school connectedness (relationships with teachers and view that teachers care for children personally and academically)

- What do you think has helped develop this relationship? - What do you think might make it difficult to develop positive relationships with staff?	
Racial identity and school connectedness - Are there students from a range of backgrounds in your school? - Are your friends from similar or a range of different racial backgrounds? - Is being Black important to you? - Do you think your racial identity matters to teachers? - Do you think your racial identity has impacted your experience at school? - Do you think that pupils from a range of racial backgrounds are treated fairly? - Do you think Black staff are treated fairly at your school? - What do you think your school does to help Black students feel connected in school? BHM, assembly - If you could give advice to a school that wants to help Black students feel better connected to school, what would that be?	These questions were informed by my cognisance of CRT (Degado, 2017; Gillborn and Ladson-Billings, 2016). These questions aimed to explore whether children viewed that their racial-identity affected their friendships, relationships with staff, how they were treated in school and their experiences in school.
SLR Synthesis (Visual approach - Will use the 'toolbox visual approach' for this section) - Discuss and show initial SLR Model of school connectedness. Are there any themes that you relate to? Are there any themes that you do not relate to?	Clark et al. (2013) discussed that the use of 'Plus, minus, interesting, can support participants with seeing topics from a different perspective. This approach was utilised to support discussion of SLR mindmap of themes (See Chapter 1, Pg. 26)
Extra-curricular activities - Are you involved in any clubs/sports or extracurricular activities at school? - Why did you choose these activities? - Does your school organise school trips?	Questions influenced Waters (2010) ecological model of school connectedness in the functional environment (extracurricular activities and involvement in decision making) these aspects were described as being part of the functional environment.

- Do you enjoy them? - Are you involved in any student decision making bodies? - What influenced this decision? - Before we finish, is there something about your experience in school that you think influences your school connectedness that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?	
Closing questions - How did you feel about taking part in the interview? How do you feel now? - Is there anything else you would like to say?	Questions designed to provide a space to emotionally debrief (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) as well as discuss anything else that they wanted to share (Sowicz et al., 2019)
Examples of Narrative inquiry - Can you tell me about your school? - Can you tell me about the behaviour policy/expectations? - Can you tell me about a normal school day? - Can you tell me about them? (your friends) - Can you tell me about your teachers or other staff members? - Why was this story important to you?	Questions that are meant to open up topics, and construct answers in a way that is meaningful utilisiing approaches that provide extended accounts of narratives such as “Tell me what happened” (Riessman, 2008, Pg.25)

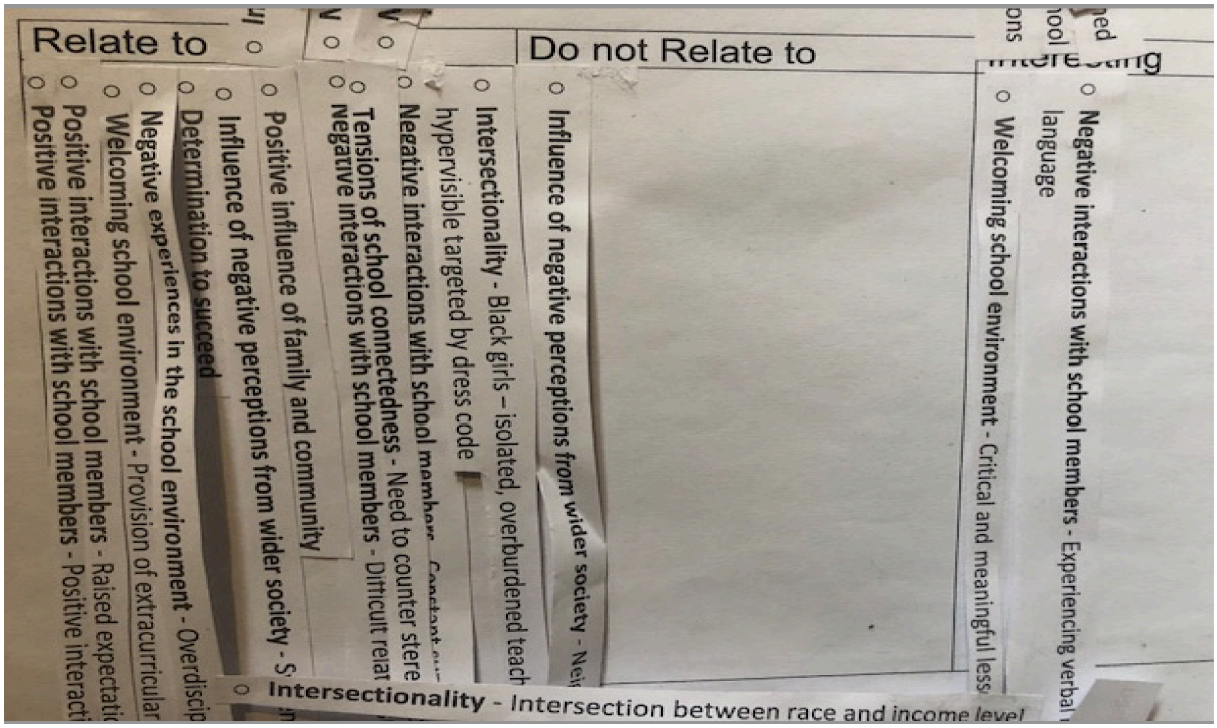
Appendix M: Parent Questionnaire and Interview Questions

