

Race and Class in Britain: a Critique of the statistical basis for Critical Race Theory in Britain: and some political implications

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Summary

In this paper I critique what I analyse as the misuse of statistics in arguments put forward by some Critical Race Theorists in Britain showing that 'Race' 'trumps' Class in terms of underachievement at 16+ exams in England and Wales.

I ask two questions, and make these two associated criticisms, concerning the representation of these statistics:

1. With respect to 'race' and educational attainment, what is the validity of ignoring the presence of the (high achieving) Indian/ Indian heritage group of pupils- one of the two largest minority groups in England and Wales? This group has been ignored, indeed, left completely out of statistical representations- charts- showing educational achievement levels of different ethnic groups.
2. With respect to social class and educational attainment, what is the validity of selecting two contiguous social class/ strata in order to show social class differences in educational attainment? **(1)**

At a theoretical level, using Marxist work **(2)** I argue for a notion of 'raced' and gendered class, in which some (but not all) minority ethnic groups are racialised or xeno-racialised and suffer a 'race penalty' in, for example, teacher labelling and expectation, treatment by agencies of the state, such as the police, housing, judiciary, health services and in employment.

I critique some CRT treatment of social class analysis and underachievement as unduly dismissive and extraordinarily subdued (e.g. a critique I make of Gillborn, 2008a, b, 2009a, b, c). I offer a Marxist critique of Critical Race Theory from statistical and theoretical perspectives, showing that it is not 'whiteness', a key claim of CRT, that most privileges or underprivileges school students in England and Wales.

This analysis has policy implications regarding school/ school district/ national education policies, and also wider social and economic policies such as social cohesion, exclusion/ inclusion, and addressing wider economic and power inequalities in European societies (Booth, 2008; Toynbee and Walker, 2008; Hill, 2009a, 2009b; Hill and Kumar, 2009).

Accepting the urgent need for anti-racist awareness, policy and activism- from the classroom to the street- **(3)** I welcome the anti-racism that CRT promulgates and analyses,

while criticising its over-emphasis on 'white supremacy'- and its statistical misrepresentations.

Expected Outcomes

This paper is a contribution to a Europe wide debate about race and class exclusion from educational success and alienation from/ integration into school success, entry to higher education, and social cohesion and stability. It also relates to the political debate about whether a focus on anti-racism is enough, for anti-racists, or whether (as Marxists argue) the focus should also be on creating class unity, similar to the 'Black and White, Unite and Fight' anti National Front activism of the 1970s, which focussed also on class politics. The debate will continue. It is a debate among academics, equality activists and governments concerned about 'social cohesion'. It is also a debate among political groups in the UK, and elsewhere, today.

The findings of this paper are that 'white supremacy' as a CRT form of explaining inequalities is not only *not* supported by statistics, but that in terms of theorising and deriving policy from theory, such a term is too blunt, ignores xeno-racism, and the racialisation of the poor white working class (as, for example, 'chavs' - a perjorative term used to describe and vilify unskilled and poor sections of the white working class-) and downplays social class factors in educational and social alienation.

Statistical Analysis and Presentation: What Critical Race Theorists Show about Education and Achievement in England and Wales at age 16+

The statistics presented in the 2000 Ofsted report by David Gillborn and Heidi Mirza *Educational Inequality; Mapping race, class and gender- a synthesis of research* (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000) showed, in diagrammatic terms, that 'Social Class Difference in Educational Attainment at age 16 in England and Wales was greater than 'Race Difference'.

This evidence sat uncomfortably with the claims of Critical Race Theory that 'race', not class, is the fundamental form of oppression and exploitation in Britain. Some Critical Race Theorists have since redefined the category of class difference in education attainment.

David Gillborn set out his concerns about representation of his earlier work in *The Times Educational Supplement* of 30 May 2008, (Marley, 2008)

David Gillborn, professor at London University's Institute of Education, claims that his research, which was the first to plot the relative impacts of gender, race and class on educational achievement, has been widely misinterpreted.

A report he wrote for Ofsted in 2000 mapped the relative achievements of each group on a graph. The impact of class on attainment appeared to dwarf race and gender. The gap between groups at the top and bottom end of the social scale seemed three times as big as the gap between black and white pupils.

But those findings have now been updated and - published for the first time in the graph above - show that class may not be the overriding factor after all.

Departing from 2000 report's practice of showing class difference in educational attainment by comparing 'social class 1' (upper professional) with 'social class 5' (unskilled working class), Critical Race Theorists, for example in statistics supplied to the *Times Educational Supplement* (Marley, 2008) now seek to show class difference in educational attainment by comparing 'social class 3' with 'social class 4'. Of course, these differences are considerably narrower than between 'social class 1' and 'social class 5'. Working class achievement is misrepresented by a narrow focus on contiguous strata.

This results in a new chart showing that 'Race Difference' is greater than 'Social Class Difference'. This fits in with CRT theorists claims that 'White Supremacy' rather than 'Capitalist Supremacy' is the most accurate description of oppression.

In addition, in the statistics presented both in the TES (Marley, 2008) and in publications by David Gillborn (2008a, 2009 a, b, c), the high achieving and large Indian heritage population of England and Wales is rendered invisible.

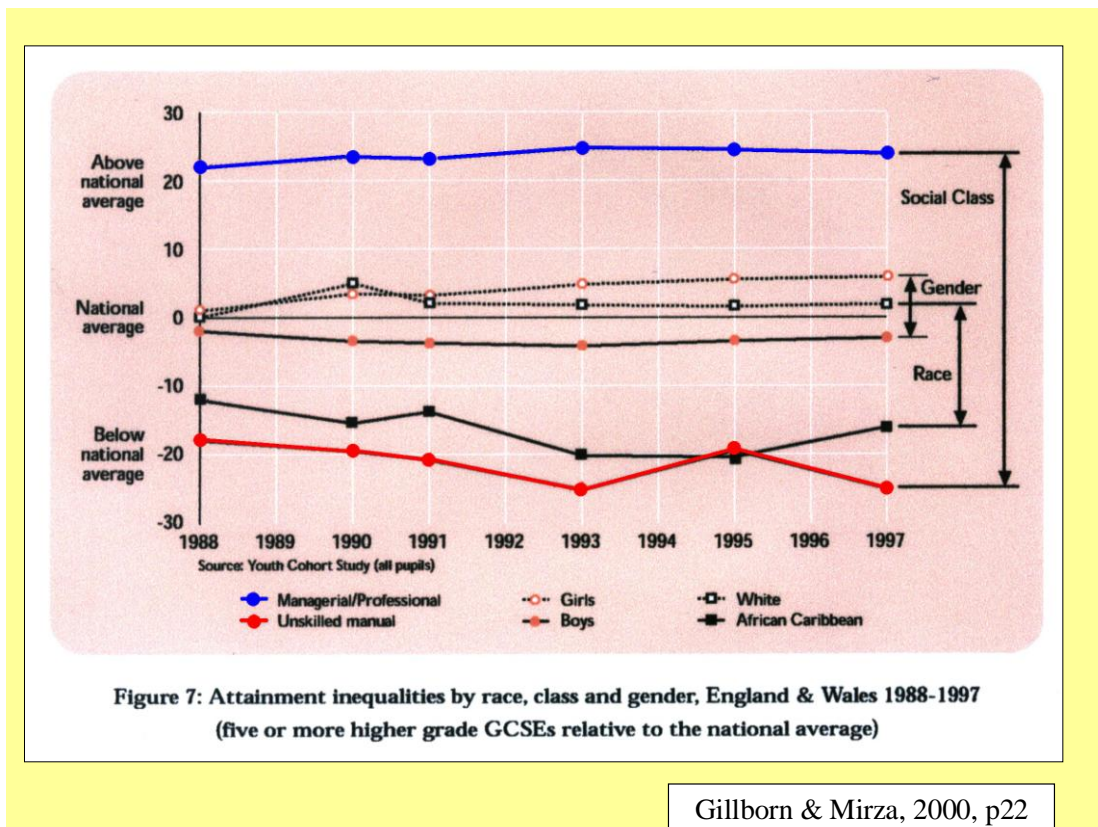
In this paper I question what I see as the misleading statistics reported by the TES. In a much lengthier piece (Hill, 2008a) I referred to statistics by Strand, (2007, 2008a, b), Dehal (2006), Demie, Lewis and McLean (2007), Demie and Tong (2007) in Lambeth, and to my own work (Hill, 2008a). In this paper the focus is much narrower than in Hill 2008a. Here it is to present statistical data as charts, appearing here showing the invalidity of the statistical base and arguments put forward in some current influential UK CRT theory. Thus, in this paper I present alternative representations of the TES/ Gillborn data, showing, to quote the TES conclusion from work by Steve Strand (Strand, 2008a, cited in Ward 2008) that

Dr Strand's analysis did not just consider race and achievement, but how race, class and gender interact. Of the three factors, social economic status has the greatest impact on pupil achievement. The class gap - the difference between the highest- class children's attainment and the lowest - is roughly three times as large as the ethnic gap.

Once class is factored out, the gap between many of the races narrows - but clear differences remain. Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils join Indians in doing better than their white counterparts. Black Caribbean children are the only group to underachieve.

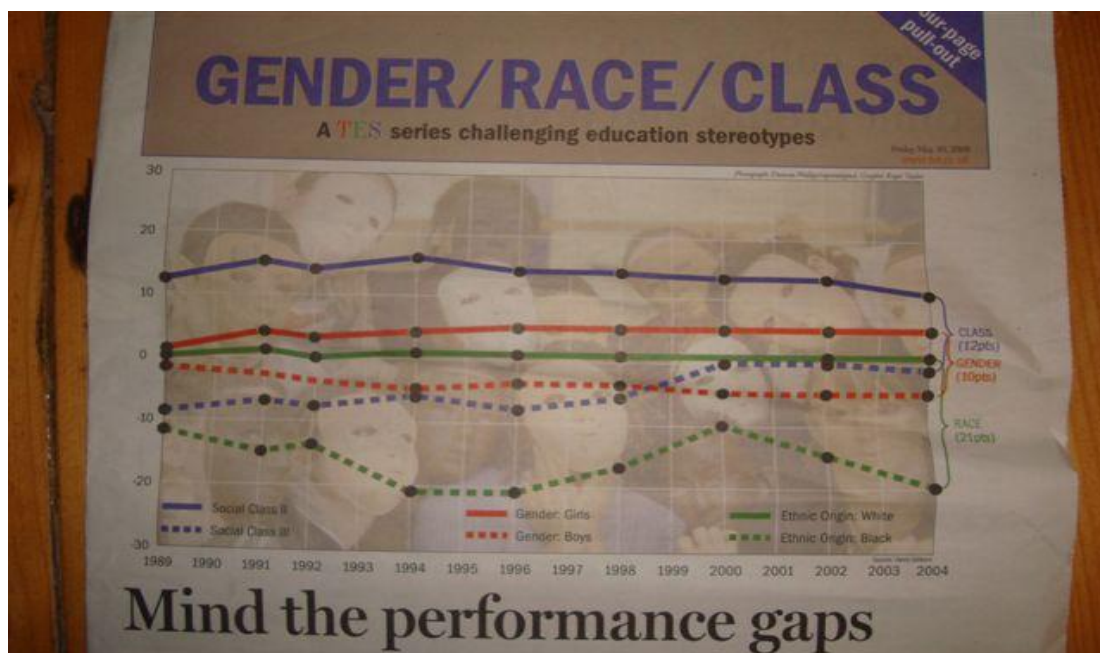
CRT theorists get *from* the 2000 position in this chart below, **Figure 1** (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000)

