

## **Islamophobia, conflict and citizenship**

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### **Abstract**

This article discusses some preliminary findings of the English part of a European Commission Fundamental Rights and Citizenship funded project 'Children's Voices' (2011-2013) concerned with exploring and understanding children and young people's experiences of interethnic conflict and violence in primary and secondary schools. This is a comparative study of England, Slovenia, Cyprus, Austria and Italy and the English focus is on Islamophobia. The research comprises a review of literature, legislation and good practice in race equality in England; a quantitative study of 8 primary schools (year 5/6) and 8 Secondary schools/sixth form centres (year 12/13) in 4 regions of England; a qualitative study of pupils and adults in 4 schools in one region and interview material from semi structured interviews with a range of 'experts' in the area. The article outlines some of the research findings from the first quantitative stage of the research. It argues that in schools with a strong citizenship ethos, where different religions are respected and where there are strong institutional processes and procedures against discriminatory practices, Islamophobia and conflict are not likely to be an issue, however, the same cannot be said for the wider society.

**Keywords:** Religion, Islamophobia, conflict, citizenship

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### Introduction - the research project

With evidence of increasing racism across many European countries, within the context of EU enlargement, globalization processes, and the diversification of migration flows there is a need for research that seeks to understand the experiences of young people with respect to racism and conflict. As schools are spaces to explore and challenge behaviours and assumptions as well as to foster positive relations, they are key arenas in which to analyse interethnic violence as well as mechanisms to address xenophobia and racism. This article is part of research from a larger research project, *Children's Voices*, which examines interethnic violence in schools in five European countries: England, Austria, Cyprus, Italy and Slovenia (the lead partner)<sup>1</sup>. In addition to analysing interethnic violence, the research project aims to identify positive measures that combat discrimination and provide examples of good practice as well as the role of the school in promoting citizenship.

The aim of the project is:

To understand interethnic and intercultural conflict and violence in primary and secondary schools across the five European partners. The overarching aim of the project is to support the implementation of children's rights by analysing the range and nature of interethnic violence in schools. For the purpose of this study the definition of violence encompasses all actions that might pose a threat to human dignity. (University of Primorska, 2010)

The research takes place in all five countries in the project and has two stages: the first stage is a quantitative study, using a questionnaire, and the second stage is a qualitative study employing individual semi structured interviews with experts, teachers and other educational professionals and focus group interviews with pupils. This article concerns only the first stage of the English part of the project, the quantitative study.

### Why Islamophobia?

In researching intercultural and interethnic violence and children's rights in the school environment in England, there is a vast tapestry of interethnic relations available for analysis. However, in light of world and home events over the past two decades, in particular the terrorist attacks on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and the London bombings in July 2005, and the resulting so-called 'war on terror' and counter-terrorism strategies that disproportionately affect Muslims, there is discernible evidence of increased hostility and prejudice towards Muslims in England and, indeed, Europe more generally (Poynting & Mason, 2007; Crozier and Davies, 2008; Suleiman, 2009; Lambert & Githens-Mazar, 2010; Allen, 2010).

Thus, we opted to analyse interethnic violence in the school environment in England through the lens of Islamophobia, in relation to both children's own experiences as well as attitudes towards Muslims<sup>2</sup>. As schools are spaces to explore and challenge behaviours and assumptions as well as to foster positive relations, they are key arenas in which to analyse interethnic violence as well as mechanisms to address xenophobia and racism. In addition to analysing interethnic violence, the research project aims to identify positive measures that combat discrimination and provide examples of good practice.

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<sup>1</sup> The project is co-funded by the European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme. For further information, see website: <http://childrenvoices.eu/>

<sup>2</sup> In choosing to examine Islamophobia, we do not assume Muslims to have an essentialist homogenised identity but, rather, we acknowledge the multifaceted and dynamic nature of identity and understand Muslims as those who choose to identify as such. Indeed, Muslims in the UK are a very ethnically and theologically diverse group (Suleiman, 2009; Beckford, Gale, Owne, Peach, & Weller, 2006).

As there is little available evidence on the prevalence of Islamophobia in schools or, indeed, of interethnic or intercultural conflict in schools in England, the article draws from a variety of research looking at racism and Islamophobia more generally and levels of violence within the educational setting.