Interview question	Literature that guided Interview question development
- Can you tell me about what influenced your decision for your child to attend their school? ○ Did the demographic of the school affect your decision	Questions influenced by Waters (2010) ecological model of school connectedness in the structural (Class size, school environment),
- What are your views about how your child's school has developed a relationship with you, as a parent?	Questions influenced by Waters (2009) ecological model of school connectedness (parent-teachers relationships)
- What are your views about the school rules in your child's school? - What are your views on whether your child is treated as equally as their peers?	Questions influenced by Blum (2005) and Waters (2010) Functional environment (School policies)
- What are your views about whether your child's teachers care about them? - What are your views about whether your child's teachers expects them to do well?	Questions influenced by Blum (2005) and Waters (2009) ecological model of school connectedness in the functional environment (high learning expectations and view that teachers care for children personally and academically)
- Do you think that your child has developed friendships in school?	Questions influenced by Waters (2009) ecological model of school connectedness (peer relationships)
- Do you think that your child feels that they can be themselves at school with staff and students? - Do you think that your child feels different from other students in school? - Do you think that your child feels a sense of connectedness to their racial identity in school?	These questions were informed by my cognisance of CRT (Degado, 2017; Gillborn and Ladson-Billings, 2016). These questions aimed to explore whether parents viewed that their children's racial-ethnic identity affected how they are treated in school and their experiences of connection in school.

- What are your views on your child's sense of school connectedness in school? - What are your views on whether your child feels connected to what they learn in their school? Example: History, English -	
- Is there anything that you would like to share?	Closing questions designed to provide a space to discuss anything else that parents wanted to share (Sowicz et al., 2019)

Appendix N: Use of adapted ‘Plus, Minus, Interesting’ method relating initial SLR synthesis themes

This involves participants identifying a ‘Plus, minus, interesting’ aspect of the topic that is being explored in research. In this study, this was adapted to ‘Relate, Do not Relate, Interesting’ to discuss initial SLR themes and ‘Don’t like, Okay, Like’ to discuss experiences of connectedness during the school day.



Appendix O: Educational Psychologist Focus Group questions

Coe et al. (2017) discussed that focus groups might be utilised to explore changes in perspectives that might emerge through dialogue. To explore changes in thinking that might have occurred through engaging in dialogue about Black children and parents' experiences of school connectedness, the following were enquired:

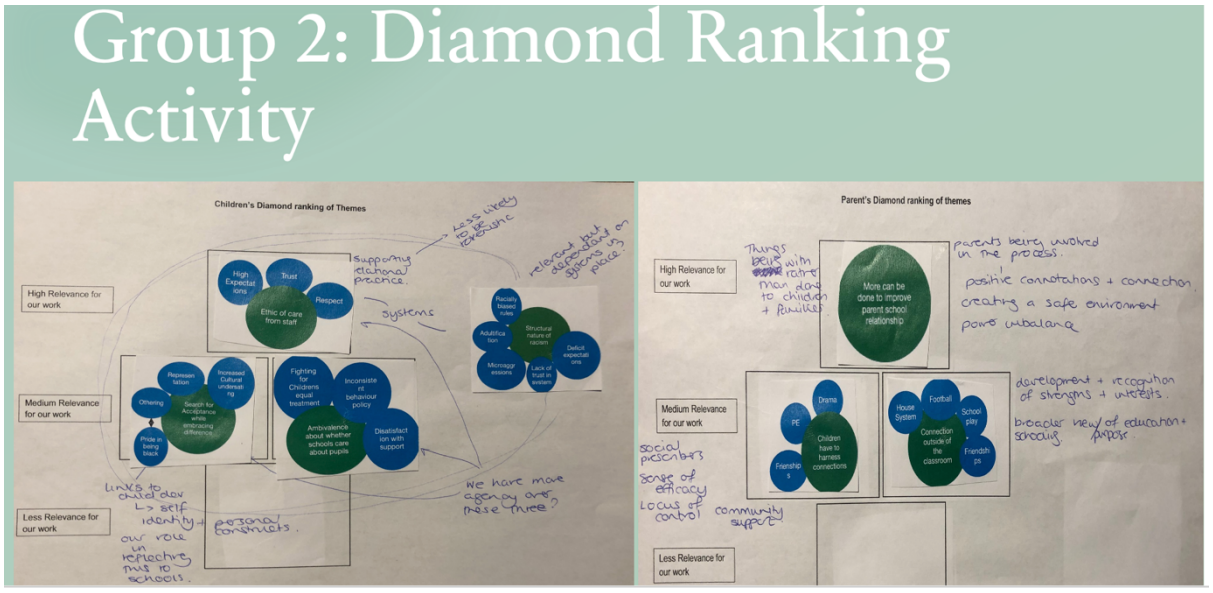
EP Focus group Questions: Beginning of focus group

- 1a) To what extent do you think Black pupils and their parents feel connected to schools in the North-East of England? Why do you think this?
- 1b) Do you think that there might be any barriers or enablers to Black young people's and their parents' experiences of school connectedness in the North East?

