

## **A Structural Approach to Understanding Black British Caribbean Academic Underachievement in the United Kingdom**

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### **Abstract**

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The contemporary underachievement of black British Caribbean youth in the United Kingdom is an epiphenomenon of their historical racial-class experiences within the global capitalist social structure of class inequality under American hegemony. Against identity politics and John Ogbu's burden of acting white hypothesis, in this article, we posit Paul C. Mocombe's (2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010) mismatch of linguistic structure and social class function hypothesis as a hermeneutical framework for understanding and explaining the underachievement of black British Caribbean youth vis-à-vis their white and Asian counterparts in the United Kingdom.

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**Keywords:** Ideological domination, Linguistic Structure, black British Caribbeans, Capitalism, Underclass, Underachievement, Social Structure, mismatch of linguistic structure and social class function, African Americans, blacks, students, achievement

### **Introduction**

The education of black British Caribbean students in the UK remains a significant cause for concern ever since their arrival in significant numbers in the 1950s. The inability or unwillingness of the British school system to help young black people fulfill their academic potential has been extensively discussed for the past 40 years (Coard 1971; Rampton 1981; Swann 1985; Sewell 1997; Gillborn & Gipps 1996; Gillborn & Mirza; Majors 2001; Archer & Francis 2007; Tomlinson 2008). This discussion has taken place under the guise of the proverbial black-white academic achievement gap.

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Hence just as in the United States, the black-white academic achievement gap has also been a focus of research in the UK (Strand, 2012). Research on educational attainment in the UK configures attainment between the main ethnic groups, whites, Asians (Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis), Chinese, and blacks (Caribbean and African). The achievement levels of these various minority groups have increasingly been the focus of much research and debate (Tomlinson, 1984; 2008; Archer, 2003; Chanda-Gool 2006; Archer & Francis 2007; Abbas 2007).

### **Background of the Problem**

Concerns about black children and their performance in school were voiced as early as the 1950s. A 1963 study by Brent LEA (Local Education Authority) found the performance of African Caribbean children was on average lower than whites in reading, arithmetic and spelling. During this period, black children were often placed in low streams and 'remedial' classes or in 'special' schools (Townsend, 1971). The over-representation of black children in schools for the educationally sub-normal, as they were known then, became a very emotive issue in the early seventies discussed eloquently in Coard's (1971) seminal text *How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Subnormal in the British School System*. His work, an expression of the deep anger felt by black parents and the black community concerning the education of their children, also acted as a catalyst for central and local government to recognize the problem. However, the Warnock Report (1978) on Special Educational Needs ignored the issue in their report despite the anxieties of parents and some schools.

Throughout the 1970s there was increasing attention to the lower performance of black Caribbean children. For instance, the Inner London Education Authority's Research Statistics Group reported that the reading scores of black Caribbean children were extremely low compared to indigenous white children.

The continued over-representation of black students in exclusion units, popularly known as 'sin-bins' due to exhibiting disruptive or behavioral problems was evident from the 1970s. While awareness of underachievement grew throughout the 1970s, there was little evidence that attempts to address this issue were effective and their under attainment continued for the next four decades (Tomlinson, 2008). Later studies on achievement in the 1990s also replicated the findings of previous research.

In a review of the research on the performance of black and other minority ethnic groups, Gillborn and Gipps (1996:29) state that, "The relatively lower exam achievement of Caribbean students especially boys, is a common feature in most of the academic and LEA research publications." A further review of studies by Richardson and Wood on 13 Inner London LEAs demonstrated that black Caribbean students were the lowest performing ethnic groups in terms of achieving five or more A\*-C General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) the basis of academic achievement at the secondary level. Whilst the national average in 1998 was 46%, for African Caribbean students it was 22% (cited in Hunte, 2004:32).

Reports of underachievement among black Caribbean students has been documented in a major extensive study by Gillborn & Mirza (2000) utilizing a range of data from 1998 and 1999 from 118 out of the 120 local education authorities (LEAs), and a variety of sources including the 1998 & 2000 Youth Cohort Study (YCS) (a major national survey) and data based on submissions from the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). Gillborn & Mirza provide ample data from six LEAs to give a comparative analysis of the performance of blacks students at the baseline assessments, which are assessments based on students' ability at the beginning of their school career, and GCSEs taken towards the end of their schooling. They draw attention to evidence that in each case the performance of black Caribbean students, declines significantly between the beginning and end of their compulsory schooling. In one large authority African Caribbean students enter school as the highest attaining group but leave school not gaining five GCSE grades. A study on Race on the Agenda (ROTA) indicate a relative decline in the performance of African Caribbean between SATS tests at age 11 and GCSE exams taken at 16 (cited in Gillborn & Mirza, 2000:17).

