

School Bullying and Racist Bullying. Who are the victims?

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Abstract

This article, developed from a conference paper which was presented at the Second Annual Global Conference on Bullying, Prague, 2010, addresses that explanations for the motivations of school bullying and racist bullying are dissimilar, whilst the nature may be alike. The PhD conducted research on bullying and racist bullying in three schools in the North East of England. From these findings, the question emerges who are the victims?

Whilst interviews were conducted amongst young people and adults, the paper largely focuses upon ideas and perceptions of young people. Whilst explanations for bullying were clearly perceived by pupils as they referred to the individual characteristics of the bully emphasizing their aggressive nature, home life and socialization. Pupils' rationale for what drives racist bullying however, focused their discussion directly upon the victim. Pupils from deprived schools and neighbourhoods perceived that victims contributed towards their own victimisation, either through a lack of assimilation and integration, or as a consequence of the unfair level of support they received from the local government. Based upon these preconceived ideas, this paper reveals that the majority of the white working class pupils and their community feel victimised in their own country, and the socio-economic environment contributes towards such ideas. Thus, pupils had little or no empathy towards victims of racist bullying. Therefore, white pupils feel victimized in their own country, but are they?

The article concludes by recommending a need for further qualitative research that explores and examines the motivations of racist bullying, victims' experiences. Further recommendations are made for improved mechanisms to be delivered on a long term basis to prevent and intervene in instances of bullying and racist bullying in schools.

Key words: Bullying/Racist bullying; Perceptions; Victims; Socio-economically deprived.

1. Introduction

School bullying and racist bullying is one of the most contentious social issues that schools face¹. Bullying has been recognized as a major social problem that affects the lives not only of young people but families, peers and often communities². Similarly, racism is a major social problem across England and Wales and beyond, however, academic research on school racism is limited.

Since 1994, all schools in the UK have had a mandatory duty to undertake a variety of anti-bullying preventative and intervention initiatives to support victims, and raise bullying awareness. Since 1999 schools have had a legal requirement to have some form of anti-bullying policy. At present, the new Department for Education's latest research publication³ suggests that a range of different approaches is needed both to identify and deal with bullying in different situations and contexts. The findings also indicate that identifying victims proved difficult due to young people's perceived differences in socio-economic backgrounds and different cultures.

In 2000, the Race Relations Act, amended from the 1976 Act, placed an enforceable duty for schools to adhere to racial equality policies and implement anti-racist measures to ensure the inclusion of all. ⁴The latest Equality Act 2010, to be implemented in England, Scotland and Wales in 2011, specifies that legislation for schools will comprise of many things, including race, religion and faith⁵. Such support is intended to encourage victims to speak out and/or encourage peers to speak on the victim's behalf as a positive coping mechanism. Yet, despite this support, underreporting remains a major concern at schools. Whilst not a major focus of this article, under reporting by victims and peers remains a crucial aspect for all academic researchers on school bullying and racist bullying.

This article explores perceptions by pupils and adults on the nature and rationale for bullying and racist bullying. Correlations exist between the socio-economic make-up of each school and neighbourhood and the quality of anti-bullying support, alongside with pupils' mentality and rationale towards bullying and racist bullying. Further research along with recommendations is given in this paper.

2. The PhD Study

The research was conducted in two secondary schools and a Pupil Referral Unit (School for the Excluded) located in the east-end suburbs of the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne from 2005-2006. Using

focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews with pupils and individual interviews with adults, a total of 51 interviews were conducted. Each school had disparate backgrounds. Old East End Community College is a technical college, vastly socio-economically deprived and in the community, mainly white yet with a large asylum and refugee population. Modern Eastern Suburban School is a large community comprehensive school with an affluent school and community environment and heavily multi-racial. Finally the School for the Excluded is a small modern unit (125 pupils on roll) and also at a major socio-economic disadvantage and within the local community. At the time of the research, this unit consisted of only white pupils.