FIGURE 1: 'Race', Class and Gender and Education Attainment Inequalities 1988-1997



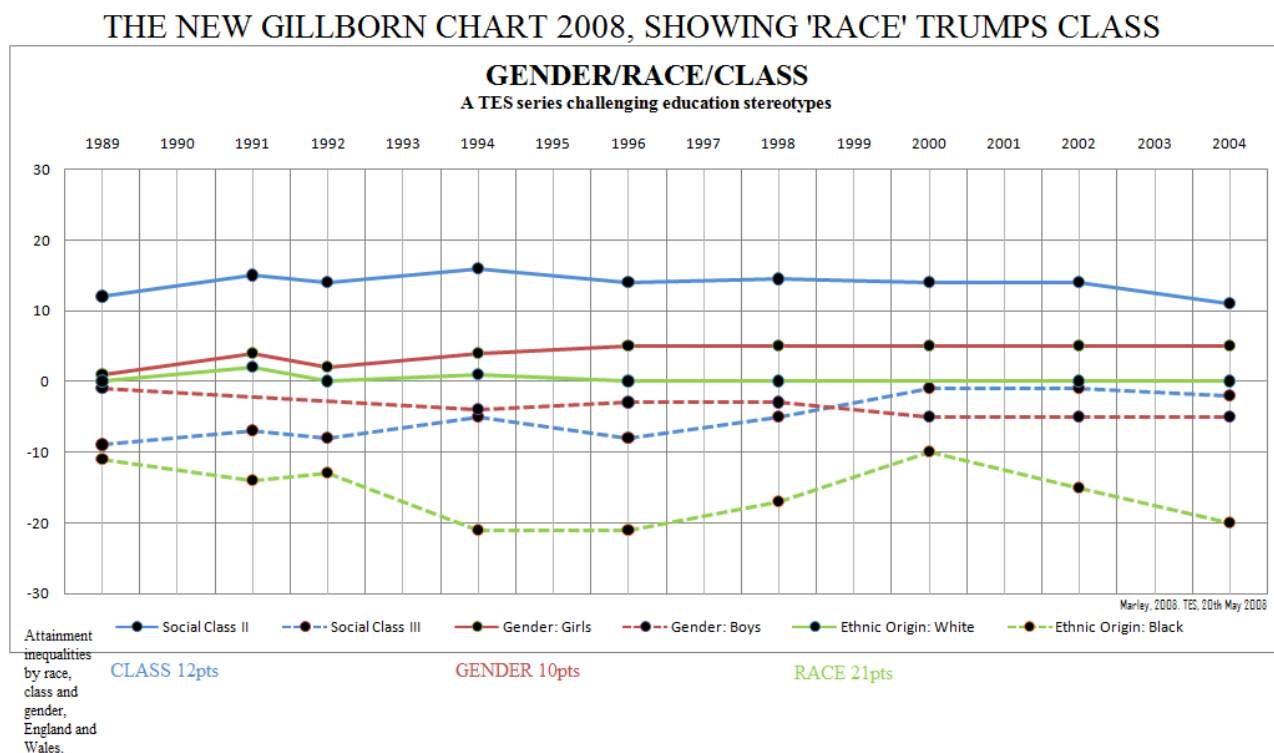
to the position below (**Figure 2**), represented in this chart in the *Times Educational Supplement (TES)* (Marley, 2008)

FIGURE 2: 'Race', Class and Gender and Education Attainment Inequalities 1989-2004 as shown in the Times Educational Supplement (Marley, 2008)



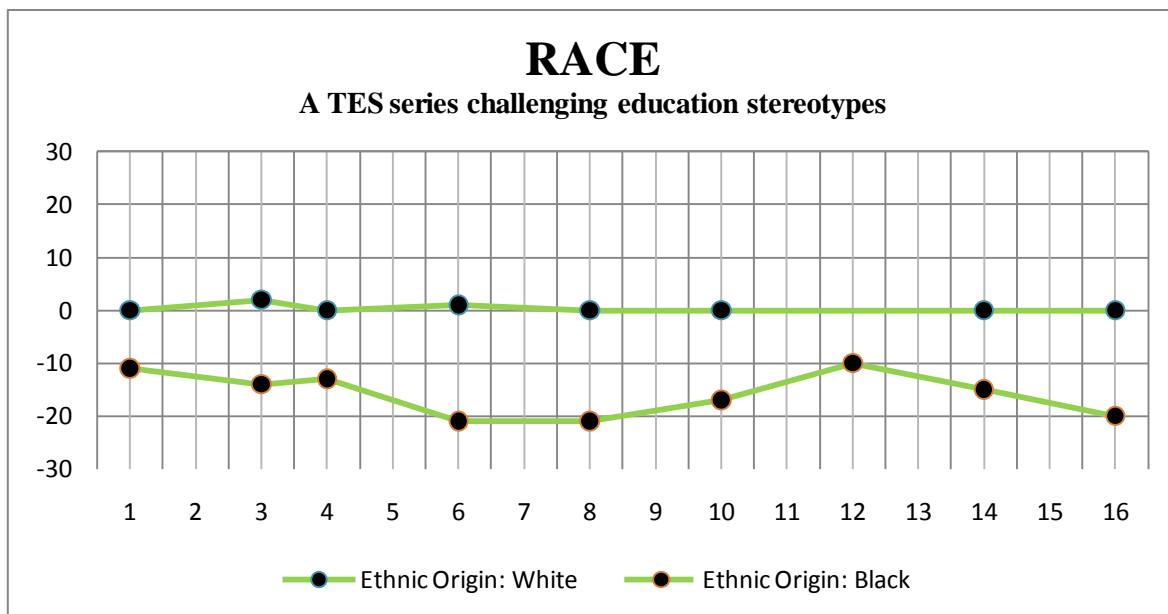
I have presented this *TES* chart more clearly below in *Figure 3*.

FIGURE 3: 'Race', Class and Gender and Education Attainment Inequalities 1989-2004



The 2008 chart in the *TES* shows (*Figure 3*) shows 'race' difference in educational attainment. It does so (*Figure 4*) by comparing 'White' and 'Black'.

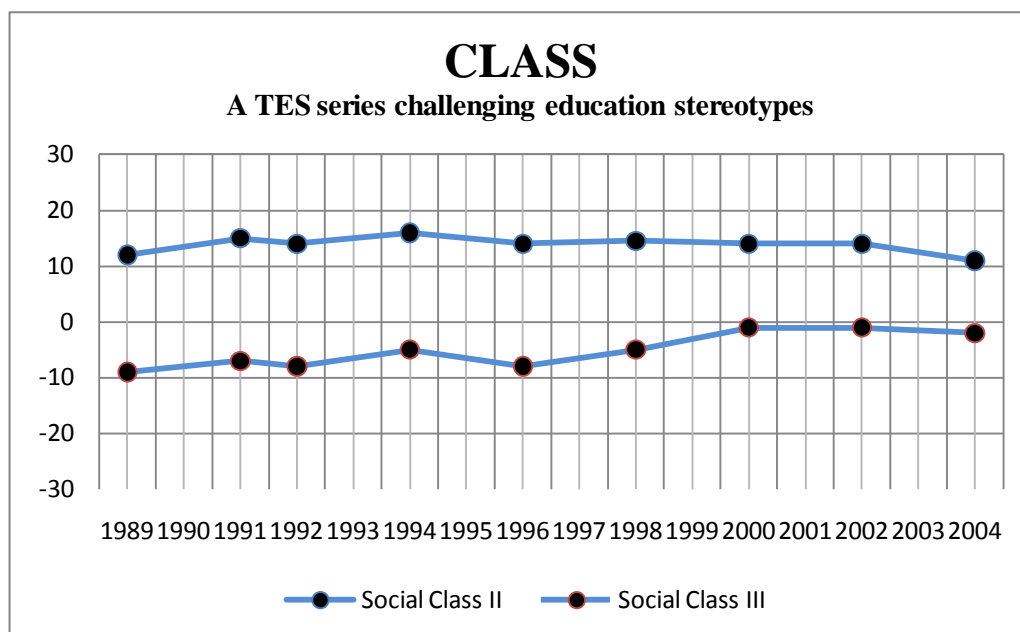
FIGURE 4: 'Race' Difference in Educational Attainment at age 16, comparing 'White and 'Black'



This chart (**Figure 4**), it should be noted, does *not* show 'race difference' by comparing 'White' with 'Minority Ethnic Group', or 'Visible Minority Ethnic Group', but by comparing White with the lowest performing large ethnic groups (Black Caribbean, Black African, and perhaps the smaller Mixed Black and White) groups. This chart does not include, or purport to show Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian ethnic groups. Two of these groups, the Indian and the Pakistani, are substantially larger than the African-Caribbean ethnic group.

As far as the depiction of 'Social Class Difference' in educational attainment is concerned (as presented in Gillborn 2008b, 2009a, b, c; Marley, 2008) (shown in **Figure 5**), the *TES* (Marley, 2008) then presented social class differences in attainment by comparing social 'class'/ stratum 2 with social 'class'/ stratum 3. These are two contiguous groups.

FIGURE 5 'Class' Difference in Educational Attainment at age 16 comparing social class strata/ groups 2 and 3



The justification and validity of this need to be questioned.

Thus, there are two questions- and criticisms- arising from this use of statistics:

3. 1. With respect to 'race' and educational attainment, what is the validity of ignoring the presence of the (high achieving) Indian/ Indian heritage group of pupils- one of the two largest minority groups in England and Wales- been ignored, indeed, left completely out of statistical representations- charts- showing educational achievement levels of different ethnic groups? 2. With respect to social class and educational attainment, what is the validity of selecting two contiguous social class/ strata in order to show social class differences in educational attainment? .