### **Increased racism towards Muslims since 9/11**

Whilst it can be difficult to differentiate between racially motivated attacks and attacks determined by religious hatred (Athwal, Bourne and Wood, 2010), a significant body of research has shown that after the events of 11 September 2001, the London bombings in July 2005 and other attacks, as well as the Oldham and Bradford riots in 2001<sup>3</sup>, there has been an exponential increase in Islamophobic rhetoric and agendas (see CBMI, 2004; Poynting & Mason, 2007; Crozier & Davies 2008; Suleiman, 2009; Lambert & Githens-Mazar, 2010; Allen, 2010). Indeed, as Athwal et al. (2010, p. 8) argue, “[T]he category ‘Muslim’ is becoming more and more racialised and the distinction between ‘racial hatred’ and ‘religious hatred’ is increasingly blurred”.

In the UK, the far-right British National Party adopted a highly explicit Islamophobic campaign, reasserting Christianity as being under threat from Muslims in the UK and stressing the inability of Islam as a religion to assimilate with British culture (Allen & Neilsen, 2002). Thus, Islamophobia is not just restricted to hate crimes and more obvious violence, but it also occurs in more subtle, discriminatory ways through forms of structural violence. For example, in educational and occupational attainment, Muslims are found more likely to face educational and occupational disadvantages (Khattab, 2009). Indeed, a significant body of literature notes the socially disadvantaged nature of much of the UK Muslim population (e.g. CBMI, 2004; Open Society, 2005; Meer, 2009; Suleiman, 2009).

### **Interethnic violence in schools**

Whilst there is little literature available on interethnic violence in schools in England, several questionnaire studies have focused explicitly on the degree and frequency of peer victimization and bullying among ethnic minority children. Available research highlights a number of discrepancies, evidencing the methodological issues and comparative difficulties of studies.

The concept of bullying itself is still a somewhat contested issue<sup>4</sup> and, owing to differences in methodology and terminology, it is difficult to find comparative data (Oliver & Candappa, 2003; Wolke, Woods, Stanford, & Schulz 2001). Researchers utilise different concepts of bullying, although most draw heavily on the work of Olweus (e.g. 1997). Further difficulties arise in isolating factors, as bullying can also be influenced by environment – class composition, size, teacher responses, a school’s ethos towards anti-bullying, etc. (Watkins, Mauthner, Hewitt, Epstein, & Leonard 2007; Green, Collingwood, & Ross, 2010). In addition, children’s own perceptions of bullying can be influenced by other factors, such as age and gender (Monks & Smith, 2006; Wood, 2007).

As a result, studies reveal differing findings and considerable variance in the prevalence of violence (Wolke et al., 2001).

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<sup>3</sup> These riots saw clashes in northeast of England between largely white and Asian groups of youths and were termed race riots by the media. See [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/7/newsid\\_2496000/2496003.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/7/newsid_2496000/2496003.stm)

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of the definition of bullying see Monks and Smith (2006)

For example, Eslea and Mukhtar (2000), in a study of Hindu, Indian Muslim and Pakistani children, found that all three groups suffered bullying equally but that they were less likely to experience bullying from their own ethnic group. Other studies have found that children from ethnic minorities were more likely to experience racist name-calling and social exclusion compared to children from a majority ethnic group (Boulton, 1995; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002; Monks, Ortega-Ruiz, & Rodriguez-Hidalgo, 2008; British Council, 2008; DfES, 2006).