3. (A) Perceptions on School Bullying

Bullying was commonly perceived as taking various forms of abuse. Such as being verbal, physical and indirect, with verbal name-calling being most common and that bullying was often a cumulative process that mostly occurred in front of witnesses. Whilst cyberbullying was identified to be on the rise, at the time of the fieldwork, 'happy slapping' (recording bullying incidents and forwarding to others) was the most common bullying trend through technology. Where perceptions differed however, pupils from Modern Eastern Suburban School identified that physical fights were not necessarily real 'bullying' unless witnessed and/or encouraged by a group of peers, whereas pupils from Old East End Community College and the School for the Excluded identified that all physical acts to be bullying. Overall, motivations and explanations for bullying drew upon four broad concepts:

Status, Power and Reputation

Overall, pupils from Old East End Community College perceived that the bully had to continue perpetrating in order to preserve his or her image and maintain a leadership style status. A simple example of this theme arose in one individual interview with one pupil from Old East End Community College. It was clear from the interview that the individual has to continue to perpetrate in order to preserve his or her image:

"I think because if someone calls them a name, they think they have to do it, ah think they think that they have to do it, to stay... ..in the group and look hard"⁶. This theory is supported by Woods⁷ who talks about social stratification and hierarchy in the peer group and argues that, boys in particular, employ aggression in order to achieve status and dominance. Similarly, where perpetrators who previously had family members at the school with a bullying reputation, they were expected to follow suit. In contrast, pupils in Modern Eastern Suburban School used this concept and applied it only to a situation where family members support a younger sibling if they are being threatened by anyone. "if the younger sister's friends or if they've got like a younger sister or brother in year 7, they've got their worst enemy, but they're scared to go and pick on them, so they get their older brother or sister to go..."⁸

The research of Sullivan *et al.*⁹ and Haynie¹⁰ is consistent with the above construction of the bully. In keeping with maintaining this leadership status, in order to continue receiving the power and prestige granted by their peers, the bully has to continue with the bullying, and not feel any possible empathy towards the victim¹¹. Showboating to impress peers was perceived to be of significant importance. Pupils, particularly from Modern Eastern Suburban School expressed that individuals were targeted because they looked defenceless and were often loners. As such, victims were perceived as the typical meek type. As some pupils put it:

"...if someone comes in and hasn't like got any friends with them, then some people might choose them"¹²

Cranham and Carroll and Lines¹³ claim that impressing peers is one crucial common characteristic of bullying and that they are able to show off their power by humiliating the reserved and weaker individuals.

Family Experiences and Childhood Victimization

A second way in which pupils explained bullying was by indicating that the behaviour of some bullies was linked to experiencing bullying at home and in the community and that this directly contributed towards the bullying behaviour. This was particularly highlighted by pupils from Old East End Community College and Modern Eastern Suburban School:

Pupil 1: "...they are probably getting bullied at home off their dad or their mam and that...

Pupil 2: they probably think it's alright to do it..."¹⁴

Pupil 1: "...they might have something going on at home and like their parents might be abusing them or something.

Pupil 2: well, they might have a problem or something, and ...instead of curing it, they're just making it worse by trying to hurt someone to make them feel better... ...which is just totally taking it the wrong way,

Pupil 1: well most bullies... ...they've been bullied before and then they think, 'Well I've been bullied, so someone else should be, deserves to be bullied'"¹⁵

Bradshaw *et al.*¹⁶, claim that adolescents from socially disadvantaged inner-city neighbourhoods are at a greater risk of victimisation and at increased risk for aggressive behaviour, retaliatory attitudes and diminished perceptions of safety than those from affluent rural areas. Yet Coloroso¹⁷ maintains that children, who have been abused and bullied usually by parents, repeat these acts in order to gain relief from their own feeling of powerlessness and self-loathing. Again, the above research findings correlate with this. Pupils also suggested or implied that psychological and medical disorders may contribute. In particular, from the School for the Excluded, one pupil expressed:

"I do believe that to bully, to be doing something as serious as cases in bullying, to be doing something in that, cruel and ambitious, you've got to have, there's got to be something going on in your head as well. You know the way I think, I think its disgraceful bullying as well"¹⁸

This opinion is in line with academic writers such as Olweus¹⁹, who suggests that most bullies suffer from gross insecurity, often needing help with psychiatric disorders. Griffin and Gross²⁰ discuss bullies who are exposed to a harsh and aggressive upbringing with 'inconsistent parental discipline strategies'. Their view supports that of Carney and Merrill²¹ who suggest that bullies, "often have a positive outlook on the use of violence to solve problematic situations"²². Furthermore, they suggest that, since bullies who are victims at home are less likely to retaliate due to helplessness, they are quite adept at identifying victims who reveal the same characteristics, or will be ineffective in their efforts to retaliate, thus making them more desirable targets.