### **Social, Class, and Gender**

A major feature of Gillborn & Mirza's (2000) research is their inclusion of social class and gender. The link between social class and academic attainment has been established for some time but identification of varied social classes can be problematic. One categorization that Gillborn & Mirza explain, used by many academic writers is the simple distinction between 'manual' and 'non manual' backgrounds where the former can be used as a marker of working class and the latter middle class.

Gillborn & Mirza (2000) found that generally students from non-manual backgrounds have significantly higher attainment, as a group than their counterparts of the same ethnic origin from manual households, which confirms the strong relationship between class and educational achievement. However, in the case of black British Caribbean students, the social class difference is not as significant; the trend is actually slightly reversed in one cohort. Black students were less likely to attain five GCSE passes than peers of the same social class in any other ethnic group. There has been a decline in their achievement at the beginning of the research period in 1988 when black students were the most successful of the groups from manual backgrounds. During the research period there were points of relative decline in the performance of black Caribbean and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students from both manual and non-manual backgrounds. The findings of Gillborn & Mirza (2000, p. 20) highlight that "inequalities of attainment are now evident for black students regardless of their class background."

In addition to discussions on the social class dimension of black achievement, research has drawn attention to the differences between boys and girls in general, especially in the 1990s when the Department for Education & Employment (DfEE) (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000:22) reported a significant gap between the attainment of boys and girls with girls having a 10 point lead with 42.8% of boys and 53.4% of girls attaining five grades. It should be pointed out that boys' underachievement is not a consistent trend across subject areas. There are differences in the achievement patterns between the genders in some curriculum areas, with the gains that girls make at GCSE reversed in A (Advanced) Level attainment. Data from the YCS suggest that while the gender gap is now established with girls from the main minority ethnic groups more likely to achieve five higher grade GCSEs than boys of the same ethnic origin and this is consistent with the recent figures reported for 2010/2011 below. There are inequalities of attainment between ethnic groups irrespective of the gender of students.

Relying on data from an YCS, Gillborn and Mirza found that although at GCSEs black girls attained more than black boys, their levels of attainment were below white and Indian girls between the periods 1988 and 1995.

From 2003 robust statistical data became available based on students achieving five or more A\*-C GCSE including Maths and English.

The data provides an accurate reflection of the national trend in education of achievement between the different main ethnic groups. The overall average level of achievement for 2011 is 58 percent. Figure 1, *Key Stage 4: Proportion of Pupils Achieving 5 or More A-C Grades at GCSE or Equivalent Including English and Mathematics GCSEs by Ethnic Group, 2006/07 and 2010/11*, gives a breakdown of the levels of achievement based on ethnicity between 2006/2007 and 2010/2011.

The proportion of students achieving five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Mathematics GCSEs continues to vary between the different main ethnic groups. Students of any white background achieved in line with the national level, with 58.0 per cent achieving 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Mathematics GCSEs, compared with the national level of 58.2 per cent. This score has remained relatively stable since 2009/10. Students of any black background achieved below the national level with 54.3 percent of black students having a gap of 3.8 per cent. This gap has narrowed by 2.0 percentage points from 2009/10 and 4.8 percentage points compared with 2006/07. Black Caribbean students perform lower, 48.6 per cent, than their Black African counterparts with 57.9 per cent. Interestingly, the performance of Black Africans is higher than students of Pakistani origin. Asian students performed above the national level with 61.8 per cent, a gap of 3.6 percentage points. The gap has widened by 1.2 percentage points between 2006/07 and 2010/11. Chinese students are the highest attaining ethnic group. The attainment gap between Chinese students and the national level is 20.4 percentage points, remaining the same from 2009/10. Whilst the numbers of Chinese students achieving the benchmark has increased between 2006/07 and 2010/11, the rate of improvement is slower than other ethnic groups.

Achievement based on gender for all ethnic groups is also a significant feature which is demonstrated in *Table 1 Achievements at GCSE and Equivalent for Pupils at the End of Key Stage 4 by Ethnicity*. Girls outperform boys in the proportion achieving 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent.

There is however some variability in the extent of the attainment gaps between girls and boys. The gender gap for Black Caribbean students is 12.5 percentage points, compared with a 5 national gender gap of 7.3 percentage points. Irish students have the lowest variation in attainment by gender, with a gap of 2.1 percentage points.