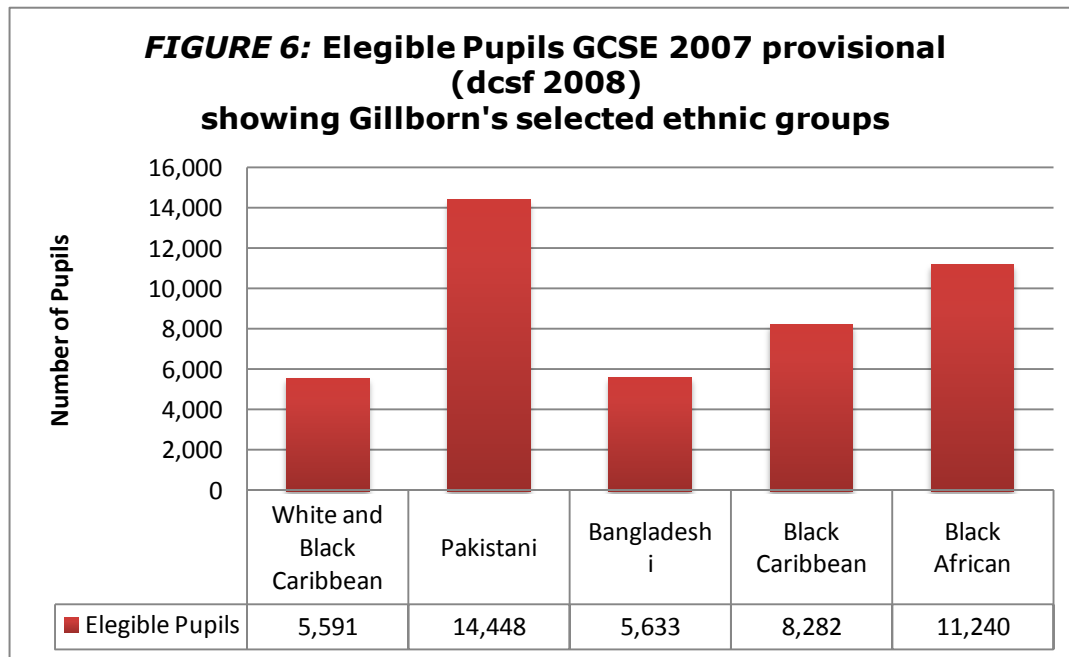
Statistical Representation of 'Race' and Educational Attainment: The Omission of the Indian Ethnic Group

CRT presentations repeatedly omit statistics concerning the achievements of Indian heritage children. Now this might not matter if this were a small population, like the Chinese, or the Mixed White and Asian ethnic groups. But it is not. It is the co-equal largest minority ethnic group. This omission enables CRT theorists to represent – indeed, misrepresent- Whites as achieving considerably more highly than minority ethnic groups.

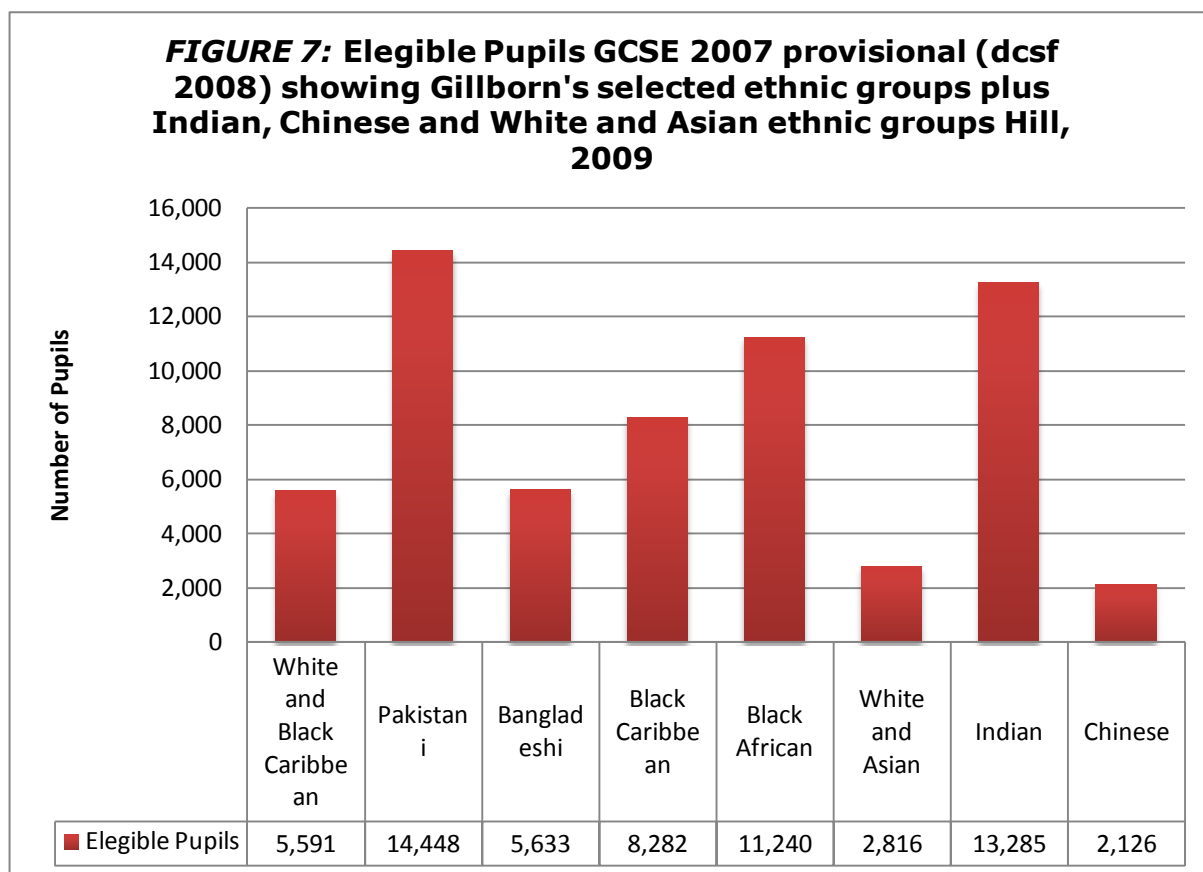
The impression given, for example at conference presentations (e.g. Gillborn, 2009c) and in Gillborn, 2009a, is that a comparison is being made between Whites, on the one hand,

and the large ethnic minority groups, on the other. But this is not the case. The only groups shown are those (large and small) which perform poorly compared with Whites.

These, below, in **Figure 6**, are the five minority ethnic groups Gillborn has selected to use as his comparators to show that Whites outperform Ethnic Minorities. And, to be sure, White pupils (the combined totals of FSM and non-FSM pupils) do indeed outperform these five ethnic groups. These are the ones Gillborn shows.



But in these charts groups that *outperform* Whites have been ignored, left out. Thus, the Indian group (and the smaller groups of Chinese and Mixed White and Asian) do not appear. In the table below, **Table 7**, I have added these groups in, showing, therefore, eight minority ethnic groups, rather than five.

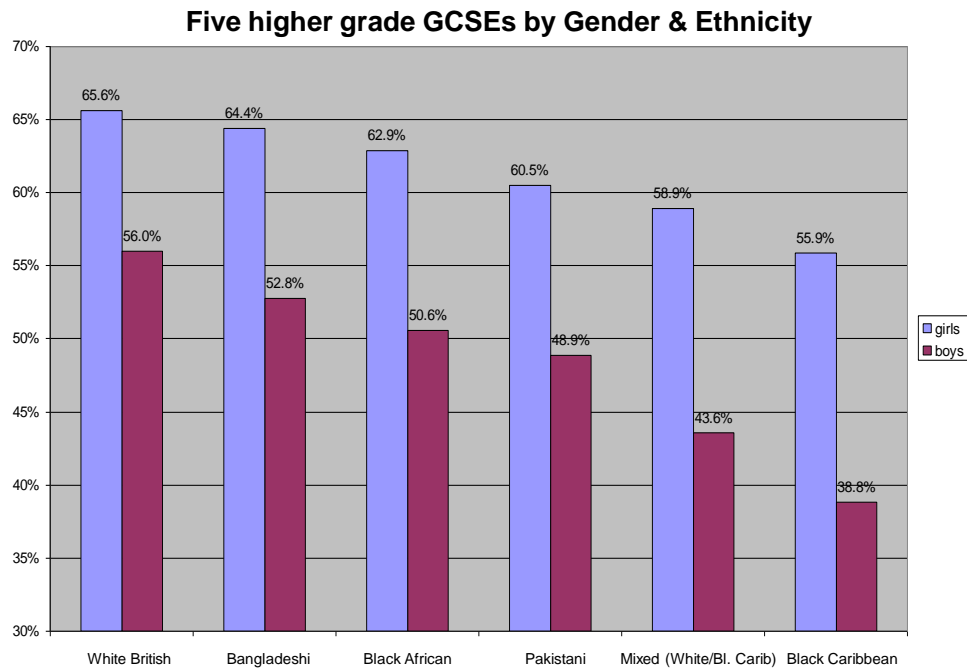


Now I wish to return to examining the statistical representations of race and educational attainment in some of the recent work of one highly esteemed and influential anti-racist writer, David Gillborn, who is now the most influential proponent of Critical Race Theory in the UK. (4)

At various conference presentations statistics that showed the relatively high attainment levels of the Indian heritage community were absent- they were not presented. The similar omission is also evident at Gillborn (2008,b, 2009a, b, c). David Gillborn writes about this in Gillborn, D. (2009a) Education: The Numbers Game and the Construction of White Racial Victimhood, in, *Who Cares About the White Working Class*, edited by Kjartan Pall Sveinsson 2009. This (Gillborn, 2009a) is particularly useful since it comprehensively sets out his sets of charts and statistical tables, and, moreover, is available online. It is these charts that I regard as less than comprehensive.

This, (*Figure 8*) below is one of Gillborn's two key tables.

FIGURE 8



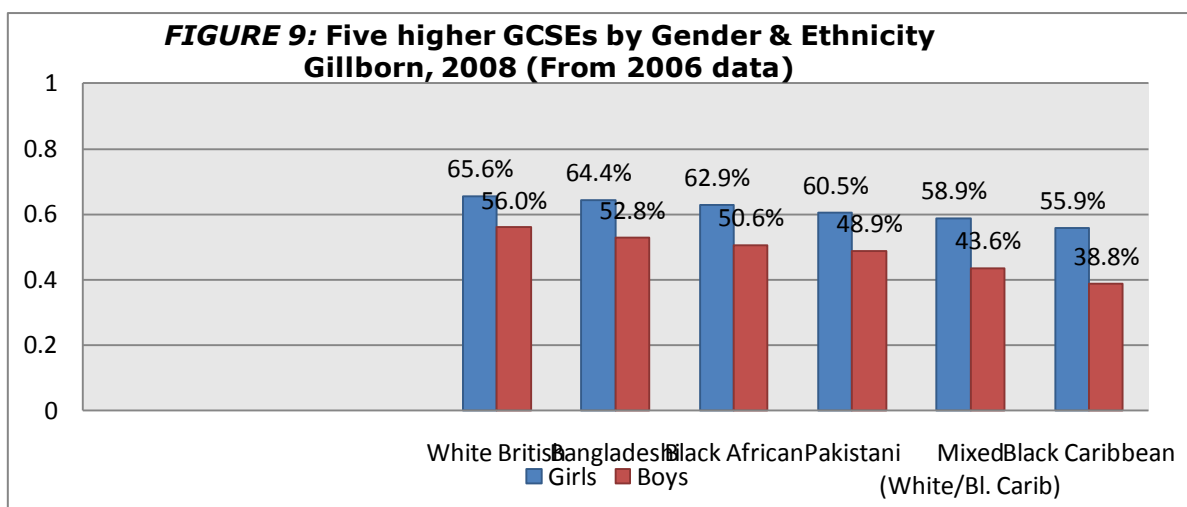
Source: Department for Education & Skills (DfES)(2006) *National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2005/06*. SFR 46/2006, London, DfES, table 32.