In contrast, Sweeting and West (2001) found that experiences of teasing/bullying did not differ according to race, physical maturity or height, but was more likely among children who were less physically attractive, overweight, had a disability or performed poorly at school. However, the majority of their respondents were classed as 'white' (96%). Smith and Shu (2000) also found low levels of racial name-calling in their study. Again, however, 90% of the sample was white. Similarly, in a recent study for the then Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF, now Department for Education, DfE), Green et al. (2010) found that young people from minority ethnic groups were less likely to be bullied than white young people (Green et al., 2010). However, as the report acknowledges, the largest proportion of young people (87%) were in the 'white' group, with only 1-3% falling into each of the other ethnic groups<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, it is clear that racist bullying is a complex phenomenon across and between ethnicities and may vary between schools depending on the proportion of ethnic minority pupils (Green et al., 2010) and the overall school ethos. Indeed, research in this area must take into consideration the fact that educational environments differ greatly within the UK. Thus, research findings must be considered carefully in light of the specific contexts in which they are applied and the potential for generalisable findings or comparisons are limited. Further, much of the literature looks at racist name calling and not at other forms of bullying which may be less overt, and there is evidence that pupils do not report racist abuse when asked about bullying in general, which might indicate that the levels of racial victimization experienced by pupils in schools is underestimated, as suggested by Siann et al. (cited in Monks et al., 2008).

Research also evidences that institutional racism towards ethnic minority children is still an issue in some schools. For instance, Gillborn and Rollock (2010) argue that although legislative changes since the Macpherson Report in 1999 saw schools imposed with a legal duty to proactively promote race equality following the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, the education system "continues to produce outcomes that are deeply scarred by systematic race inequalities," (p. 139). For example, rates of permanent exclusion are widely recognised as disproportionately affecting Black student groups and rates of educational achievement remain lower for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds (Parsons, 2009; Carlile, 2010; Gillborn & Rollock, 2010)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The report used data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE), which encompasses a number of limitations (see for example Gillborn, 2010)

<sup>6</sup> Although some of this data, when disaggregated for other factors, highlights more differential patterns as groups or as not homogenous, instances of social class also has a part to play (Gillborn, 2010).

Much of the research on racism in schools points to the fact that teachers often deny or are oblivious to the existence of racism in their school (Hill et al., 2007; Crozier & Davies, 2008; Gillborn & Rollock, 2010). Such findings are symptomatic of the often widely held view that racism is a term that relates only to the obvious, in the form of violent attacks, rather than reflecting the reality that many forms of racism can be much more subtle and even unintended (Gillborn & Rollock, 2010).

### **Islamophobia in schools**

Whilst there is very limited literature available on instances of Islamophobia in schools (Shaik, 2006), evidence from more general research on Muslims highlights problems within the education system. Institutional racism towards Muslims within the educational sector, both in relation to teachers' assumptions and prejudices towards Muslim students, is found to be a problem in several research papers (Weller et al., 2001; Shah, 2006; Hill et al., 2007; Crozier & Davies, 2008; Meer, 2009). A recent OSI report on countries across Europe found that although many schools did engage in inclusive educational practices with Muslim pupils, some Muslim pupils continued to suffer racism and prejudice and faced low expectations from teachers (OSI, 2010).

Further, educational outcomes amongst young Muslims are often lower than those of other groups (Meer, 2009). While it is accepted that parental education and social class play an important role in shaping these educational outcomes, Halstead (cited in Meer 2009, p. 389) lists a range of other issues that are perceived to be relevant by Muslims themselves: "Religious discrimination; Islamophobia; the lack of Muslim role models in schools; low expectations on the part of teachers; time spent in mosque schools; the lack of recognition of the British Muslim identity of the student."

In England, Farzana Shain's (2011) detailed study of Muslim boys in the West Midlands found that existing tensions were aggravated within schools post-11 September 2001 and whilst boys stated racism existed prior to then, since then they had felt increasingly stigmatised as being associated with Islamic terrorism. Shain also found racism to be a central feature of the boys' experiences of school, from both overt, low level name-calling to more covert institutional racism. However, she noted that contemporary racism is complex and contradictory: whilst the boys were addressed as 'terrorists' and 'Bin Laden' following 11 September, which "illustrates how the politicisation and racialisation of religion are shaping contemporary racist discourse," biological notions of race were also a feature of their experiences of racism (Shain, 2011, p.158). Crozier and Davies (2008) also found in their study that, for the majority of South Asian young people from a Muslim background they spoke to, racially motivated abuse, harassment and often subsequent violence was a central feature of their school experience. In line with other studies, they also found teachers often denied this experience. Unfortunately, as Islamophobia is not always recognised as racism and is often not referred to in guidance / policy documents by local authorities, Islamophobia in schools can sometimes go unaddressed (CMBI, 2004).