Relative Deprivation

Bullying was also motivated by relative deprivation. Only pupils from Modern Eastern Suburban School were able to explain that the bully's deprived social and economic background often shaped a higher level of expectation for material possession and resentment or covetousness towards others who, in their opinion, unjustifiably had obtained these possessions. They reflected upon the idea that:

“...if somebody wasn’t as well off and they thought, well they’d bully the more well off person and they would take the property off from them...”²³

“They could be just jealous and then start picking on you... ..like you might have something and they don’t have it, so they could try and pick on you and stuff and try and get it off you”²⁴

Victims therefore, possessing expensive items were often bullied because the perpetrators were not able to afford these things. However, this was not an issue at Old East End Community College and the School for the Excluded. Graham²⁵ claims that often relative deprivation is more important as a cause for violence, including physical bullying, than absolute deprivation in children, in particular at schools, as pupils feel frustrated by not having the same material items as others.

Negative Influence of the Media and Social Context

In the wider social context, the media holds a significant amount of negative influence over the way pupils treat each other. Research has suggested that with regular exposure to violence young people are likely to become desensitized to real life violence and have less understanding of the suffering inflicted upon victims²⁶. Pupils from the School for the Excluded referred to one popular play station game that depicted all forms of violence:

Pupil 1: “...San Andreas like! Proper learns you everything after that, don’t it?

Pupil 2: definitely, too right

SQ: What was that?

Pupil 1: San Andreas learns you everything, EVERYTHING right!!

Pupil 2: drugs, prostitutes, hit man”²⁷.

Similarly, Coloroso²⁸ identified another popular play station game, Grand Theft Auto III as inviting young people into violence and argued that “Kids who are regularly exposed to media violence are apt to become ‘intimidated’... ..and imitate the violence they see and hear”. Eron and Huesmann²⁹ argue that, in addition to peers, the media becomes increasingly important in influencing a child’s social development. They believe that the media holds long-term effects as it portrays aggression and violence as attractive attributes to copy.

4. (B) Perceptions on Racist Bullying

In contrast to the explanations pupils offered for school bullying, when asked to explain racist bullying the pupils offered a range of different explanations. Instead of focusing upon the individual characteristics of the bully, pupils’ explanations for racist bullying were often resolute in a discussion based upon the victim’s individual and cultural traits. For most pupils, their explanations for racist bullying appeared to indirectly hold the victims responsible.

Racist bullying was identified as verbal name-calling through to physical violence; however, racist name-calling was the most common form. Although fewer forms were identified, the way in which pupils described them were specific and direct and articulated that racist bullying was directed against the individual because of their ethnic make-up. Connolly and Keenan’s³⁰, research revealed that the pupils in their sample identified examples of racist bullying using specific and illustrative language. In their sample, for example, pupils used expression such as ‘Chinky, Paki and coco-pops’ as names they had heard or for some, were called. It can be argued that such examples, tended to play a role in contributing towards and reinforcing an environment within which pupils in their sample felt degraded and humiliated³¹. Pupils’

identified racist verbal terminologies that they had heard and presented these on written notes. Again, pupils used belittling language quite easily and this supports Connolly and Keenan's argument that the use of such language places the victim in a position where they are greatly insulted and humiliated. Pupils' notes included the following:

"Black boy; black currant; black b*****; People call coloured people Black c**** and B*****..."³²

"Jew; Paki; chinky; Jew; Nigger; Paki; Chinky; Nigga; Jew; Paki; Chinky; Nigga; Black b**tar*; Chinky; Paki; Nigger; Paki; Chinky; The Paki B*****d; Nigger."³³

Interestingly, pupils presented themselves as non-racist, yet only used descriptive and illustrative language when identifying racist bullying. For example, when referring to non-white pupils, the term 'coloured' was used and this was employed rather frequently. The intention was clearly to humiliate and stereotype the victims. Popular examples included mocking ethnic accents and skin colour. Whilst this was the only identification given by pupils from Modern Eastern Suburban School and School for the Excluded, pupils from Old East End Community College delved deeper. Racist bullying often had religious and political associations. Such as, an individual derived from India, would be mocked and labelled a 'Hindu', or if from Germany, they would be branded a 'Nazi'. However, individuals emanating from Muslim countries, the racist taunts appeared as political links, such as terrorism through anti-Muslim jokes or humiliating retort; 'Taliban' and 'suicide bomber'. Whilst all pupils unanimously agreed that racist bullying rarely occurred at their school, as did the teachers, all pupils had admitted to witnessing racist incidents and were unambiguous in their examples. In terms of the teachers' perceptions to racist bullying, they responded to questions about racist bullying by suggesting that they did not perceive that much occurred within the school. Furthermore, a teacher from Modern Eastern Suburban School perceived that racist bullying was barely non-existent. One teacher identified that:

Teacher: "...in terms of racism, I haven't seen any in the classes that I teach,

SQ: okay, how about around the school or a situation that you've heard from maybe other teachers from other years, as well,

Teacher: I have, well, from the experience of the pupils who I teach and from what I've heard, I haven't personally heard of any, in that sense. But I'm sure there will be, but it's probably more if you ask other year groups, you know you would get more of a clearer picture of that thing, ...

...because, personally I, I haven't, I just haven't come across that, as such. Probably very luckily, (laughs). I would say, definitely.

SQ: So, you're not aware, or nothing actually takes place in your own classrooms at all?

Teacher: no. Not in my classrooms, no, no, no"³⁴

Explanations for racist bullying largely drew upon two broad concepts:

Individual and Cultural Differences

To pupils, motivations for racist bullying related to the individual physical characteristics and cultural differences of victims. Often, images of different coloured skin, wearing headscarves, turbans, etc were raised during the discussions. Furthermore, during a focus group in Old East End Community College, pupils disclosed their anger and frustration as they perceived the presence of the non-white community in 'their' streets, attending 'their' schools and yet, in their view, not integrating. As pupils from one focus group in Old East End Community College suggested:

Pupil 1: "I don't mind them coming to our country, but I don't like it when they just sit there and don't say anything to us.

Pupil 2: aye there's about 17 good families on my street and the rest are just blooming Chinese!"³⁵

This demonstrates an uncomfortable feeling about living in an ethnically mixed area, where little integration and social cohesion exist. These views were consistent with Cockburn's³⁶ finding that the white community feels vulnerable and isolated. Elsewhere, Cockburn argues that a failure of society to recognize this has serious consequences for challenging racism and fostering community cohesion. Raby³⁷ identified this response as 'white defensiveness' where respondents in her interviews discussed their whiteness as a form of 'disadvantage' and felt victimized. This shared view provoked growing levels of 'mutual racism'. Similarly in another focus group with Old East End Community College, one boy openly disclosed his true racist feelings. Believing that the presence of such groups and lifestyle differences deeply impacted the living conditions of the white community, he adamantly expressed:

"I don't know why dark people just don't go back to where they came from, they just come over here and cause fights for white people and then the white people just get in trouble for them. Well I think it's wrong and they shouldn't be here!"³⁸

Such racist hostility shocked the class tutor; yet, no one challenged his racist remarks. Cockburn's³⁹ findings suggest that white young people's animosity had increased as they felt the decrease in their economic wellbeing, a loss in their sense of identity as they felt overwhelmed by their presence and such mindsets were born out of fear of unknown cultures, anger and chiefly, frustration. Fear was particularly directed towards the Muslim community. One teacher at the School for the Excluded revealed that a pupil admitted that after the September 11th 2001, terrorist attacks, he refused to board a plane if he saw a dark person on the same flight. In contrast, pupils in Modern Eastern Suburban School narrated an incident where a young Muslim girl had her headscarf pulled off by some boys:

SQ: "why were they attacking her, those boys?"

Pupil 3: maybe it's because of her colour,

Pupil 4: and her head scarf and she's really nice as well... ..she's American, but she's coloured and she's got a headscarf and she's really friendly.

Pupil 2: they might have been brought up where they haven't seen anyone with a headscarf, and then they might think, 'oh well, she's not like us is she', so they might just try to take it off her... ..break her, making her cry

Pupil 3: but that's her religion and she has to wear it"⁴⁰

Sympathy was shown as pupils indicated that they knew the victim and genuinely liked her. Furthermore, this more sympathetic view could be associated with the social make-up of the school, which was strongly multiracial and practiced zero tolerance against all forms of racism and racist bullying.