Source: Department for Education & Skills (DfES) (2006a) *National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2005/06*. SFR 46/2006, London, DfES, table 32.

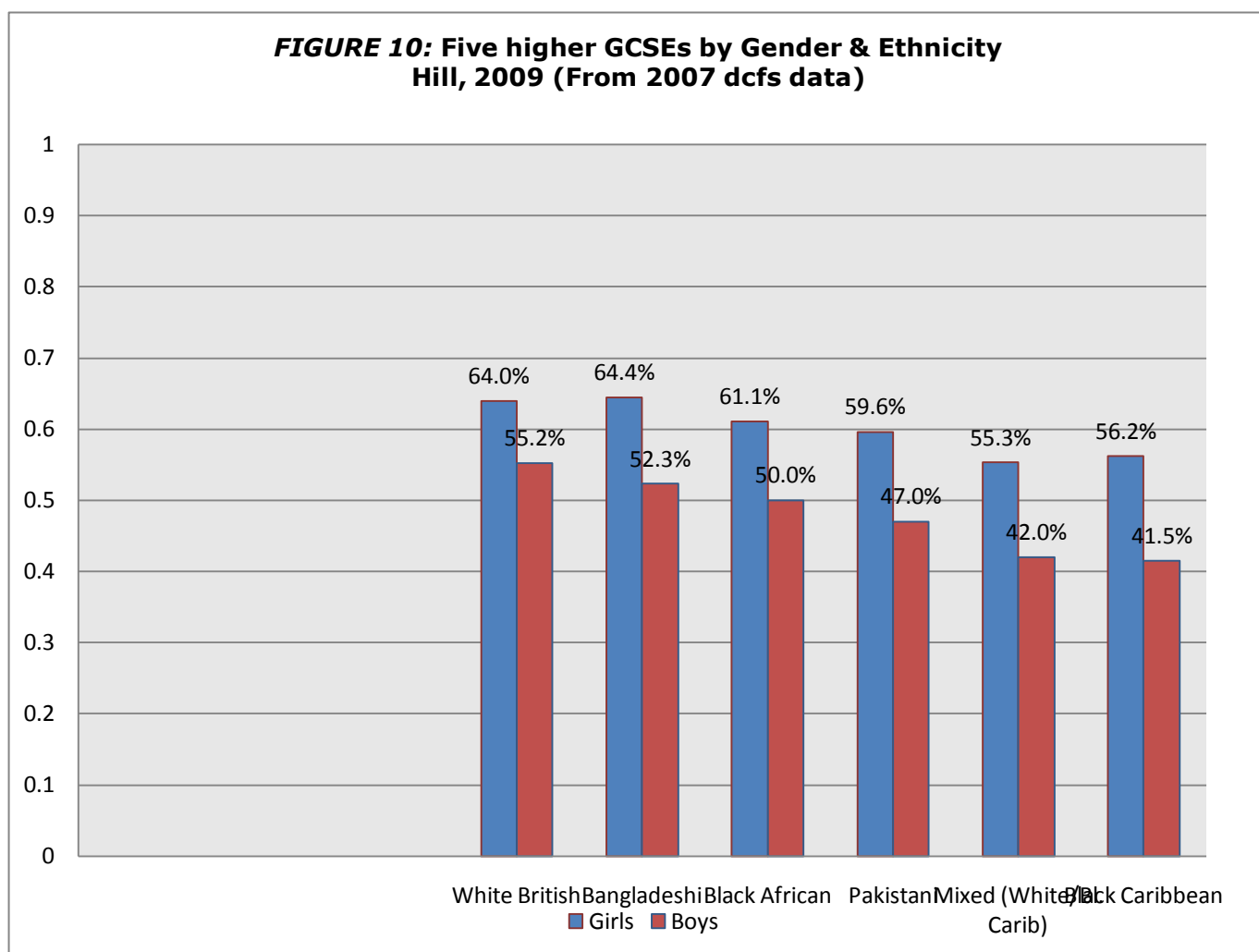
(actually, this is not table 32, it is table 7 at www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000708/SFR04_2007v1.pdf

I have re-presented is table, below, for the purpose of visual clarity.

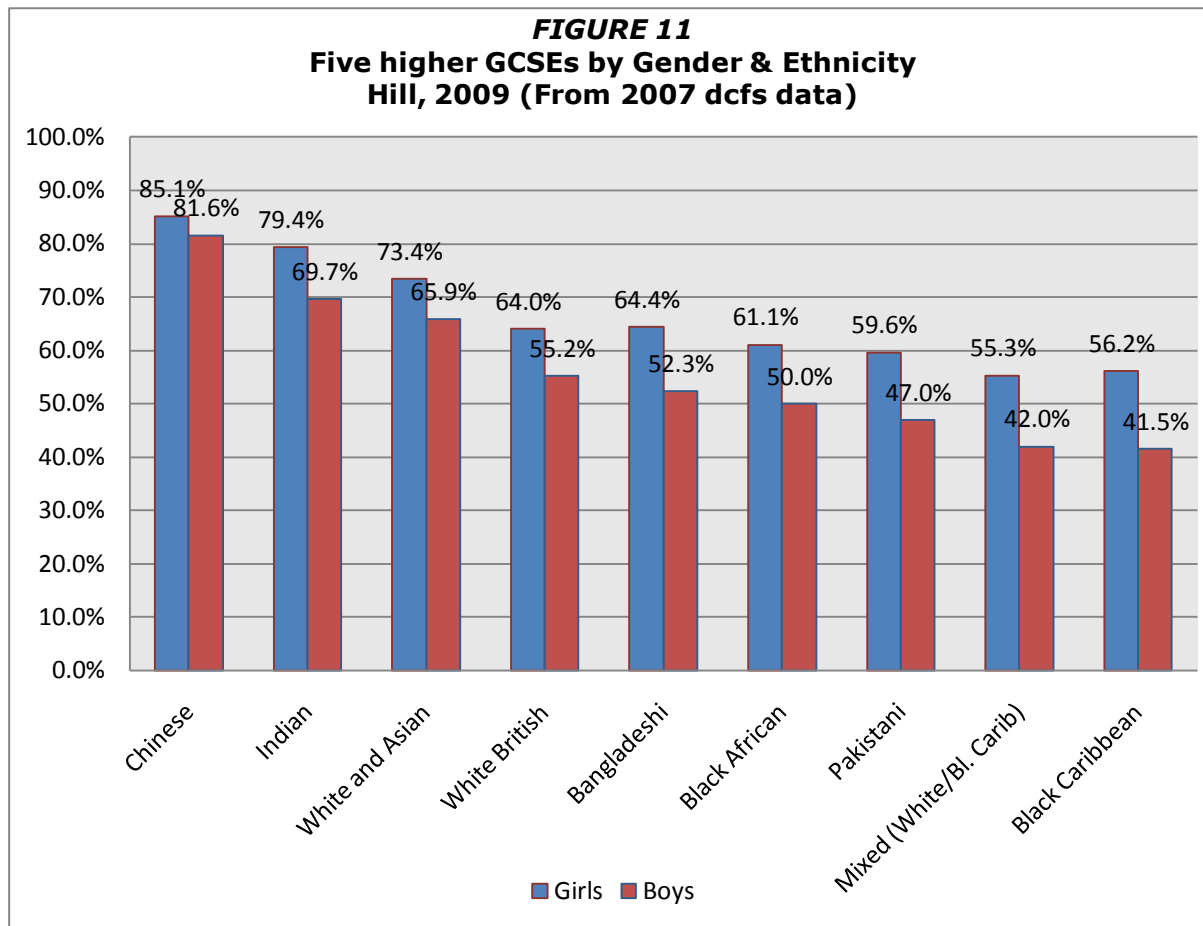


I have also updated this table, using the same ethnic groups as David Gillborn, in the table below, **Figure 10**. The only difference between Figure 7 and Figure 10 is that I have used the more up to date 2007 data, instead of the 2006 data used by Gillborn. The comparative patterns of attainment shown are similar.

It needs to be asked, what is missing, in the spaces to the left of the chart?



The ethnic groups *not shown* by David Gillborn are included in my chart below, in (**Figure 11**), which is a composite table correlating ethnic group and educational attainment. The table shows not only the ethnic groups shown by David Gillborn, but, in addition, the three additional groups, one of which, the Indian, is the co-equal largest minority ethnic group. (The Chinese and the Mixed White and Asian groups are smaller).



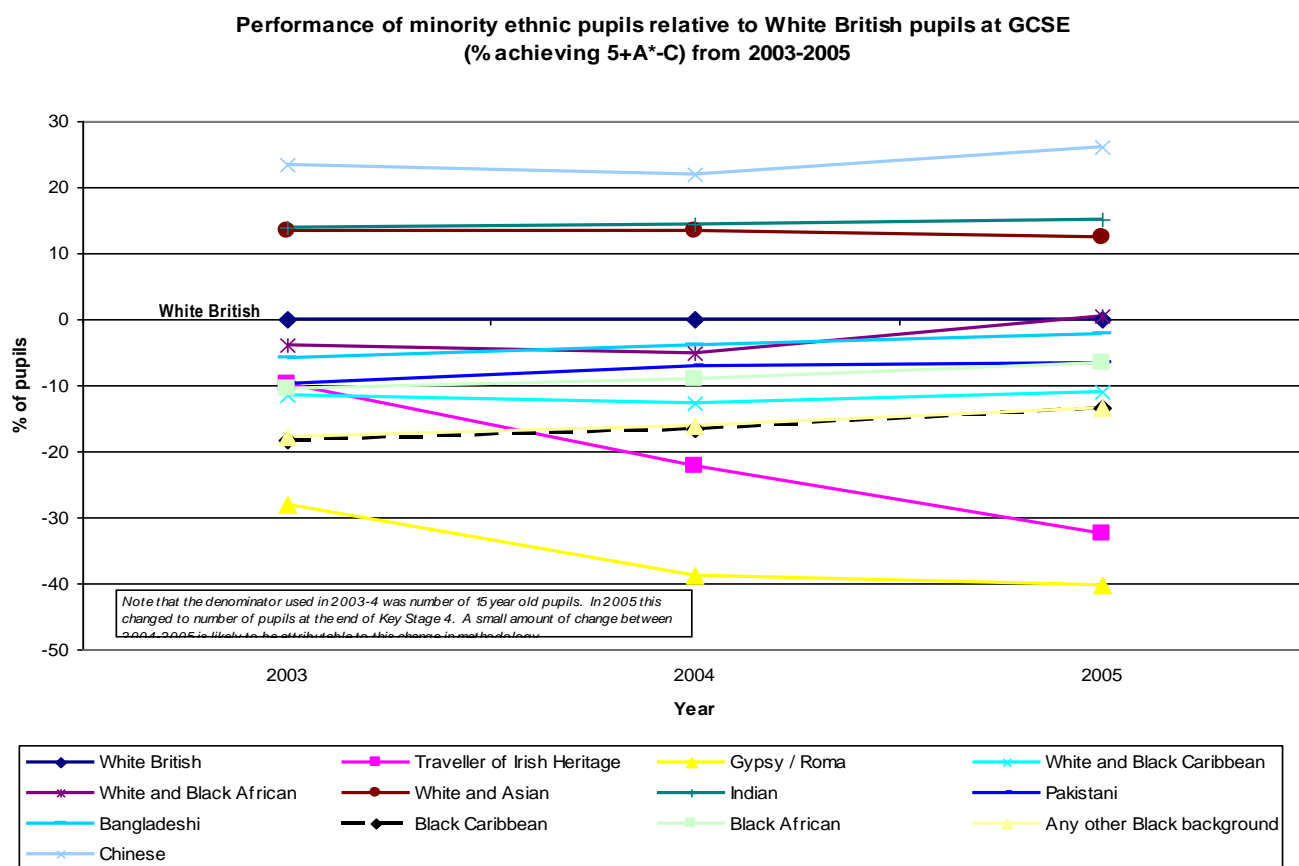
This is one of the two key tables I am presenting. It compares White academic attainment at GCSE level not just with low performing groups, but with other minority groups, too! And it shows that while Whites (as a whole - rich and poor, all social classes/strata) outperform most minority groups, they do not outperform them all. They underperform compared to some groups (the largest being the Indian, Chinese, and Mixed White and Asian groups).