### **Legislative context**

Since 1990, we have witnessed a wide range of legislation in relation to race equality with implications for education. At a wider societal level we have seen moves to strengthen and extend legislation around employment, provision of services, education and the promotion of good relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds. For example, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires all public authorities to promote race equality. This act builds on the Race Relations Act (RRA)1976, which provides protection to 'racial groups', explained as "a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origin" (Richardson, 2009, p. 3)

Neither religion nor belief were included as appropriate markers and became subsequently excluded. However, following developments in case law since 1976, monoethnic religious groups such as Jews and Sikhs came to be defined as ethnic groups and are therefore protected, but multi-ethnic religious groups such as Muslims and Christians were not included (CBMI, 2004; Cesari, 2006). More recently, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 makes it unlawful to stir up hatred against persons on religious grounds. Also in 2006, the Education and Inspections Act introduced a new section to the Education Act 2002 giving schools a duty to promote community cohesion from September 2007. The Equality Act of 2010 brings together many different equality laws to harmonise and, in certain respects, to extend the various pieces of discrimination law that had been introduced over the last 30 years.

Specific legislation in relation to education has been introduced alongside the more general race equality legislation. For example, the Education Inspections Act 2006 made it a legal requirement for head teachers to include prevention of all forms of bullying in their school's behaviour policy. This includes racial or ethnic bullying.

The legislation, recommendations and related guidance have been important in providing the stimulus for the development of good practice in schools with respect to race equality and in many cases schools have used Citizenship Education as one vehicle to implement this (Osler, 2009).

### **Citizenship, race equality and Islamophobia**

The research is concerned with examining interethnic and intercultural conflict in schools as a way of supporting the implementation of children's rights both in schools and in the wider society. In taking this perspective, we are clearly adopting a particular conception of citizenship, one which would argue for a citizenship in which people and children can legitimately have, and express, diverse and multilayered identities. The Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review 2007 report was explicit about the need for young people to learn about, respect, and value the diversity of identities in schools and the wider society. The report asked:

Do we, as individuals and as a nation, respect each other's differences and build on commonalities? Do we appreciate our own and others' distinct identities? Do we really have an understanding of what it is to be a citizen, of how it is to live in the UK? And, most importantly, are we ensuring that all our children and young people have the education they need to embrace issues of diversity and citizenship, both for them to thrive and for the future of our society? This 'education for diversity' is fundamental if the UK is to have a cohesive society in the 21st century. (DfES, 2007, p. 16)

In asking such a question, the report was underlining the importance of a citizenship that is 'maximalist' (Mc Coughlin, 1992) with citizens with layered identities. As Parekh describes it, a form of citizenship where

Citizens are both individuals and members of particular religious, ethnic, cultural and regional communities. Britain is both a community of citizens and a community of communities, both a liberal and a multicultural society, and needs to reconcile their sometimes conflicting requirements. (Parekh, 2000, introduction)

Thus, citizenship within this perspective cannot operate if people, including children and young people, experience conflict, prejudice and discrimination due to their 'race', culture, ethnicity or religion. The need for citizenship education, which takes diversity and identity seriously, was accepted by the previous government. Indeed, the current secondary

citizenship education curriculum includes as one of three major concepts “Identities and diversities: living together in UK” and starts by emphasizing the importance of citizenship education which, it states, “encourages respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities. It equips pupils to engage critically with and explore diverse ideas, beliefs, cultures and identities and the values we share as citizens in the UK. Pupils begin to understand how society has changed and is changing in the UK, Europe and the wider world’ (QCA, 2007, p. 27). One of the five cross curriculum themes of the secondary curriculum is “Identity and cultural Diversity” (QCA, 2007). Had the previous government returned to power in 2010, the plans were to have introduced a revised primary curriculum in which this conception of citizenship education was explicit. However, a new government took office and, at the time of writing, the primary and secondary curriculum are being reviewed and we do not yet know what kind of citizenship is being planned for the revised curriculum from 2014.