Further research on ethnicity and education indicates that students of Nigerian origin perform better than their Caribbean counterparts (Demie 2005; Demie et al 2006). The matter is further complicated by recent research which suggests white working class boys on free school meals (FSM) are the lowest achievers in the UK (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007). (Currently, UK writers use students' eligibility for free school meals (FSM) as an indicator of social disadvantage). However, as Gillborn (2008) points out white non-FSM students have higher success rates than most of their peers of the same gender from different ethnic groups. The greatest inequalities are between white and black Caribbean students and this is true for both genders. Research by Stand (2012) who draws on the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) also indicates a white British-Black Caribbean achievement gap at age 14. In spite of these fascinating trends many black Caribbean boys are six times more likely than white boys to be excluded from school (DfES, 2006). The scale of the challenge of black underachievement is evidenced by numerous conferences including the annual Black Child Conference in London organized by the Member of Parliament, Diane Abbott.

### **Theory and Method**

A plethora of studies explain the underperformance of black Caribbean pupils, particularly black Caribbean boys, in the UK vis-à-vis the aforementioned ethnic groups. These theories range from institutional racism (Rampton 1981; Macpherson 1999) and peer group pressure (Sewell 1997; 2000), to more sophisticated models of the wider inequalities in society, practiced in schools by teachers who exclude pupils on the basis of their race, class and gender and the intersection of these components (Wright et al. 2000; Majors 2001; Archer & Francis 2007).

Within the last 40 years, postmodern and post-structural emphasis on identity politics and John Ogbu's (1986) burden of acting white hypothesis has dominated both the US and UK contexts not only in the scholarly journals, but also public policy initiatives, multicultural education, mentoring programs, standardization of curriculum, parent involvement, and after-school programming, adopted to avoid the stigma of acting white high attaining black students perceive among their black peers.

Postmodern and post-structural theories on education highlight education as a “discursive space that involves asymmetrical relations of power where both dominant and subordinate groups are engaged in struggles over the production, legitimation, and circulation of particular forms of meaning and experience (Erevelles, 2000: 30). As such, postmodern and post-structural theorists “examine the discursive practices by which student subjectivity (as intersectionally constructed by race, class, gender, and sexuality) is produced, regulated, and even resisted within the social context of schooling in postindustrial times” (Erevelles, 2000: 25). Academic underachievement from this perspective is viewed as the by-product of marginalization, domination, and alienation based on identity and learning styles/multiple intelligences. Pedagogically, the public policy choice of postmodern and post-structural theorists are for the most part multicultural education and multiple modes of learning and teaching, which addresses the intersection and diversity of subjective positions and multiple intelligences found among students in schools (Mocombe and Tomlin, 2010, 2013; Wright, 2013).

John Ogbu’s burden of acting white hypothesis suggests that black students academically underachieve for fear of being labeled “acting white” by their black peers. Academic success is viewed as the status marker of whites. Therefore, many black students conceal their academic prowess for fear of marginalization and alienation from their black peers. More than 40 years have passed since postmodernism and post-structuralism made identity politics fashionable, and Fordham and Ogbu initially gave credence to the “burden of Acting white” and the “oppositional peer culture” hypothesis in their essay “Black Students’ School Success: Coping with the “Burden of Acting White” (1986).

Although social scientists have produced very little empirical evidence to substantiate either the correlation between identity politics and academic achievement on standardized tests or the validity for a “burden of acting white,” there is still strong public support and belief in their assertions for explaining the academic underachievement of black students and the black/white achievement gap (Tyson et al, 2005, p. 582). Schools and school boards have introduced multicultural education, head start programs, mentoring and counseling programs, and black achievement in education has been stressed above all things else in the school curriculum in order to combat the affects of the burden-of-acting-white.

Yet in spite of these efforts, blacks everywhere on average score disproportionately poorly on standardized tests compared to their white counterparts. In the United States, for example, just 12% of African-American 4<sup>th</sup> graders have reached proficient or advanced reading levels, while 61% have yet to reach the basic level. In a national assessment of student reading ability, black children scored 16% below white children. Forty-six percent of black adults, compared with 14% of white adults, scored in the lowest category of the National Adult Literacy survey. The results indicate that blacks have more limited skills in processing information from articles, books, tables, charts, and graphs compared with their white counterparts (Gordon, 2006, p. 32). More perplexing, the students who lose the most ground are the higher-achieving black children.

“As black students move through elementary and middle school...the test-score gaps that separate them from their better-performing white counterparts grow fastest among the most able students and the most slowly for those who start out with below-average academic skills” (Viadero, 2008, p. 1). As previously highlighted, the numbers among British Caribbean blacks are far worse in places like the United Kingdom (Mocombe and Tomlin, 2010, 2013). In the present article, the authors, against identity politics and Ogbu’s oppositional thesis, offer an alternative structural framework, based on the shift of production in the two societies, within which researchers ought to begin to study the black-white achievement gap that persists among black British Caribbean youth in the UK in spite of efforts in place to resolve the issue. This is a relational argument articulated by Paul C. Mocombe in the case of black Americans (2005, 2007, 2009, 2010), which seeks to demonstrate the relational impact that capitalism, globalization, and the US postindustrial mode of production and its media control has on influencing black youth in the US to academically underachieve.