Other analysts, too, show a more complete set of comparative statistics than does Gillborn.

Inderjit Dehal (2006), for example, shows a similar table to my one, (shown below as *Figure 12*) though he reports on slightly older data. And I have deliberately presented mine in a similar format to Gillborn.

FIGURE 12

2003 to 2005 – A changing picture

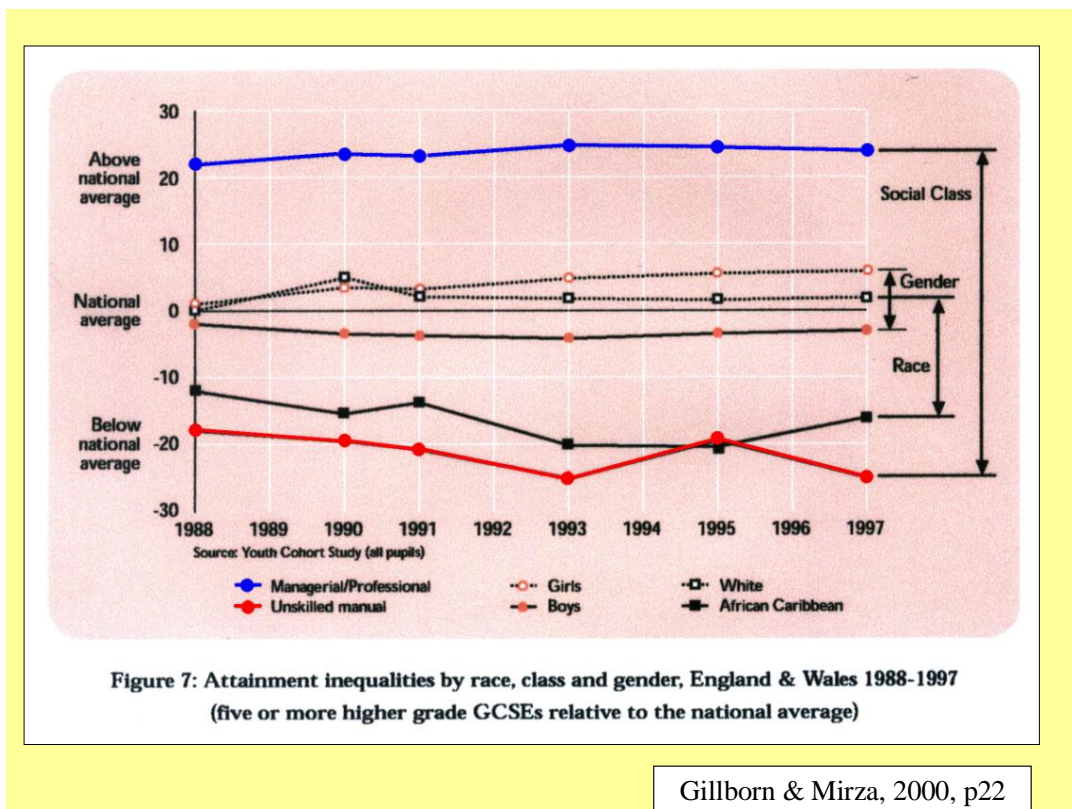


Statistical Representation of `Class` and Educational Attainment: Which Sections of the Working Class should be compared with each other to show social class differences in educational attainment?

As shown in the section above, some Critical Race Theorists were unhappy that the statistics presented in the 2000 Ofsted report by Gillborn and Mirza sat uncomfortably with the claims of Critical Race Theory that 'race', not class, is the fundamental form of oppression in Britain.

In his recent CRT writing and conference presentations (Gillborn 2008b, 2009a, b, c), and their reporting in the TES (Marley, 2008) Gillborn has since redefined the category of class difference in education attainment. To recall, this (*Figure 13* below) is what the 2000 charts showed.

FIGURE 13: The Key Table from Gillborn and Mirza, 2000



Departing from the 2000 report's practice of showing class difference in educational attainment by comparing 'social class 1' (upper professional) with 'social class 5' (unskilled working class), Critical Race Theorists (for example David Gillborn in his statistics supplied to the *Times Educational Supplement* and published in Marley (2008), now seeks to show class difference in educational attainment by comparing 'social class 2' with 'social class 3'.

Of course, these differences are a lot narrower than those between 'social class 1' and 'social class 5'.

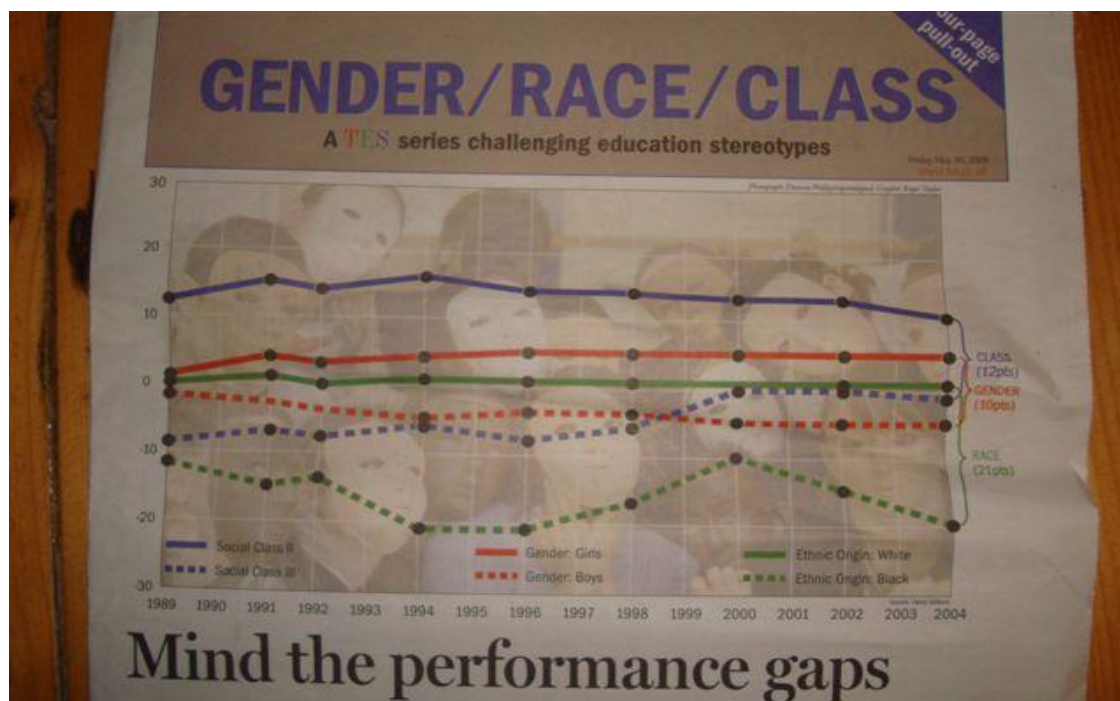
As reported in Marley (2008),

Professor Gillborn places pupils on a five-point social scale. Comparing the results of pupils from categories one and five, social class is responsible for an amazing 44 per cent difference between the proportions of children achieving five good GCSEs. But pupils from the extreme ends of the spectrum account for only a third of children.

Comparing the results of children in the second and third social class categories, which represent more than half of pupils, the difference in results is a far smaller 12 per cent.

So, according to Gillborn's statistics, as supplied to and represented in the TES (Marley, 2008) 'race' trumps class after all!, as is shown in Figure 2 of this paper, repeated here for facility of access, as **Figure 12**, below

FIGURE 12: 'Race', Class and Gender and Education Attainment Inequalities 1989-2004 as shown in the Times Educational Supplement (Marley, 2008)

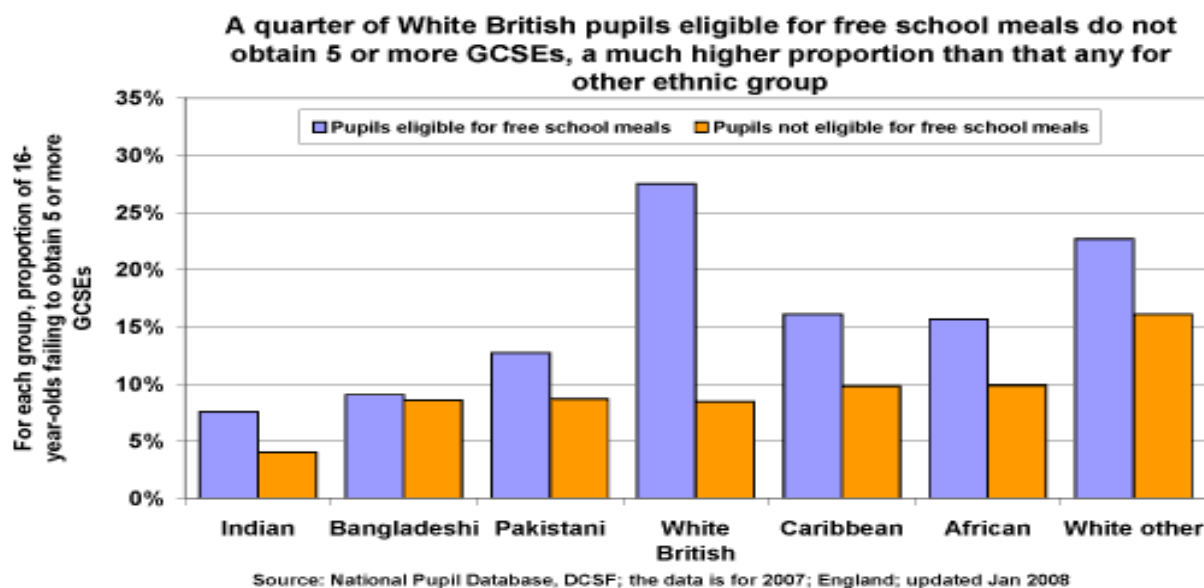


Critical Race Theorists in general in the UK, are concerned about charts and plentiful press and publicity about the white working class and about 'poor white boys'. In his various publications (such as Gillborn 2009a, b, c) Gillborn cites numerous headlines, based on DCSF statistics of 2008 (and indeed, of previous years). CRT theorists are concerned about

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charts and publicity showing that poor white pupils (identified as those in receipt of Free School Meals) *underachieve* at GCSE level more than any other major ethnic group. This poor achievement by poor strata of the working class (those claiming and in receipt of Free School meals) is shown in the DCSF (2008) chart and *The Guardian* headline (Williams, 2009) below.

