

Using Constructivist Grounded Theory to Examine the Experiences of Black British Female Managers

July 2021

Background

- The Equality Act 2010 – means it is unlawful to discriminate against people with protected characteristics.
- ‘Public Sector Duties’ (PSDs) introduced a legal obligation for public organisations to consider race, disability and gender equality when making decisions.



The Equality Act 2010

Institutional Racism

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people”
([Paragraph 6.34](#)).



Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

“..no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities”
(Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, 2021, p8).

Literature Review

“...on average BAME [female] respondents were more ambitious and career-focused than others, especially white British, but in certain respects reported less support” ([Arnold et al., 2019, p 4](#)).

Racial discrimination was far more “vociferous” than gender-based discrimination ([Showunmi, 2020. p 58](#)).

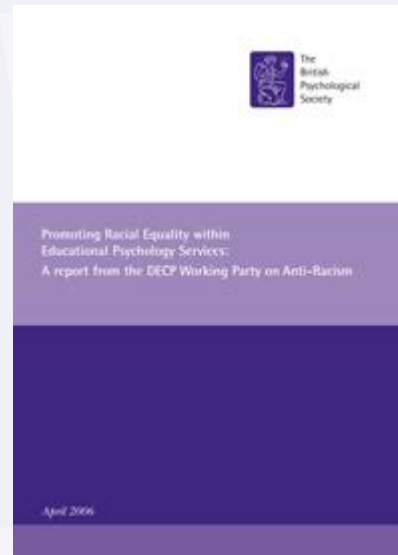
Stereotype threat ([Aronson and Steele, 2005](#)) associated with Black British women of African and Caribbean heritage - angry, laziness, aggressiveness, and dominance ([McGee, 2020](#), [Phipps and Prieto, 2020](#)).

BAME Psychologists

“BAME professionals disappear from the profession? [and] when this pattern of exclusion is repeated time and time again **why do psychologists remain silent?**”
(M’gadzah, 2020, p1).

Aims

And Objectives



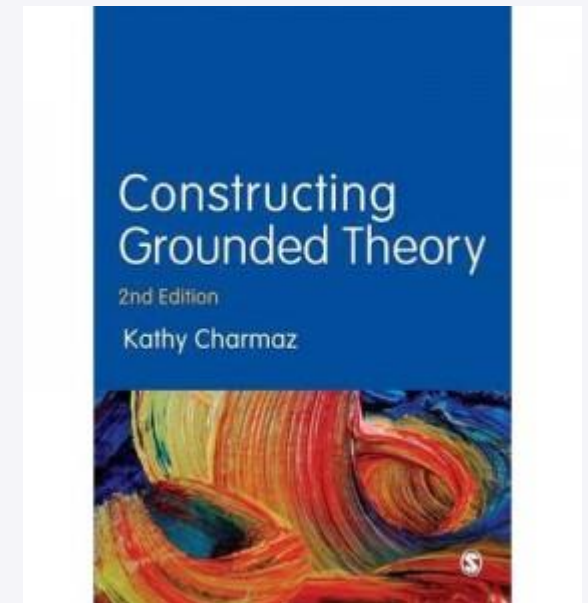
1. To highlight institutional racist practices within Educational Psychology Services and other CYPS, at both individual and Service level, which adversely affect Black British women.
2. To suggest ways to dismantle insensitive practices and to suggest alternative strategies.

See: [Promoting Racial Equality within Educational Psychology Services \(2006\)](#)

Methods

Constructivist Grounded Theory

- reality is subjective
- the researcher's background will unavoidably influence the research findings
- The researcher practises reflexivity
- generalisations are situated in a specific context, i.e., Black British female managers and CYPs workplaces.



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Participants

Name	Age	Occupation
Shirley	60+	FE lecturer
Patricia	50+	FE lecturer
Jenny	40+	Deputy head teacher
Amber	40+	Senior Educational psychologist
Sian	40+	Senior Educational psychologist
Leanne	40+	Senior Educational psychologist
Brenda	50+	Senior Educational psychologist
Georgina	40+	Deputy head teacher
Maxine	50+	HE lecturer
Ann	40+	HE lecturer

Data Collection



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- *Demographic Questionnaire.*
- *Interviews.*

Phases – rapport and sensitivity:

- (i) Apprehension,
- (ii) Exploration
- (iii) Cooperation

(i) Apprehension

‘I know I’ve had like negative impact. I don’t know if it has held me back’ (Jenny).

‘Negative impact, how does that look...?’ (Researcher).