Unfair Advantage

A second explanation given by pupils, particularly from Old East End Community College related to perceptions of preferential treatment afforded to immigrant, asylum seeker and refugee communities by the government. The presence of these groups was believed to have generated major changes within the local community and according to many pupils; such changes were perceived to be unfair and unwarranted. As two pupils discussed:

"...Miss the government's been changing things here because of them, like Christmas, they're changing that and that's not for any reason... ..well that makes people more racist like"⁴¹

“I mean schools don’t call it Christmas anymore, it’s called festivities”⁴²

Pupils in one focus group in Old East End Community College complained that the name was changed from black board to dry white board so as not to offend any minority ethnic groups. Pupils agreed that implementing such drastic changes would:

Pupil 1: “well it makes people feel racist

Pupil 2: well people might effect to that, like just because of the name, like ah wouldn’t think that calling it a black board is being racist towards anyone. ...I mean it’s a black board and Christmas is Christmas”⁴³

Some pupils from Old East End Community College became more vociferous in their articulation of the disparity and complained at the advancement in the quality of life for minority ethnic groups, which was believed to have been achieved largely by attaining their own businesses. In their opinion, such groups were favoured by the government by being given first choice of housing. Cockburn⁴⁴ claims that while racism is undeniably a prime cause of community conflict, there is a failure by policy makers to carry some parts of the white community with them and this perpetuates a cycle of resentment. For example, his data reveals that the young people who were interviewed perceived that “nothing is being done for them and plenty done for others”⁴⁵. Echoing a similar view, pupils’ complained that:

Pupil 1: “about immigrants having corner shops.....yeah every corner shops have got them in them and flats, they all are in the flats, and they just keep on bringing more and more....

Pupil 2: there’s like flats behind mine (house) and they get first option of flats, coloureds moving in before us”⁴⁶

Most pupils were resentful as they felt neglected. This neglect was linked to the schools’ role, where changes were made to accommodate such groups. Pupils’ frustration was particularly acute as they believed that they had witnessed these communities receiving material goods from the local council:

Pupil 1: “...I think it wrong because we only have small things off the council, but when they come over here, they get big Mercedes and stuff and it’s not fair!”⁴⁷

Failing to understand why asylum seekers and refugees were in the UK allowed pupils to justify racist comments. Whilst no pupil openly declared racism, they appeared to suggest that the non-white community should almost expect racist retaliation. Pupils blaming the non-white communities for prospering may suggest that they feel ashamed of the lack of progression in their own lives and resentful of the development in the lives of these communities. One pupil remarked during the pilot focus group that:

“There’s loads of Asian people, black people... ...well there’s too many of them in this country and they take over the corner shops since the 70’s”⁴⁸

The above stereotypical example of immigrants attaining their own business suggests that in a short space of time immigrants have managed to prosper economically, whilst white people appear to be lagging. These findings are similar to those of Ray *et al.*⁴⁹ who suggest that often communities are ashamed of their lack of achievement in life in comparison to the minority ethnic communities. They argue that much of the racist perpetration was due to using such groups as scapegoats and racist violence may be motivated by ‘unacknowledged shame’⁵⁰. Their research into racist perpetrators in Oldham, Greater Manchester, suggested that there was much support for the National Front due to their stereotypical attitude that minority ethnic groups were at an unfair advantage. They argue that much of the racist perpetration

was due to using minority ethnic groups as scapegoats, “for their own sense of failure and resentment”⁵¹ Whilst the sentiments from pupils at Old East End Community College were the same, there was no direct evidence from any interviews that this drove community members to racist violence.

Adults perceived that racist bullying occurred due to ignorance and a lack of acceptance of other cultures amongst the white community and this often turned into a feeling of fear of the unknown. Adults also firmly believed that pupils’ racist behaviour and attitude derived from antipathy displayed within the home and the wider community and viewed young people as ‘passive recipients’. For example, this perception where preferential treatment was given amongst minority ethnic groups.

5. Discussion and Implications for Future Research

What can be understood from each of the three schools are that there are considerable differences with the socio-economic backgrounds, particularly between Old East End Community College and Modern Eastern Suburban School between the neighbourhoods within which the schools are located. Old East End Community College, for example, located in the east end suburbs of the city, has significant social and economic deprivation with a high population of lower working class people who live in close knit, inner city and manufacturing town communities. The crime rate is high. In comparison, Modern Eastern Suburban School also located in the east end of the city, is relatively affluent and the majority of the population is from middle class backgrounds, and therefore, the area has less problems with crime. As there are variations in class backgrounds between both schools, there were differences between pupils’ perceptions of bullying and it can be suggested that the socio-economic and demographic backgrounds provide an understanding to these differences.