Mocombe’s “mismatch of linguistic structure and social class function” hypothesis is Neo-Marxist argument that posits that black academic underachievement for black American youth is tied to the intersection between race, racism, and their historical structural class relations to the mode of production in capitalist organization of society. We are suggesting that this same logic holds true in the UK in regards to the underachievement of black British Caribbean Youth.

In other words, black British Caribbean youth in the UK when they initially enter school underachieve, that is have problems processing information from questions, tables, and graphs on standardized tests, due to a phonological, morphosyntactical, and semantical mismatch of linguistic structure between black British talk and Standard British English, which leads to comprehension problems on standardized tests. Later on as they matriculate through school and acquire the Standard English of the school system, which allows them the linguistic flexibility to code switch and better grasp the meaning of texts on standardized tests, their underachievement can be attributed to the social function of their initial linguistic structure, i.e., mismatch of linguistic social class function. Globally, more blacks, of any nationality, have achieved status and upward economic mobility speaking their patois, hustling, playing sports, and entertaining than achieving academically and speaking the *lingua franca* of the power elites. A

As a result, blacks, especially black boys given the opportunities for girls are not widespread in hustling, sports, etc., in their adolescent years are less likely to place much effort into education as a viable means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility in a global marketplace under US hegemony, dominated predominantly by images of successful blacks as hustlers, athletes, and entertainers. Thus, blacks are paradoxically at both an advantage and disadvantage in the global marketplace which has come to define their social roles as hustlers, athletes, and entertainers. On the one hand, their linguistic structure growing up in economically segregated inner-cities are influenced by the black American and British underclasses who in conjunction with the upper-class of owners and high-level executives have positioned athletics and the entertainment industries as the social functions best served by their linguistic structure in the service economy of the US, UK, and globally which subsequently leads to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility for blacks.

On the other hand, their linguistic structure inhibits them from succeeding academically given the phonological, morphosyntactical, and semantical mismatch between their linguistic structure and the function it serves in the postindustrial labor market of the US, UK, etc., and that of Standard (American and British) English and the function they serve in school as a medium to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility for blacks in the society.

School for many blacks, that is to say, is simply a place for honing their athletic and entertainment skills and hip-hop culture, which they can subsequently profit from in the postindustrial economies of the US and UK. Many blacks in America and Britain enter school speaking Black/African American English Vernacular and Black British Talk, respectively. Their linguistic structure in schooling in postindustrial education, which values the exchange of cultural facts as commodities for the postindustrial economy, is celebrated along with their music and athletic abilities under the umbrella of multicultural education. Therefore, no, or very few, remedial courses are offered to teach them Standard American or British English, which initially leads to poor test scores on standardized tests because the phonology, semantics, and syntax, or the way its expressions are put together to form sentences, of BEV/AAEV and BBT juxtaposed against that of Standard English (SE) and Standard British English (SBE) prevents many blacks early on in their academic careers from decoding and grasping the meaning or semantics of phrases and contents of standardized tests, which are written in the English curriculum of schools (Mocombe, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011).

As blacks matriculate through the school system, with their emphasis of succeeding in music and athletics, and acquire the Standard English of the society which offers them linguistic flexibility and the ability to code switch between the two linguistic systems, those who make it become part of the black professional class celebrating the underclass culture, from whence they came, of those who do not make it and therefore dropout of school constituting the black underclass of poorly educated and unemployed social actors looking to the entertainment industry (which celebrates their conditions as a commodity for the labor market) and the streets as their only viable means to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility in blighted inner-city communities.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Hence similarly to black Americans in the United States we are suggesting that the origin of the achievement gap among black Caribbean youth in the UK is grounded in their historical racial-class relations to the mode of production in the global capitalist world-system, which dates from the slave era, and not to identity politics or the burden of acting white.

As Mocombe points out in the case of black America, in agricultural slavery beginning in the early eighteenth century, black America was constituted as a racial caste in class dominated by the social class language game of the black bourgeoisie (E. Franklin Frazier's term), the best of the house servants, artisans, and free blacks from the North, which discriminated against the practical consciousness and linguistic system (social class language games) of field slaves and newly arrived Africans who constituted the black underclass (Mocombe, 2005, 2007). The industrialization of the northern states coupled with black migration to the north from the 1800s to about the mid-1950s, gave rise to the continual racial-class separation between this urban, educated, and professional class of blacks whose practical consciousness and linguistic system mirrored that of middle and upper-middle class whites, and a black underclass of former agricultural workers seeking, like their black bourgeois counterparts, to be bourgeois, i.e., economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility, through education and industrial work in Northern cities.