‘I think it makes, I am quite cynical I think, I think it makes me quite cynical yeah, but I am not someone that gives up’ (Jenny).

Are you tired? (Researcher)

‘Yeah, and I feel it’s grossly unfair and it’s grossly unjust and I don’t want to play that game. I feel like, I’m playing a game and I don’t feel like I should have to’ (Jenny).

(ii) Exploration

“I remember being kicked in the shins and things... there was one other Black family at school and we were very well aware of racial abuse... I mean I must have been 4 or something... kids call you names... as you get older you're well aware of the different perceptions that dark skin signify as you walk into a room, it's a very obvious tangible signifier of difference” (Sian).

‘Yeah...I agree with what you said basically... although it's really important to guard against... your energy then becomes toxic, and I don't want that because you don't want to be smirched by the fallibility of people’ (Amber).



(iii) Co-operation

‘...they cared about their kids—all three of us, three girls—and it was a fairly strict upbringing, at the time I thought it was strict, but now I understand why they were strict because they were preparing for the future’ (Ann).

“We do live in a country where Black people are not represented at the highest echelons in great numbers. So there are some things to be aware of, so it’s... we’re still... there’s still ceilings that we have to break through...you really need to take it into account when you analyse these transcripts... around the systems which enable Black people to make it to positions of leadership and the exploration of that’ (Amber).

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Example of a field note

- Jenny took the interview to new directions as it progressed. This was a good thing.
- I need to update the list of questions for the interview. I do not need to follow this list exactly because clearly other more pertinent questions will arise during the interview.
- Listen to recordings straight away and make a list of questions in time for the next interview.
- Do not ask, ‘How do you deliberately take a stand against racism?’ but rather ask ‘What is your attitude towards taking a stand against racism?’ .

Initial Coding

Jenny: Well, I identify myself as primarily a Black woman, a Black teacher that's grown up in England with Jamaican heritage parents.

'I know she prepared me for being a Black woman in Britain more than she had to prepare me for being a woman in Britain' (Ann).

"You go into the workplace; you always have to prove that you are worthy" (Maxine).

- At the end of each stage, I applied initial codes to each portion of the interview transcripts—a method termed ‘fracturing the data’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 160).
- Sentence-by-sentence and event-by-event analyses.
- Scrutinised the data to find *in vivo* codes. *In vivo* codes were used when participants described their experiences with ‘imagery power that far transcend individual situations’ (Charmaz, 1983, p.115).

Initial Coding

Raw Interview Data	Initial Codes	Gerund Code
<p>Jenny: Well, I <u>identify</u> myself as <u>primarily</u> a <u>Black woman</u>, a <u>Black teacher</u> that's grown up in <u>England</u> with <u>Jamaican</u> heritage <u>parents</u> (3).</p> <p>I see myself as very much a <u>Jamaican</u>. I <u>never ever</u> refer to myself as <u>English</u>, but I <u>refer</u> to myself as, and that's a discussion that came up quite recently as well with my <u>colleague</u> who's <u>Jamaican</u>, and it was that you know, why are you saying you're English and when I sort of <u>had</u> to <u>explain</u> to him about it (3).</p> <p>The <u>English</u> would <u>see you</u> like you are a <u>foreigner</u>; at least that's my perception of how I am perceived so I see myself as a <u>strong Black woman</u> (3).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black woman of Jamaican heritage • Grown up in England • She is a foreigner in the eyes of English people. • Her identity is not obvious, it needs explaining. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying herself as a Black woman first • Associating predominantly with her Jamaican heritage • Viewing herself as a Jamaican • Implying that English people view her as a foreigner • Having to clarify her [complex] identity to other Black people • Feeling empowered • Acknowledging that the dominant culture's views serve to marginalise minorities' views • Taking control by attributing positivity and strength being a Black female in the UK • Preserving a positive sense of self-concept

Focused Coding

‘Mum always said, you know, work hard... you know, mum always said you’ve got to work harder than others, you know...you got to do and if you want to work hard, definitely work hard, and you will...

...there is a glass ceiling—and there is a glass ceiling, but you know you can go through the glass ceiling, if you’ve got the drive or the will or the passion, and if you worked yeah...‘I am quite cynical, and I am very much aware that I am having to work harder. I just feel like I am having to work a lot harder than others’ (Jenny).

Over 200 codes were developed in this way (Charmaz, 1983).