FIGURE 15 from DCSF 2008



From: The Poverty Site (2007)

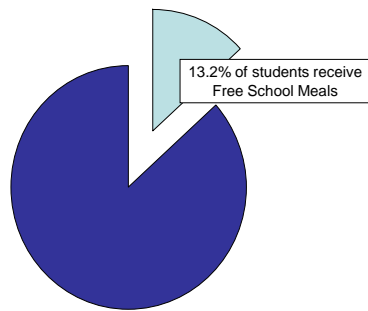
FIGURE 16

Of the 13,500 pupils who got three As in their A-levels in 2007, only 189 had been eligible for free school meals. Rachel Williams talks to three working class students who went to Oxbridge

Williams, R. in *The Guardian*, Saturday 17th January 2009

Gillborn is then concerned to show that FSM pupils are just a minority of pupils. He compares the percentage of pupils receiving FSM (13.2%) with those self-describing as working class (57%).

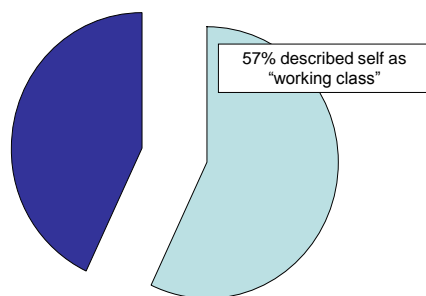
FIGURE 17: FSM (Free School Meals) pupils as a % of the total number of pupils



Source: Department for Education & Skills (DfES)(2006) National Curriculum Assessment, GCSE and Equivalent Assessment and Prior 16 Assessment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2005/06: SP8 462006, London, DfES, table 32.



FIGURE 18 Percentage of people self-describing as 'working class'



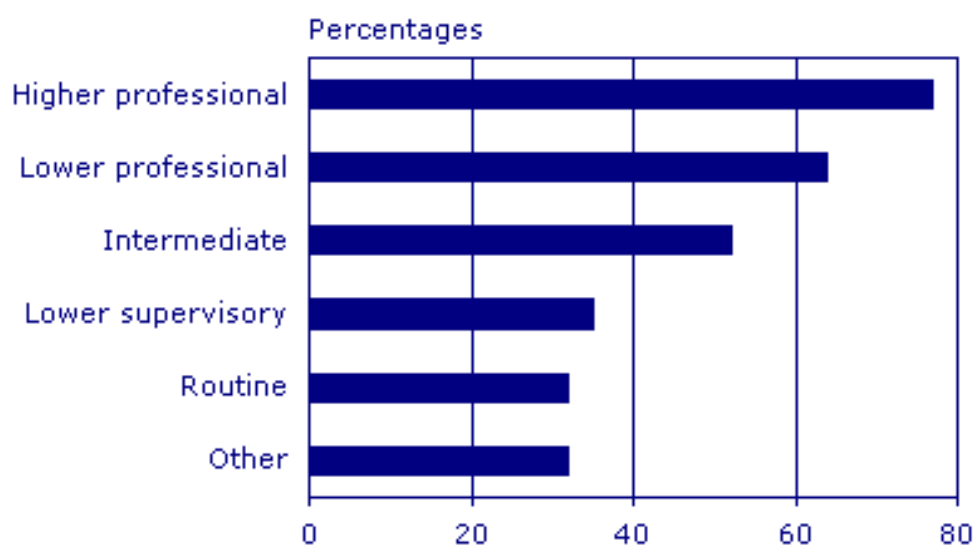
Source: Survey by the National Centre for Social Research cited in BBC News Online (2007) What is working class? <http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6295743.stm>



It is notable that in this one sole instance Gillborn departs from using hard statistical data, in favour of using subjective self-identification data. This is an unusual and questionable procedure which he does not draw attention to or justify.

However, rather than use the FSM data, or even data which (is clearly not available) concerning the academic achievements of the 53% self-describing as working class, Gillborn, in order to compare the academic attainments of different class groups in society, prefers to use data comparing social 'classes' 2 and 3. Such data, comparing attainment of different social status/ class/ strata groups is readily available, as for example in **Table 19** below.

FIGURE 19: Education: Exam results differ by social status (from Office of National Statistics, 2004)



Attainment of five or more GCSE grades A* to C: by parental NS-SEC, 2002, England & Wales Office of National Statistics (2004) Social Inequalities: Education. Published on 7 December 2004.

To return to data concerning 'race' and class, there is further highly relevant data within Gillborn's earlier work with Heidi Mirza, from the 2000 Gillborn and Mirza Report (Table 6). This shows that Indian 'manual' (i.e. working class) children outperform White working class children considerably, and also that Pakistani working class children perform at very nearly the same level as White working class children. In fact attainment figures for 1988, 1993 and 1997 are the same as for White working class children.

These figures, in **Figure 20** below, refer to the whole of the manual working class, not just that percentage in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM). Such statistics invalidate the reservations and objections held by some CRT theorists about figures showing white working class children outperform minority ethnic groups. Such statistics also serve to invalidate the statistical underpinning of CRT claims of White Supremacy, the claim that, other than for that percentage of white working class children (those on Free School Meals) who are performing poorly, white children do better than ethnic minorities.

Gillborn is concerned with press and publicity that highlights the underachievement of 'poor whites'. If Gillborn wishes to look at statistics that are not drawn from Free School Meals data, data which rely on differential take-up by different ethnic groups) then the data to compare the academic performance levels of the White Working Class (the manual section of

it, anyhow) with the Minority Ethnic Working Class (again, the manual section of the working class), then the figures are readily available. They are contained, though rarely highlighted, in Gillborn’s own earlier work, in Gillborn and Mirza, 2000 (to repeat, this is presented in *Figure 20*, below).

FIGURE 20: Educational attainment by class (manual and non-manual) and by ethnic group (White, Black, Indian, and Pakistani-Bangladeshi). From Gillborn and Mirza, 2000

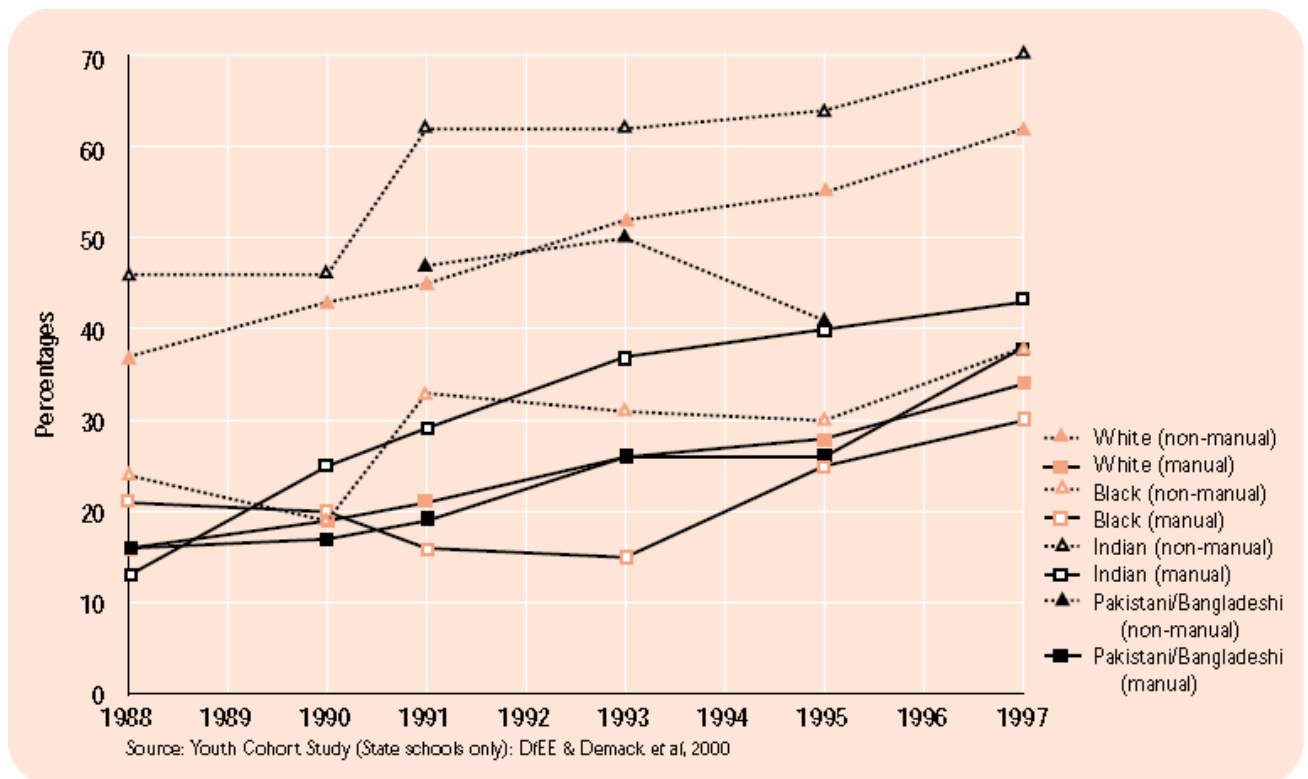
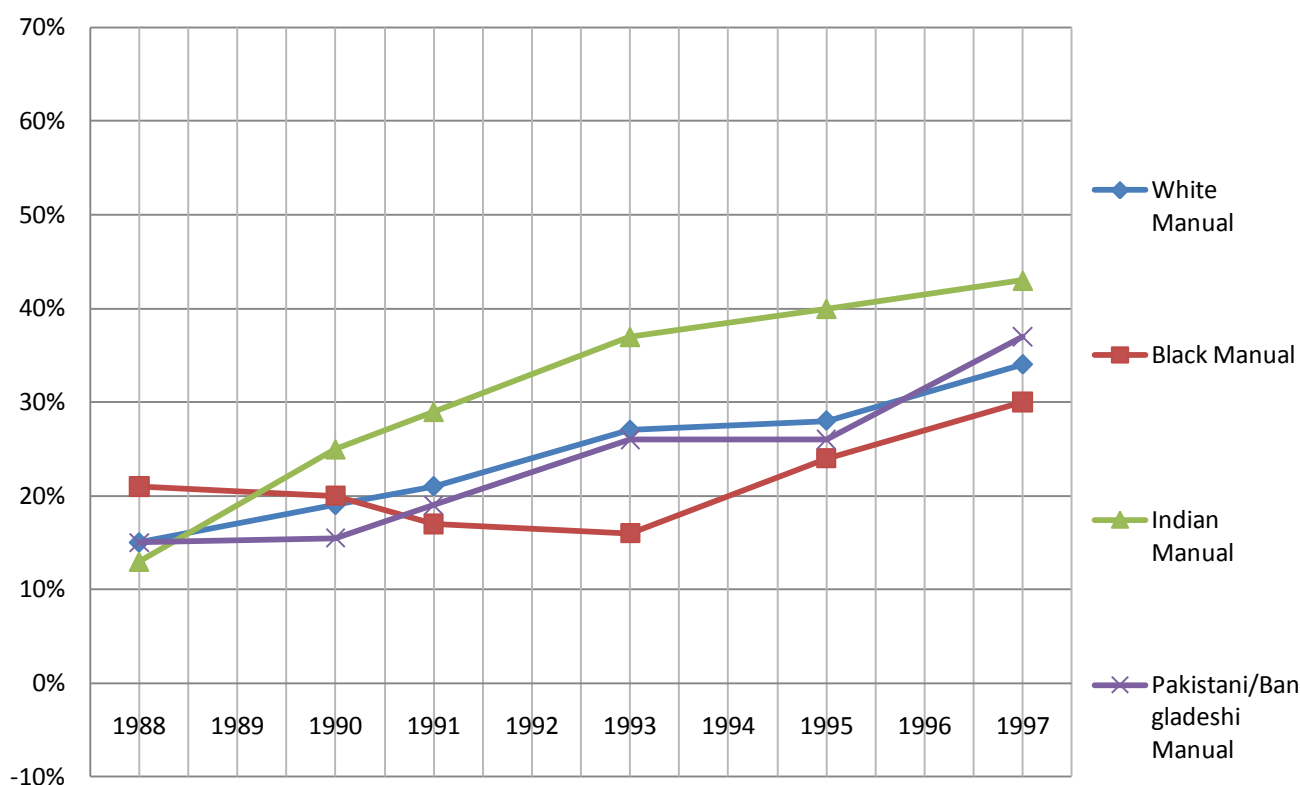