It was interesting to discover that whilst all pupils shared similar views on what constituted bullying, only pupils at Modern Eastern Suburban School were able to articulate the difference between what constituted physical bullying and what was a normal fight. Furthermore, this school maintained a positive school ethos through implementing a variety of anti-bullying and anti-racist preventative and intervention support for all pupils, (Citizenship classes, school counsellors, lunchtime peer-support, learning and peer mentors). Despite the affluent background of this school and community neighbourhood, however, a mob-style fighting culture appeared to be more of a problem than bullying. Whereas in Old East End Community College, bullying appeared to be a significant problem and whilst violence was rare, when it did occur, it was extreme. This could possibly be attributed towards the relatively minimal and anti-bullying/anti-racist support measures used by the school (Circle Time classes, house and form tutors). Teachers at this school went on very few anti-bullying training courses and aside from the occasional presence and use of youth workers, there was no other form of outside agency, such as counsellors, nor any peer mediation scheme used, quite unlike Modern Eastern Suburban School. Emanating from a rather socio-economically deprived school and neighbourhood with high statistics in crime, this suggests that the bullying mentality can be shaped through a poor school ethos and negative peer pressure. Particularly, as Old East End Community College is located in an environment that is socially and economically deprived, with the lack of funding and time given by teachers to be effectively trained, there was much disgruntlement amongst pupils as to the effectiveness of the teachers’ response. With the School for the Excluded, bullying was more rampant outside of the unit as similar to Old East End Community College; it also was located in a socio-economically deprived neighbourhood where much crime also existed. However, whilst bullying occurred inside the unit, there was a strong anti-bullying support network for victims as well as the perpetrators (Personal Social Health and Education-PSHE classes, learning mentors, parental involvement). This enabled for teachers to maintain a positive ethos within the unit and keep bullying and other forms of violence under reasonable control. With fewer than 130 pupils on roll, this also allowed teachers to work closely with pupils and keeping bullying to a minimum. Where Old East End

Community College have larger classes and minimal resources to teach against bullying, this could account for pupils lack of depth, accuracy and detail than talking about bullying.

Whilst pupils articulated bullying through a discussion that concentrated solely on the perpetrator's characteristics, they lacked in depth and detail of victims' experiences, yet victims of bullying were clearly perceived as victims. Not only was the perpetrator held responsible for bullying, pupils perceived that it was their individual, social and psychological problems that drove them to bully. In comparison, there was less dialogue on racist bullying however discussions shifted to focusing entirely upon the victims. Another common pattern between each school was the admission that whilst racist bullying existed, it barely occurred within the grounds of the school. Teachers however, completely downplayed the existence of racism in their school. Upon reflection therefore, the manifestation of racist bullying can be speculated. Where pupils from Old East End Community College clearly revealed prejudicial attitudes, it would be difficult to assume that no racism occurred. Furthermore, it was alarming to discover that despite the use of racial derogatory language and particularly, the pupil from the focus group at Old East End Community College who openly declared racist hostility towards minority ethnic groups, asylum seekers and refugees, the boy was not challenged by the teacher present in the room, nor by any of the pupils present. This was especially startling as there were pupils from asylum and refugee communities also participating in the focus group. Such attitude could be speculated into suggesting that perhaps prejudicial attitudes were either overlooked or ignored by the school. This strongly suggests that many victims prefer not to tell anyone. Furthermore, and as witnessed in this focus group, where teachers fail to challenge derogative and prejudicial views, this may only further serve to discourage victims to speak out, as it would appear that the teachers are virtually condoning such behaviour. This could help explain for those teachers who perceived that racist bullying was not a major problem. Only those teachers interviewed at the School for the Social Excluded agreed that much racist behaviour occurred, but outside in the community and neighbourhood environment.

The profile for victims of racist bullying was identified as largely being held accountable for their own victimization. As demonstrated above, pupils particularly from Old East End Community College showed a great deal of hostility as by witnessing drastic changes to their school and local neighbourhood environment, and in their perceptions, to accommodate minority ethnic groups, they themselves felt victimized, not only by the school, but also by the local government. Pupils from the School for the Excluded were neither hostile nor sympathetic towards minority ethnic pupils, yet at the time of the fieldwork research, none were present at the unit. This therefore suggests that by not having to deal with these groups on a daily basis, there was less frustration towards them. Yet prejudices deriving from the family and neighbourhood and community filtered through the pupils' attitudes, as one teacher from the School for the Excluded explained as she referred to the pupil, who, after September 11th 2001, refused to board a plane if a non-white person was taking the same flight. Only pupils from Modern Eastern Suburban School showed moderate concern towards minority ethnic communities and to those whom pupils were familiar with. Furthermore, this sympathetic view towards the Asian girl could be associated with the middle class neighbourhood environment, as well as the social make-up of the school which practiced zero tolerance towards racism.