However, racial discrimination coupled with suburbanization and the deindustrialization, or outsourcing of industrial work to Third World countries, of northern cities left the majority of blacks as part of the poor black underclass with limited occupational and educational opportunities. Consequently, contemporarily, America's transition to a postindustrial, financialized service, economy beginning in the 1970s positioned black American underclass ideology and language, hip-hop culture, as a viable means for black American youth to achieve economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility in the society over education. That is, finance capital in the US beginning in the 1970s began investing in entertainment and other service industries where the segregated inner-city language, entertainment, and athletic culture of black America became both a commodity and the means to economic gain for the black poor in America's postindustrial economy, which subsequently outsourced its industrial work to semi-periphery nations thereby blighting the inner-city communities.

Black Americans, many of whom migrated to the Northern cities from the agricultural South looking for industrial work in the North following the American Civil War and World War I and II, became concentrated in blighted communities where work began to disappear, schools were underfunded, and poverty and crime increased due to deindustrialization and suburbanization of Northern cities.

The black migrants, which migrated North with their BEV/AAEV from the agricultural South, became segregated sociolinguistic underclass communities, ghettos, of unemployed laborers looking to illegal, athletic, and entertainment activities (running numbers, pimping, prostitution, drug dealing, robbing, participating in sports, music, etc.) for economic success, status, and upward mobility. Educated in the poorly funded schools of the urban ghettos, given the process of deindustrialization and the flight of capital to the suburbs and overseas, with no work prospects, many black Americans became part of a permanent, AAEV speaking and poorly educated underclass looking to other activities for economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility. Those who were educated became a part of the Standard-English speaking black middle class of professionals, i.e., teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. (the black bourgeoisie), living in the suburbs, while the uneducated or poorly educated constituted the black underclass of the urban ghettos. Beginning in the late 1980s, finance capital, in order to avoid the oppositional culture to poverty, racism, and classism found among the black American underclass in the urban ghettos, began commodifying and distributing (via the media industrial complex) the underclass black culture for entertainment in the emerging postindustrial service economy of the US over the ideology and language of the black bourgeoisie. Be that as it may, efforts to succeed academically among black Americans, which constituted the ideology and language of the black bourgeoisie, paled in comparison to their efforts to succeed as speakers of Black English, athletes, "gangstas," "playas," and entertainers, which became the ideology and language of the black underclass living in the inner cities of America. Authentic black American identity became synonymous with black underclass hip-hop ideology and language as financed by the upper class of owners and high-level executives of the entertainment industry.

Thus, contemporarily, in America's postindustrial service economy where multiculturalism, language, and communication skills, pedagogically taught through process approaches to learning, multicultural education, and cooperative group works in school, are keys to succeeding in the postindustrial labor market, blacks, paradoxically, have an advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, their linguistic structure growing up in inner cities is influenced by the black underclass who in conjunction with the upper class of owners and high-level executives have positioned athletics and the entertainment industries as the social functions best served by their (BEV) linguistic structure in the service economy of the US, which subsequently leads to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility for blacks in the society.

This is advantageous for the black underclass because the black underclass identity, the language and social function it promotes, becomes an authentic black identity by which black American youth can define themselves and participate in the athletic and entertainment industry of the postindustrial social structure. On the other hand, their linguistic structure inhibits them from succeeding academically given the mismatch between their linguistic structure and the function it serves in the postindustrial labor market of the US, and that of Standard English and the function of school as a medium to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility for blacks in the society.

School for many blacks, in other words, is simply a place for honing their athletic and entertainment skills and hip-hop culture, which they can subsequently profit from in the American postindustrial economy. Many blacks in America enter school speaking Black or African American English Vernacular. Their linguistic structure in schooling in postindustrial education, which values the exchange of cultural facts as commodities for the postindustrial economy, is celebrated along with their music and athletics under the umbrella of multicultural education. Therefore, no, or very few, remedial courses are offered to teach them Standard English, which initially leads to poor test scores on standardized tests because the phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax, or the way its expressions are put together to form sentences, of BEV/AAEV juxtaposed against that of Standard English (SE) prevents many black Americans early on in their academic careers from decoding and grasping the meaning or semantics of phrases and contents of standardized tests, which are written in Standard English. As blacks matriculate through the school system, with their emphasis of succeeding in music and athletics, those who make it academically, athletically, and through the entertainment industry become part of the black professional class celebrating the underclass culture, from whence they came.