Managing, Comparing and Sorting the Codes

Code	Barriers to Career Progression
Definition	Any reference to individual and institutional issues that Black female managers perceived inhibited their career progression.
Abbreviation	B2CP

Theoretical Sampling and Development of Core Categories

- Theoretical sampling began at the end of the first data collection stage, after the researcher analysed the transcriptions from the first two interviews (with
- A final engagement with theoretical sampling took place at the end of the second data collection stage.
- I analysed the data by constantly comparing different groups, people, accounts and experiences
- Bank of advanced memos

Final Coding

After all interviews were transcribed and coded,
Re-examined every set of coded data to ensure
accuracy and consistency.

Some definitions of categories that were developed
at the beginning of the process were redefined.

When do I stop?



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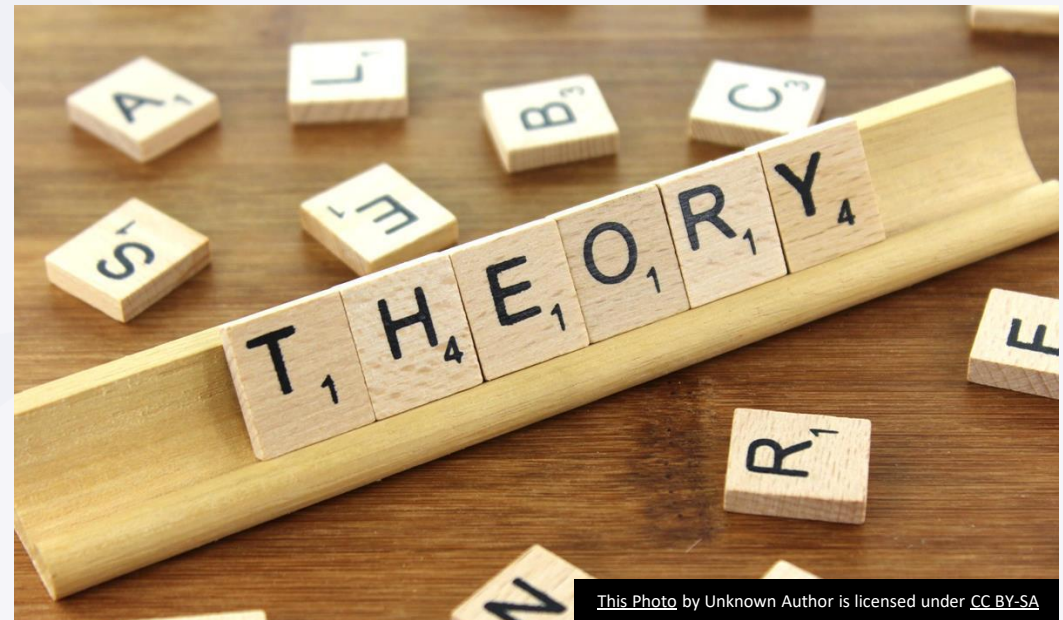
Memo:

Charmaz (2006) advises that when a researcher has examined straightforward research questions that aspire to resolve practice issues in applied fields, a small number of interviews may be sufficient.

...I can stop ...saturation has been reached!

A Substantive Grounded Theory

Substantive theory is a strategic link in the formulation and generation of grounded formal theory. Since substantive theory is grounded in research on one particular substantive area, it might be taken to apply only to that specific area ([Glaser and Strauss, 1999](#))



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A Substantive Grounded Theory...

Siblings and prominent community representatives, taught them about what it means to be a member of a minority ethnic group in the UK.

Blatant and aversive acts of racism that were perpetuated by their school-aged peers and their teachers.

Black students were incapable of learning the English language, suffering from poor self-esteem and lacking a sense of identity (Christian, 2005).

Desire to achieve educational and occupational success remained unswerving.

A Substantive Grounded Theory...

Steadfastness, resilience and sense of determination has enabled them to break through concrete ceilings.

Modern-day versions of racism much more difficult to recognise, prove and challenge.

Institutional racism subtly persists.

A Substantive Grounded Theory...

Miller, D. (2021). Black British female managers—The silent catastrophe

Black British female managers endeavour to walk a precariously fine line between showing self-confidence, determination and assertiveness, and being labelled as 'aggressive'.

They held off threats from negative stereotypes (Aronson and Steele, 2005), questions concerning their capabilities, and behaviours that challenge their authority, by working "20 times harder" (Leanne)".

Reflections and Limitations

Concluding Remarks

CGT research has the potential to contribute to the understanding of Black women's experiences of becoming and being managers in CYPS.

Similar research studies can serve to influence 'positive action', decision-making and/or institutional-level policymaking ([Miller, 2021](#)).

THANK YOU