Given that there is little literature on interethnic violence in schools (Monks et al. 2008), the specific focus of this study is to examine violence that arises from ethnic tensions and focus on the different types of violence experienced, something which is less covered in previous literature (Monks et al., 2008) and thus to examine such forms of violence as social exclusion. The aims of this study are therefore to shed light on pupils’ experiences of interethnic violence within the school environment, and to compare and contrast the experiences of pupils based on their religious and ethnic background to establish if there is any differences. For the purposes of this article, only data relating to pupils’ religious background will be referred to.

## **Method**

### **Research Setting**

All of the schools, except one, had provision in place for pupils for whom English is not their first language. The one school without provision was a sixth form centre that admits pupils at 16 years or older. Some of the schools had large ranges of strategies and resources for such pupils which largely reflected the needs of the school population in relation to first languages spoken. All but one school had explicit policies and procedures for dealing with racism and bullying and many had a large range of race equality and anti bullying policies and activities. We would suggest that this shows that these are schools which embed the aims of citizenship education in their ethos and whole school approach.

### **Sample**

A total of 729 children and young people completed questionnaires. Fifty-seven per cent (422) of respondents were in primary school in Year 6, with two classes of Year 5 children and 43% (307) were in secondary school in Year 13, with two classes in Year 12. The gender breakdown in the sample overall was 54% female and 46% male.

The ethnic composition of the sample is broken down in Figure 1. The largest ethnic group of the sample was White British (25%) followed by Pakistani (17%), and Indian (14%).

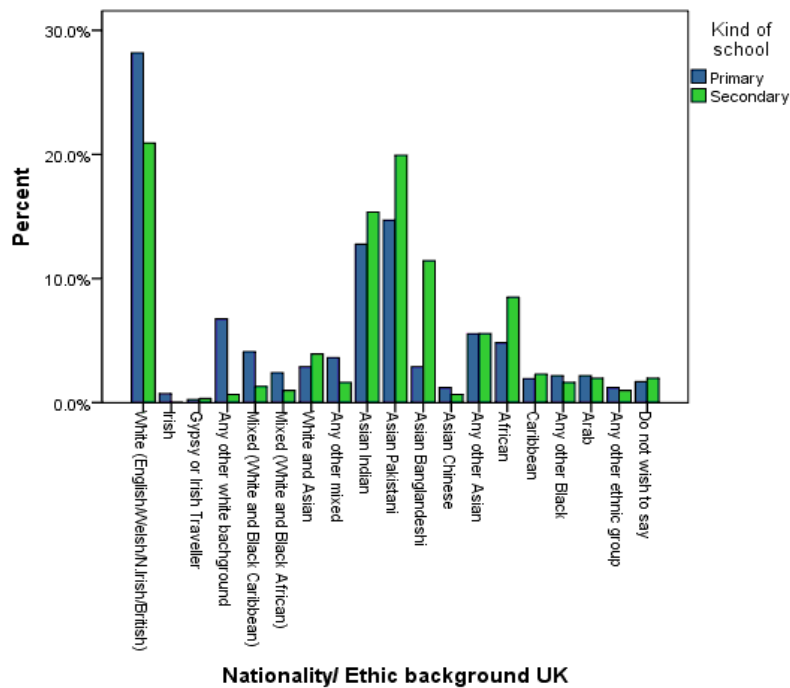


Figure 1. Ethnic background of respondents

### Religions

Overall, over 40% of the respondents were Muslim, reflecting our choice of schools in areas with high Muslim populations. This was followed by Christian (21%), Sikh (6%), Hindu (4%), Other (1% -including Jehovah’s Witness, Taoist, Zoroastrian), Buddhist (0.7%) and Jewish (0.3%). Twenty-three per cent of respondents stated that they were not religious and 3% chose not to declare their religion.

As numbers of respondents from a Jewish or Buddhist background were so low (2 and 5 respectively), the decision was made to amalgamate these groups together with ‘Other’ to create the possibility for better comparison. Those who chose not to declare their religion were also grouped into ‘Other’ to create a larger group for the purposes of analysis. Figure 2 shows the resulting percentages.