An underclass constituted of those who do not make it and therefore drop out of school—poorly educated and unemployed social actors looking to the entertainment industry (which celebrates their conditions as a commodity for the labor market) and the streets as their only viable means to economic gain, status, and upward social mobility in blighted inner-city communities.

Globally this action plays out in the UK, for example, via globalizing forces and the media industrial complex under American hegemony.

Given the rise of globalization under American hegemony and the rise of America's postindustrial economy, which focuses on entertainment and service industries, black American athletes and entertainers have become the dominant bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for black youth culture around the globe over their professional counterparts. Thus, in postindustrial economies like the UK, black youth attempt to achieve economic status and upward economic mobility in the society by emulating the language and behavioral patterns of black American athletes and entertainers who, paradoxically, have become global stars and pariahs in the global social relations of production. So it is in the historical and structural evolution of the social relations of production of the capitalist world-system under American hegemony that the black/white achievement gap in America and the United Kingdom must be understood. Black American underclass culture has been commodified by the upper class of owners and high-level executives in the US for capital accumulation in their postindustrial economies. In doing so, they have positioned black underclass ideology and language as the basis for social integration in their society and the world, thereby perpetuating the underachievement of blacks, which began in slavery in the Americas. The same processes we are suggesting hold true for black British Caribbean youth in the UK.

An increasing number of Caribbean people came to Britain to fill the labor gap in the post-World War II period. In 1951 there were some 15,000 Caribbean newcomers. It is important to mention that America had been the traditional destination for Caribbean people but their entry was restricted because of new legislation, most notably the 1952 McCarren-Warren Act. Therefore, Britain became the natural focus for migration. The early migrants came from islands that had historic links with Britain such as Jamaica, St Kitts, Barbados, and Montserrat. In some cases British organizations such as the London Transport and regional hospital boards launched recruiting drives in the Caribbean (Walvin, 1984).

Many Jamaicans, in particular, were recruited through a network of travel agents. In Barbados, the authorities provided loans and assistance for local migrants.

The extent of population movement varied enormously from island to island. In 1960, for example, 9.2 per cent of Jamaican population and 31.5 per cent of Montserratians emigrated to the United Kingdom, but less than 2 per cent of Trinidadians and Tobagans.

It is estimated by the Migrant Services Division of the West Indian Federation Office that the total number of Caribbean immigrants entering the United Kingdom in 1961 was 238,000 (Peach 1968, p. 15). Most early immigrants were young men without dependents (Foner, 1979). Later migrants were mainly women and children. Dodgson (1985, p. 64) captures some of the experiences of Caribbean women who migrated to Britain during this time:

Life was much harder for women than it was for men...I used to have to take the two children to the child-minder and go to work in the factory – I had to catch the bus at half-past five...I come back and use the coal fire. They rent you a room but you can't do anything...sometimes you had to hide the iron...You think it is little hardness we suffer in this country.

The 1960s saw the enactment of progressively more stringent legislation on immigration. By the 1970s, mass immigration had virtually come to a halt, following the 1971 Immigration Act which put severe restriction on family reunification and chain migration. The total Caribbean population in Britain was estimated at 1.5 percent of the population by 1971. Contemporarily, well over a third of the current Black population is British born and over half of those who are immigrants have been in Britain for more than 30 years. The overall numbers of new immigrants now arriving in Britain is smaller than the numbers returning to the Caribbean. Recent estimates of the Caribbean population provided by the Statistical bulletin (2011) suggests that there are over 600,000 Black Caribbean people (approximately 1.3 per cent) in Britain, of the total population of 55 million. For the most part, British Caribbean blacks come in the main from two social class language groups or games (Ludwig Wittgenstein's term), a patois speaking underclass and an administrative embourgeoisied middle and upper middle class created by their historical racial-class relations within the global capitalist social structure of class inequality. In Britain, both groups constitute a small but unassimilated significant black minority which is more reminiscent of America than the Caribbean.

Following slavery in the Caribbean, most ex-slaves participated in local affairs only marginally more than East Indians. In the French and British Caribbean, for instance, whites controlled the local legislature with a handful of men of color who were ideologically and linguistically interpellated and embourgeoisied as colored middle class administrators of the colonial system.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries witnessed a shift in the power in the Caribbean following slavery and decolonization, however. Black and other people of color increased their influence in government and other institutions under the middle class or European influences (embourgeoisement) of the handful of men of color who once ruled with whites. Although, the relationship between blacks and whites changed, the continued separation of the black majority from the white and brown minorities meant the poor, who were mainly blacks, developed their own underclass patterns of behavior and beliefs, ideologies and linguistic structures, which became juxtaposed against the middle class and European identities, acquired through formal schooling, of those in power following slavery and decolonization.