Figure 6: GCSE attainment by social class and ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1997 (five or more higher grade (A*-C) passes)

This table below, *Figure 21*: GCSE attainment by social class and ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1997 (five or more higher grade (A* - C) passes) showing statistics for Manual Class strata only; below is *the second key table in this paper*. It does show that (in 1997) the White manual Working Class pupils did indeed outperform Black manual working class pupils at GCSE level. But it also shows that not only did the Indian manual working class pupils outperform Whites, but so did the (combined) Pakistani/Bangladeshi manual working class pupils.

**FIGURE 21: GCSE attainment by social class and ethnic origin, England & Wales 1988-1997 (five or more higher grade (A* - C) passes) Manual Class only (Hill, 2009)
Extracted from Gillborn and Mirza, 2000, Figure 6**



This situation, of working class underachievement as well as underachievement by some minority ethnic groups, is reported by successive government reports and commentaries. For example the written commentary in the DES Report (DES, 2007) *SFR 04/2007 National Curriculum Assessments, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2005/06(Revised)* (Online at www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000708/SFR04_2007v1.pdf)- the source actually for Gillborn's various sets of statistics (e.g. Gillborn 2009a) states that this 2006 report:

...presents the latest statistics and research on black and minority ethnic pupils in the education system. It provides details on the BME school population (2006), attainment and progress in 2005 (compared to previous years...

Key findings include:

- 21% of the maintained primary school population and 17% of the secondary school population in 2006 belonged to a minority ethnic group.
- Gypsy/Roma, Traveller of Irish Heritage, Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils consistently have lower attainment levels than other ethnic groups across all the Key stages.
- Indian, Chinese, Irish and White & Asian pupils consistently have higher levels of attainment than other ethnic groups across all Key Stages.

This 2007 reports that 'Chinese, pupils of Mixed White and Asian heritage, Irish and Indian pupils consistently achieve above the national average across Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4'. This echoes the 2006 report, *Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils aged 5-16* (DfES, 2006b)

These figures are surprising for they show that, despite institutional and personal racism, the White population performs at around the same level as the population as a whole despite it being more middle class than almost all other ethnic groups (other than Indian and Chinese).

The astonishing and un-disguisable characteristic of these various statistics- in contrast to the impression given by David Gillborn- is that they do not reveal white overachievement.

This is actually very surprising. Racism, as highlighted by many books and articles by David Gillborn himself, from the work done by The Institute for Race Relations, in journals such as *Race Equality Teaching*, in political magazines such as *Searchlight*, and indeed textbook chapters I have edited and co-written (5) is clearly alive and kicking in Britain.

There is no doubt that Britain is a racist society, that there is institutional racism in schools universities, prisons, employment- in all state institutions and in society. That is incontrovertible. I am not denying racism and its perniciousness and pervasiveness. The election successes of the BNP in recent years, culminating in the June 2009 election of two BNP Fascist/ Racist MEPs , together with the racist anti-Islamic rioting engineered during the

summer and autumn of 2009 in Luton and other towns by the 'English Defence League' (and its Welsh and Scottish variants) and its BNP cohorts, are deeply disturbing. (6)

Theoretical Analyses

These data are important. They feed into and inform theoretical analyses concerning the impact of 'race' and of class on educational achievement, and hence into arguments and theoretical analyses concerning the severity of the impact of race and class discrimination, oppression in society. Hence to the legitimacy of on the one hand Marxist, and on the other hand Critical Race Theory analyses of society.

Thus such theories, based on statistical data, inform, or can inform, government and local education authority and school policy in the sense of either focusing primarily on combating race discrimination, or alternatively, on combating poverty and social and economic inequality (regardless of ethnicity/ 'race').

Theoretically I argue (Kelsh and Hill, 2006; Hill (2008a, b, c) for a notion of 'raced' and gendered class, in which some (but not all) minority ethnic groups are racialised or xeno-racialised. They suffer a 'race penalty' in, for example, teacher labelling and expectation, treatment by agencies of the state, such as the police, housing, judiciary, health services and in employment.

In this paper I therefore seek to add to a Marxist critique of Critical Race Theory) (7) - from a statistical perspective.

Gillborn (e.g. 2008a) gives specific recognition to the analysis that social class is 'raced' and gendered (e.g. p. 46), but gives relatively little - in fact very substantially less-explicit (other than implicit) recognition that 'race' is classed (and gendered). While his work is not silent on social class disadvantage and social class based oppression, his treatment of social class analysis is dismissive and his treatment of social class underachievement in education and society, extraordinarily subdued.

Other CRT theorists (such as John Preston, e.g. 2007, 2009a) do see the dangers of grouping all whites together. Thus, Preston notes,

Whiteness is not monolithic (except in very bad examples of CRT) and it would not necessarily surprise me if the white working class do not perform as well as other groups (and it probably is to do not only with class but also with the re-racialisation as 'chavs' etc). In terms of the argument about the white working class I would say that they are being Re-racialised to the margins of 'respectable' whiteness to the position

they were in at the beginning of the 19th Century. Hence the white working class are becoming visible as a group in terms of their educational (under) performance. (8)

As Grant Banfield (2009a) notes (with respect to Preson's categorisation of 'all whites'),

The endless categorisations. What the Race theorists don't grasp is, unlike class, 'race' is a social construction. It has no basis in the material world: science has long revealed to us that there is biological basis to 'race'. Conversely, class is more than a constructed category. It refers to real, historical, material relations. The social mechanisms that give rise to the various historical expressions of 'racism' lie deep in class relations

Political Strategies

The statistics used or misused by academics can impact on the foci of political action-street action, propaganda, and programmes of progressive and egalitarian political parties and groups.

Theories of oppression and of exploitation, with their statistical underpinnings and justifications, also impact on progressive political action. This is exemplified in the recent European Parliament election campaign and current political action and developments in Britain.

The question for progressives, egalitarians, socialists and Marxists is the balance between focusing on anti-racist campaigns and class-based campaigns. The major current examples of anti-racism based campaigns are 'Hope not Hate', and Unite Against Fascism (UAF). During the June 2009 European election campaign, they both called on voters to 'vote anyone but the BNP'. On the other hand, some socialist/ Marxist/ Communist campaigns such as the NO2EU-YestoDemocracy and the SLP campaigns prioritise(d) class based campaigns, of anti-racism, anti-sexism, but also of working class unity. In strategic terms this is the difference between a Popular Front and a United Front. (9)

Thus, two alternative political strategies were evident in the 2009 European election campaign in Britain. The first strategy, (that of Unite Against Fascism- UAF- and the 'Hope Not Hate' campaign, and the tactical voting urged by some sections of RESPECT (such as Salma Yaquub and the North-West region of RESPECT) was that the most important issue of all in the European election campaign was the anti-racist issue, to 'Stop the BNP'. Hence the call by the abovementioned sections of RESPECT to 'Vote Green' to 'stop the BNP'.

This particular view would seem to theoretically align with the view of Critical Race Theorists that 'race' and racism are *the key* forms of structural discrimination and oppression in Britain and in the USA. David Gillborn's insistence, like the Racism Awareness Training theorists of the 1970s, and like the various incarnations of black separatists and nationalists in various countries, seeks to blame all whites, and serves to divide the working class, black from white. At the political level this was paralleled by the various groups within the socialist and Marxist Left seeking to prioritise anti-racism who were furious with NO2EU for 'splitting the anti-racist vote' during the 2009 European election campaign.

A class-based Marxist analysis is that it was the collapse of New Labour's vote- due to its abandonment of working class interests in the interests of neoliberalism- that depressed the voting turnout, enabling the BNP to get elected. This was despite the BNP gained fewer votes than in the previous European elections. But they got elected because of the collapse in the Labour vote.

Gillborn's prioritising of the 'race' issue is in contrast to the view of Marxists who took a class perspective- who prioritised the class issue. Such a class perspective was advanced within, for example, the NO2EU-YestoDemocracy campaign (supported principally by the RMT trade union, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Britain with its *Morning Star* daily newspaper, and (ultimately) the view of Socialist Resistance, (to which I belong).