EP Focus group Questions: End of focus group

- Has anything changed in your thinking about Black students and parents' experiences of school connectedness in the North-East of England during this session?
- Is there anything that has been discussed that you think has implications for your work or for the service?

Appendix P: Educational Psychologist Diamond Ranking Activity



Appendix Q: Codebook extract

Code	Description	Origin – Inductive/Deductive	Example
Representation influenced parents' choice of school	Child recalling how the success of another Black student influenced parents' decision for them to attend the school. Influence of representation in school choice,	Inductive – generated from Transcript	Child Transcript 2: *"I didn't even want to go to that school but my parents like, heard that someone else who's Black did really well in that school, like their friend's daughter or something."*
Restrictive nature of hair policy	Hair policy appears to be restrictive, and controlling in specific reference to Black children.	Inductive/Deductive. -generated from Transcript. -Discussion guided by conversation of SLR themes	Child Transcript 1: *"Hair Policy? Probably if you get a haircut, you can't have it in particular ways. You can't get dreadlocks or stuff like that. I mean you get talked to saying you can't do it again. Or if you want a cut to just sort of style it out, they tell us you can't have that as well. So it's very hard"*
Family influence in supporting friendship development in school	Child recalling how interactions between family and school system supported friendship development.	Inductive – generated from Transcript	Child Transcript 4: "*My mom was a good friend of her dad. Yeah. So like, I sort of knew who she was, like, I've never like met her before. And she was friends with this Black girl who she already knew. So they were already together. And then obviously, like, we weren't in the same form, I had no lessons. But then, like I just started speaking to her and*

			then I got to know her. And then she started coming round."
Racial opportunity gap in participating in extracurricular activities	Child questioning if there is a difference in opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, which is influenced by the effects of racial inequalities. Effects of Hypervisibility.	Deductive/Inductive --generated from Transcript -generated from CRT	Child Transcript 3: "*I went to this theatre group, there was one Black person, and one Indian person, but I think last year I was the only Black person.. the rest of the people were whiteaAnd I was like, really weird because like, I know a lot of people who like theatre, but not everybody gets the opportunity."*

Appendix R: Theming Process abstract

Theme	Code	Description	Origin – Inductive/Deductive	Example
Children Theme: Structural Nature of Racism	Child: Discriminatory language used by staff	Child recalled an experience of substitute teacher using racialised language in school, which was specifically targeted at Black children and teacher then enforcing racialised segregation in the classroom. Demonstrated resistance by not acknowledging teacher and then holding teacher to account for their use of racialised language by clarifying what they meant by their language.	Inductive/deductive -generated from Transcript -generated from CRT	Child Transcript 1: *"We had this substitute once and she like she split us up. This part was all White people and this part was all Black people. We didn't care cause all the Black people are part of my friend group. We didn't mind it but it still felt racist. So we're all just talking, messing about and stuff like that. She's just kept shouting at us. Stop, stop, stop. Stop with that monkeys! Stop acting like monkeys And I said what do you mean stop acting like monkeys? That is kinda racist and she said oh I didn't mean it like that and then she started shouting at us for no reason stop acting like that! We just ignored it. We were just shouting with each other. Just having jokes. bouncing with each other. And then she shouted at us stop acting like monkeys! you little monkeys!"*
Parent Theme:	Parent: Child has to use imagination to	Parent viewed that as their child did not see themselves as being	Inductive - generated from transcript.	Parent Transcript 3: *"I don't think that she does feel particularly connected to most things. One*

Children have to harness connection	see themselves in curriculum	represented in the curriculum, they aimed to counter this by using their imagination.		*thing I think she does feel is Mandarin. Her Godmothers daughter lives in China and is teaching. She finds it fascinating and there are personal connections for her that she can kind of see people who look like her doing things in places that she would never have imagined."*
EP Theme: Implications for future practice	EP: Implication at the organisational level	EP discussed that an implication for their work might involve working with SLT to ensure that there are clear policies in place to act against racism in school.	Inductive – generated from Transcript	EP Transcript 7: "*To ensure that any concerns around bullying, racism and cultural insensitivities are addressed with SLT and to act as a critical friend with regards to how policies and procedures address these issues."*