Education in the Caribbean, for the most part was an elite privilege for the handful of colored men who once ruled with whites. The poor constituted a poorly educated underclass living either in the overcrowded Caribbean capital cities or small farm towns, looking to immigrate to the homeland of their former colonial masters for work and better economic opportunities. The well-to-do, for the most part, paid for private, parochial education; upon completion, they subsequently sent their children abroad for secondary schooling. In many instances, these privilege elites returned back to the islands where they assumed administrative and bureaucratic roles in government or the private sector. Hence Caribbean society, as well as its immigration pattern overseas, would become juxtaposed between, or against, the poorly educated underclass speakers of Creole or Caribbean patois and an embourgeoisied middle class of non-white administrators who, contemporarily, served the same purpose as the handful of colored persons who administered the islands with whites during the colonial period.

Be that as it may, upon immigration to places like the UK beginning in the 1940s, racism in the labor, housing, and educational markets, which paralleled what happened to the black American in the US, segregated the majority of the black Caribbean immigrants seeking to achieve the embourgeoisement of their former colonial masters.

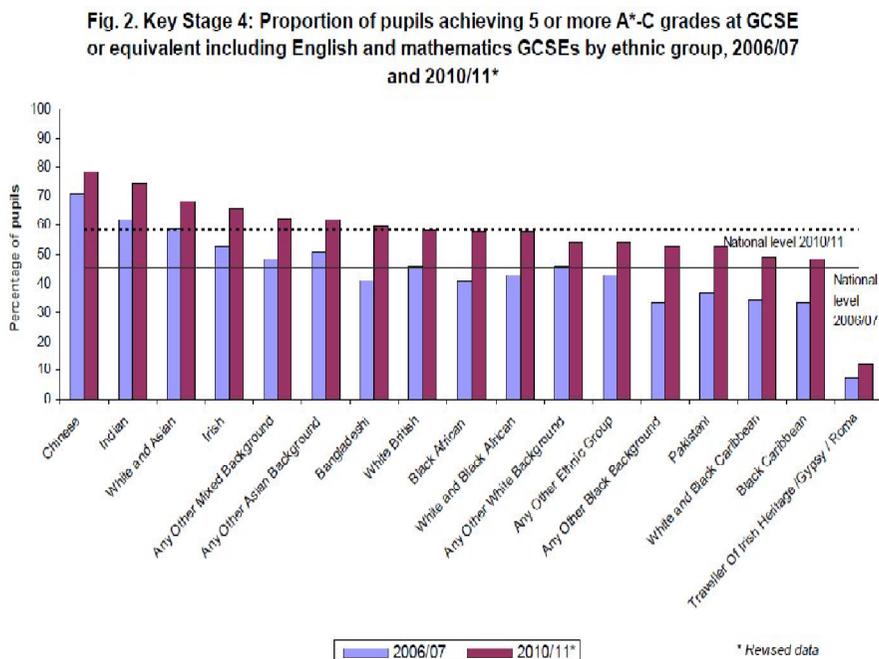
What developed then was a caste, color, and class system in places like the UK in which the black immigrants sought the embourgeoisement of their former colonial masters through education in segregated poor black Caribbean communities where work was beginning to disappear to the suburbs or overseas, suburbanization and deindustrialization respectively, while simultaneously reproducing a class system in which those who did not attain the middle class ideology and language of the former colonial masters constituted an underclass of poorly educated, unemployed, and patois speaking blacks looking to hustling, the entertainment industry, and sports as viable means to status and upward economic mobility in the UK's emerging postindustrial economy.

Subsequently, influenced, via the globalization of the American media, by the success of the black American underclass, who positioned, with the help of corporate finance capital, their underclass culture as viable means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility in America and the global marketplaces' postindustrial economies, black British Caribbean youth beginning around the 1980s sought to do the same as they positioned black British Talk and underclass practices, hustling, participating in sports and the entertainment industry, as means to status in Britain and the global marketplace over and against the educational orientation of the black British and American middle classes of earlier generations who did not perceive their embourgeoisement as the status markers of whites.