During that campaign, as a lead regional candidate for NO2EU-YestoDemocracy (10), at various venues, from doorstep campaigning, to addressing the Trades Union Congress national conference of Trades Councils (local TUCs), to conversations with Greens at the Regional Election count, I was one of those who advanced the view that anti-racism was and is a key policy/ focus, but that there are others, such as resisting/ opposing/ stopping privatisation of public services, opposing the European Union's privatising policies such as the health services Directive and the Postal Services Directive (which demand of member states the marketisation of Health and Postal Services), renationalising formerly public services such as the Railways; stopping/ reversing the Posted Workers' Directive which, along the principles of the Bolkestein Directive, allows groups of workers to be imported by employers into member states and paid at the wages of the originating member state, thereby undercutting trade union national agreements.

The final aim of much of the NO2EU campaign was to set up a new Workers' Party, backed by trade unions, as a socialist party, defending working class interests, (of workers of all colours and creeds) occupying the space to the left of Labour. (11)

The political focus made by socialists and Marxists in Britain during the period of the May-June 2009 European parliamentary election campaign was between two positions.

The first was prioritising the 'Don't Vote BNP' campaigns. The Socialist Workers' Party, the largest of the Marxist parties in Britain, with around 5,000 members, took the perspective highlighting race.

The second position, held by other parties (such as NO2EU and its constituent/supporting organisations, and the Socialist Labour Party) took the class perspective. (Respect was split over the issue). This class perspective (at least that held by the Socialist Party constituent part of NO2EU) was about developing/ setting up a new Workers Party on the other, one that would unite various socialist political parties, groups, individuals, with trade unions. That is, to prioritise working class issues on behalf of / with the 'raced' and gendered working class. This view, that I am advancing here, is to fight the class struggle for all workers, black, white, brown, or, to echo the anti-fascist slogan of the 1970s, 'black and white unite and fight, smash the National Front. To echo an international slogan of working class revolutionaries and Marxists across different countries, '*o povo unido jamais sera vencido*', 'the workers united will never be defeated'.

This is not to deny the existence of 'white privilege'. Yes, Whites do have white privilege because of the colour of their/ our skins. But the poor white English, Portuguese, African Caribbean, Black African, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Chinese have more *in common* in terms of the material conditions of their daily existence than they do with sons and daughters of the millionaire white English, Indian, Pakistani, African Caribbean or Chinese millionaire. As Bob Crow, leader of NO2EU-yestoDemocracy, and of the RMT says, 'I have got more in common with a Chinese labourer than I have with Sir Fred Goodwin' (the multimillionaire ex-'boss' of the Royal Bank of Scotland) (Hattenstone, 2008).

Conclusion

David Gillborn has a long and highly honourable and admirable history in writing against racism. He is arguably the leading academic writer exposing racism within the education system in England and Wales. His books over the past two decades have been, quite rightly, very influential on students of education and (as much as any academic books are, on teachers practice and on some aspects of government policy.

In his recent work, in his progress into Critical Race Theory, he has gone beyond exposing and excoriating racism and how racism works, and how anti-racism can and should work. He has now extended into a theory of 'White Supremacy', that the very political basis of the state is White Race supremacy.

Many Marxists disagree, arguing, in contrast to a succession of black separatist, 'blame all whites' and (now) Critical Race Theorists, that the very political (and- importantly- economic- basis of the state -to which Gillborn scarcely refers) is capitalism, the exploitation of the labour power of the working class, black, white, men, women. Of course capitalist classes use reserve armies of labour- women, 'guest workers', 'illegal immigrants, imported ex-colonial peoples, to increase their profits, and have often, historically, been happy to use racism, and racist divide and rule tactics, to minimise their wage bills and maximise their profits.

Marxists accept much of the CRT criticism of racism in society, its operations, and its terrible effects, and welcome the exposures and highlighting of these operations and their effects. However we cannot accept the theory of 'White Supremacy' as the dominant form of oppression and exploitation in capitalist society.

Marxists, in contrast, propound a class perspective, recognising that

- The capitalist class, in its quest for ever more surplus-value, seizes upon any opposition that, owing to historical developments preceding or within capitalism, enables the production of more surplus-value.
- As Marx argues, the "division of labour seizes upon, not only the economic, but every other sphere of society and everywhere lays the foundation of that all engrossing system of specializing and sorting men" (1867/1967, p. 354).
- These socially constructed and ideologically naturalized and enforced oppositions - those involved in race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and so forth - are folded in to the core opposition of labor and capital.

In order to develop and critically evaluate theorisation and arguments about race and class, and the political tactics and strategies that might be based on those theories, then it is incumbent on us all to avoid statistical misrepresentation. Anti-racism is too important to be the subject of flawed and misleading statistics.

This paper develops on Hill, 2008a, b, c, 2009a.

NOTES

1. As a Classical Marxist, I hold to a binary notion of class, rather than the Weberian inspired classifications of infinite strata. In Kelsh and Hill (2006) I critique, with Deb Kelsh, how

‘The Marxist concept of class..., has been emptied of its explanatory power by theorists in the field of education as elsewhere who have converted it into a term that simply describes, and cannot explain the root causes of, strata of the population and the inequities among them.... Over the last several decades, the revisionist left has systematically discredited and displaced the Marxist concept of class, understood as a relationship of ownership to private property (means of production) (Hill, 1999; Hill and Cole, 2001a; Kelsh, 2001; Rikowski, 2001; Zavarzadeh, 1995). As the revisionist left now uses class, the term "social class" refers to social divisions, social strata, that are effects of market forces that are understood to be (relatively) autonomous from production practices, that is, from the social relations of capitalism that are the relations of exploitation between labor and capital.

Such an analysis is developed powerfully in Kelsh’s most recent publication, Kelsh, Hill and Macrine (2009).

As Banfield (2009a) notes,

When class is treated as an analytic category all signs of life are lost in the dizzy heights of abstraction. The gritty realities of class disappear when it is seen as an idea (theory, perspective, a social scientific category) and not, what it really is: a social relation. (See also Banfield, 2009b)

However, for the purposes of this article and critique, I am critiquing Gillborn on his own grounds, *from within* (as well as, glancingly only- as in this endnote- from without) *his own parameters*.

2. For example, work by the African-American writer Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948, also Reed, 2001), Zavazardeh (2002), Kelsh and Hill (2006), Young (2006), Cole and,

(2007), Cole (2008, 2009a, b, c, d), Kelsh, Hill and Macrine (2009), Motala and Vally in South Africa (2009).

3. I have been actively involved in the anti-Fascist and anti-racist movement since the 1970s. From the Grunwicks mass picket in 1977, to being a local officer of the Anti-Nazi League in the 1970s, and being smoke bombed by NF supporters, to engaging in street confrontations against the National Front, and twice being physically attacked by Fascists. I was also involved in ARTEN, the Anti-Racist Teacher Education network late 1980s, and joined the march to close down the NF headquarters in Welling in 1993. More recently I took part in part and was a platform speaker at the 2009 anti-BNP rally at the national conference of the Trades Union Congress Trades Councils.

4. I have seen David Gillborn present his arguments at two separate conferences- the April 2009 AERA (American Educational Research Association Annual Conference in San Diego, California) (Gillborn, 2009c) and at the Race(ing) Forward: Transitions in theorising 'race' in education conference organised by The Higher Education Academy, in 2008, at the University of Northampton (Gillborn, 2008b).

5. See, for example, Cole Hill and Shan, 1997, Hill and Cole, 1999, 2001b; Hill and Robertson, 2009.

6. An anti-Muslim group calling itself the 'English Defence League' recently demonstrated outside mosques in London and Birmingham, chanting "*Muslim bombers off our streets*". On Friday 11 September, over 2,000 people turned out to defend the Harrow Mosque against them. (Rainsborough, 2009; Jones, 2009; Choonara, 2009). Similar racist demonstrations have been held in Wales and in Scotland by The Welsh Defence League and the Scottish Defence League.

7. At a theoretical level, I use Marxist work such as that by Motala and Vally in South Africa (2009), by the African-American writer Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948, and in Reed, 2001), by Young (2006), classical Marxist work by Kelsh (2001), Zavazardeh (2002). For recent British Marxist critiques of Critical Race Theory, see Cole and Maisuria, 2007; Cole, 2008a, 2009a, b, c, d; Hill, 2007, 2008a, b. c. 2009a.

8. John Preston (2009) does, however, share Gillborn's disquiet that 'the white working class are the exotic failures of the month' and that there is a 'rediscovery of the white working class'. He quotes Gillborn (2009) approvingly in asserting that the white working class are the new race victims.

9. A Popular front is a broad-based multi-class alliance, involving for example liberal and even conservatives, in., for example, an anti-war movement, or an anti-fascist or anti-racist movement. While valuable in mobilizing (sometimes very) large numbers and forces, its politics are usually the politics of the lowest common denominator. Extremely important though that might be, the Popular Front is different from a United Front in that a United front is a coming together of socialist forces. It is class based, with a (working) class perspective. For a discussion of the differences between these two forms of organization/ political tactics, see, for example, Goldfield, 1999; Bensaid, 2007; Choonara, 2007. Choonara also points out the difference between the United Front and the revolutionary, Marxist, party. The United Front 'is not a substitute for a revolutionary party. The United Front tactic can never, under any circumstances, mean the subordination of revolutionary politics and organisation to reformist politics and organisation'.

10. I was lead candidate for the NO2EU-YestoDemocracy campaign in the May-June 2009 European Parliament election campaign, for the SouthEast region of England. See <http://www.no2eusoutheast.blogspot.com/> for some aspects of the campaign. The election leaflets in the SouthEast region highlighted anti-racism as one of the four key points of the campaign. See also the interview I did (Hill, 2009b) with *Weekly Worker*, online at the Respect blogspot, *Interview with Dave Hill who tops the No2EU list in the South East* at <http://respectuk.blogspot.com/2009/05/interview-with-dave-hill-tops-no2eu.html>. The main organisations supporting NO2EU-YestoDemocracy were the RMT trade union, Socialist Party of England and Wales, the Communist Party of Britain, the Alliance for Green Socialism, and the Indian Workers Association. Groups such as Socialist Resistance also gave their general support.

11. The RMT (Rail maritime and Transport) union, led by Bob Crow, called a national public meeting on 7 November 2009, Conference: Crisis in Working Class Representation. See Tucker, 2006; Hill, 2009b for arguments surrounding this

development, which has led to the setting up of a Coalition of the Left to fight the 2010 General Election in the UK, as a trade unionist backed working class party, to the left of Labour. (Crow, 2009). At that conference a Coalition of the Left was announced. Its launch leaflet is at <http://thejuniusblog.wordpress.com/2009/11/06/new-coalition-of-the-left-is-go/>. As the leaflet says,

This coalition has the backing of the Communist Party of Britain, the Socialist Party, the Alliance for Green Socialism and is supported, all in a personal capacity, by Bob Crow (general secretary RMT), Brian Caton (general secretary Prison Officers' Association), leading national officers of the PCS civil servants' union, and national executive committee members of the CWU, UNISON, FBU and USDAW trade unions.

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