From this paper, the findings suggest that pupils' understanding of bullying and racist bullying are influenced by their own life experiences, located within their own neighbourhood, family and school environment. Specifically, they suggest that, whilst perpetrators are often seen as individual agents identified by particular 'individual' traits, the behaviour of perpetrators of racist bullying is often explained with recourse to a discussion of the victim traits, such as lifestyle, background and culture. Worthy of note is that the motivations for racist bullying, exploring and understanding victims' experiences of bullying and racist bullying warrants additional research as current research is limited and partial in its use of qualitative methodology. This study reflects the research findings from one inner city. Additional areas of research

that can be recommended are: Firstly, that racist bullying is an issue that requires further exploration in schools, especially in the context of school anti-bullying policies and the Equality Act 2010. In addition to schools developing a serious attitude working towards anti-bullying and anti-racism, improved strategies through a combination of preventative and intervention measures in bullying and racist bullying appropriate to the school, and on a long term basis, are required and able to assist schools to achieve this goal, particularly contrasting a narrower and a more holistic approach. This not only would be effective in deepening pupils understanding of the subject, but also develop a meaningful ethos in schools and accepting attitude towards the presence and cultural lifestyle of minority ethnic groups. Similarly, positive integration and social cohesion from minority ethnic groups is crucial to developing a harmonious school and local neighbourhood and community atmosphere.

Notes

¹ Ma *et al.* 2001

² Olweus, 1993

³ Department for Education, (2010:89)

⁴ Rupra (2007:95)

⁵ Richardson, R, (2010:6)

⁶ Individual interviews, years 8 and 9, Old East End Community College

⁷ Woods (2009:224)

⁸ Focus group, year 8, Modern Eastern Suburban School

⁹ Sullivan *et al.* (2005)

¹⁰ Haynie (2001, in Sullivan *et al.*, 2005)

¹¹ Sullivan *et al.* (2005: 17)

¹² Focus group, year 9, Modern Eastern Suburban School

¹³ Cranham and Carroll, (2003:113), Lines (2008:66)

¹⁴ Focus group, year 9, Old East End Community College

¹⁵ Focus group, year 8, Modern Eastern Suburban School

¹⁶ Bradshaw *et al.*, (2009:206)

¹⁷ Coloroso (2008:19)

¹⁸ Focus group, year 9, School for the Excluded

¹⁹ Olweus, (1993)

²⁰ Griffin and Gross, (2004:384)

²¹ Carney and Merrill, (2001 cited in Griffin and Gross, 2004:384)

²² Griffin and Gross, (2004: 384)

²³ Focus group, year 9, Modern Eastern Suburban School

²⁴ Focus group, year 8, Modern Eastern Suburban School

²⁵ Graham (1996:185)

²⁶ Coloroso (2008:120)

²⁷ Focus group, year 9, School for the Excluded

²⁸ Coloroso (2008:121)

²⁹ Eron and Huesmann (1984:159)

³⁰ Connolly and Keenan (2002:349)

³¹ Connolly and Keenan (2002)

³² (Written notes by focus group, year 7, Old East End Community College).

³³ (Written notes by focus group, year 7, Modern Eastern Suburban School).

³⁴ Teacher interview, Modern Eastern Suburban School

³⁵ Focus group, year 9, Old East End Community College

³⁶ Cockburn, (2007:548)

³⁷ Raby (2004:377)

³⁸ Focus group, year 9, Old East End Community College

³⁹ Cockburn, (2007:551)

⁴⁰ Focus group, year 8 Modern Eastern Suburban School

⁴¹ Focus group, year 8, Old East End Community College

⁴² Focus group, year 8, Old East End Community College

⁴³ Focus group, year 8, Old East End Community College

⁴⁴ Cockburn (2007:553)

⁴⁵ Cockburn (2007)

⁴⁶ Focus group, pilot sample, Old East End Community College

⁴⁷ Focus group, year 9, Old East End Community College

⁴⁸ Focus group-pilot, years 8 and 9, Old East End Community College

⁴⁹ Ray *et al.* (2004:360)

⁵⁰ Ray *et al.* (2004: 350)

⁵⁰ Ray *et al.* (2001:216)

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