This has led to the academic underachievement, as previously highlighted, of black British youth due to two factors: 1) a mismatch of linguistic structure (phonological, morphosyntactical, and semantical mismatch between black British Talk and Standard British English) when they initially enter school; 2) and later on due to a mismatch of linguistic social class function as they do not apply themselves to academically achieve because of the disconnect between their linguistic structure (black British Talk) and economic success for blacks in the UK and global marketplaces' postindustrial economies where black (British and American) underclass language structures and ideological practices have been commodified by corporate capital for capital accumulation and as a means to economic gain, status, and social mobility for the black poor.

Hence, just as in the case of the black American, racial segregation vis-à-vis the structural processes, deagriculturalization, immigration, industrialization, urbanization, suburbanization, deindustrialization, and postindustrialization, involved in global capitalist relations of production of the last four-hundred years constitute the theoretical framework for understanding the emergence and persistence of the black/white academic achievement gap, which is becoming a global phenomenon as blacks lag behind many racial and ethnic groups academically. Future research must continue to focus on the relationship between the racial-class distinctions, middle and underclass identities, in black communities created by their historical relations in the capitalist mode of production, their linguistic structure, and subsequent academic underachievement, which will perpetually be amongst us so-long as blacks are overrepresented in entertainment and athletic professions.

**Figure 1. Key Stage 4: Proportion of Pupils Achieving 5 or More A-C Grades at GCSE or Equivalent Including English and Mathematics GCSEs by Ethnic Group, 2006/07 and 2010/11**



Source: Department for Education and Skills. Statistical First Release February 2012.  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000977/index.shtml>

**Table 1: Achievements at GCSE and Equivalent for Pupils at the End of Key Stage 4 by, Ethnicity Department for Education and Skills. Statistical First Release.**

**Table 2a: Achievements at GCSE and equivalent for pupils<sup>1</sup> at the end of Key Stage 4 by ethnicity**

Years: 2006/07 to 2010/11 (revised)<sup>2,3</sup>

Coverage: England, maintained schools (including Academies and CTCs)

	All pupils <sup>4</sup>					
	Number of eligible pupils <sup>1</sup>			Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C grades inc. English & mathematics GCSEs		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
<b>All pupils<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>288,887</b>	<b>278,045</b>	<b>566,932</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>58.2</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>236,334</b>	<b>227,722</b>	<b>464,056</b>	<b>54.6</b>	<b>61.5</b>	<b>58.0</b>
White British	225,919	217,636	443,555	54.8	61.7	58.2
Irish	984	960	1,944	64.8	67.0	65.9
Traveller of Irish Heritage	67	70	137	19.4	15.7	17.5
Gypsy / Roma	300	295	595	9.7	11.9	10.8
Any other White background	9,064	8,761	17,825	50.7	57.9	54.3
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>9,414</b>	<b>9,361</b>	<b>18,775</b>	<b>54.8</b>	<b>62.2</b>	<b>58.5</b>
White and Black Caribbean	3,161	3,263	6,444	44.5	53.5	49.1
White and Black African	916	895	1,811	53.9	61.5	57.6
White and Asian	1,899	1,860	3,759	63.6	72.6	68.1
Any other mixed background	3,438	3,323	6,761	59.6	65.2	62.3
<b>Asian</b>	<b>22,458</b>	<b>20,749</b>	<b>43,207</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>66.2</b>	<b>61.8</b>
Indian	6,702	6,246	12,948	70.5	78.6	74.4
Pakistani	8,683	7,740	16,423	48.9	56.7	52.6
Bangladeshi	3,452	3,498	6,950	56.7	62.7	59.7
Any other Asian background	3,621	3,265	6,886	56.3	66.6	62.2
<b>Black</b>	<b>12,510</b>	<b>12,879</b>	<b>25,389</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>54.3</b>
Black Caribbean	3,984	4,074	8,058	42.3	54.8	48.6
Black African	7,038	7,393	14,431	52.2	63.2	57.9
Any other Black background	1,488	1,412	2,900	43.1	57.4	52.6
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>1,172</b>	<b>1,131</b>	<b>2,303</b>	<b>73.6</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>78.5</b>
Any other ethnic group	3,676	3,131	6,807	49.9	58.8	54.0

Source: National Pupil Database

1. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 in each academic year.

2. Figures for 2005/06 - 2009/10 are based on final data, 2010/11 figures are based on revised data.

3. From 2009/10 IGCSEs, accredited at time of publication, have been counted as GCSE equivalents and also as English & mathematics GCSEs.

4. Includes pupils for whom free school meal eligibility could not be determined.

5. Includes pupils for whom ethnicity was not obtained, refused or could not be determined.

. - Not applicable.

x - Figures not shown in order to protect confidentiality. See 'Confidentiality' within the SFR text for information on data suppression.

Source: Department for Education and Skills. Statistical First Release February 2012  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000977/index.shtml>

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