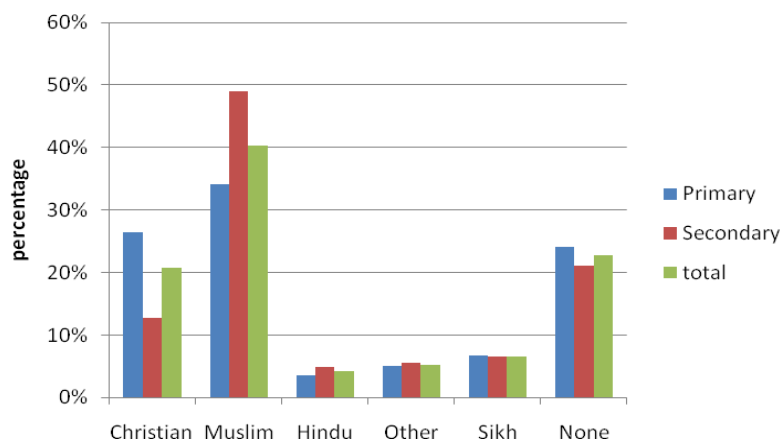


Figure 2. Religious background of sample regroupped



## Measures and Procedures

The questionnaire was developed with all partners across the five countries, with additional questions added by each partner for their particular focus. Separate questionnaires were developed for the two different age ranges: primary and secondary/sixth form. The questionnaire itself was loosely divided into sections and used a range of question types, including multiple choice and scales, to explore children's attitudes to their peers with regard to ethnic background and religion, the nature of interethnic violence in school as well as pupil and institutional response in school, locally and on a national level. All participants were asked to indicate their gender and ethnic group using the ethnic classifications from the 2011 UK census.

The data collection took place in five different regions of England: London, the South East, West Midlands, East Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humber, all of which have areas of high ethnic mix and density. However, for the purpose of this research, we treated the East and West Midlands as one region. In each region, the questionnaire was administered in two primary schools and two secondary/sixth form centres and pupils generally completed the questionnaires themselves. The schools and secondary/sixth form centres chosen to for the study were all non-selective, mixed gender, state schools with a higher than average ethnic mix. No faith schools were included in the sample. Schools were also asked to provide contextual data on their ethnic composition and anti bullying policies.

The fieldwork itself took place in November and December 2011 across England; all the researchers were white British. The aim was to have a minimum of 40 pupils completing the questionnaire in each school; however, in three secondary school/sixth form centres, figures were slightly lower. In total, 729 pupils completed the questionnaire. Chi-square comparisons were carried out to test associations between responses and pupils' religious background, as well as age.

We encountered a range of problems and issues with regard to data collection:

1. Difficulties in finding and gaining access to schools: participation in the project was voluntary and finding schools that would agree to take part was difficult. This was partly due to the selection criteria (which restricted the choice of schools): the sensitive nature of the project, which meant that it was possible that only schools who felt confident with the way they managed interethnic violence were prepared to be involved; and the nature of schools themselves. School staff are often very busy and research is not a priority for them, which is a consistent problem in research of this nature (see Eslea & Mukhtar, 2000).
2. Adults and peers vetting/influencing the data: in many primary schools the completion of the questionnaire involved considerable discussion and explanation, and classroom assistants and teachers were used to read and sometimes scribe for pupils who had greater difficulties comprehending. Inevitably this could have influenced the answers.
3. Finding enough participants: in the secondary school/sixth form centres, where a looser structure exists with regard to attendance, it was sometimes difficult to find enough pupils to complete the questionnaire.
4. Pupils' understanding and interpretation of questions: as other research, such as that of Hurry has shown, variation in reading abilities and comprehension of read information varies largely in English primary schools (cited in Wolke et al. 2001, p. 3) and thus may be a source of error. Indeed, many of the questions involved the

term ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethnicity’ and the idea of ethnicity proved a difficult concept for some of the younger pupils in primary schools to grasp. (Cohen et al., 2007).

### Results

The overall focus of the questionnaire was interethnic relations and whether conflict arose from ethnic tensions within the school environment. However, for the purposes of this article, only the findings relating to religion will be discussed.

#### Pupils’ experiences of school

In relation to the school environment, respondents were asked whether their school was a place where pupils were treated equally by teachers and whether their school had an inclusive environment.

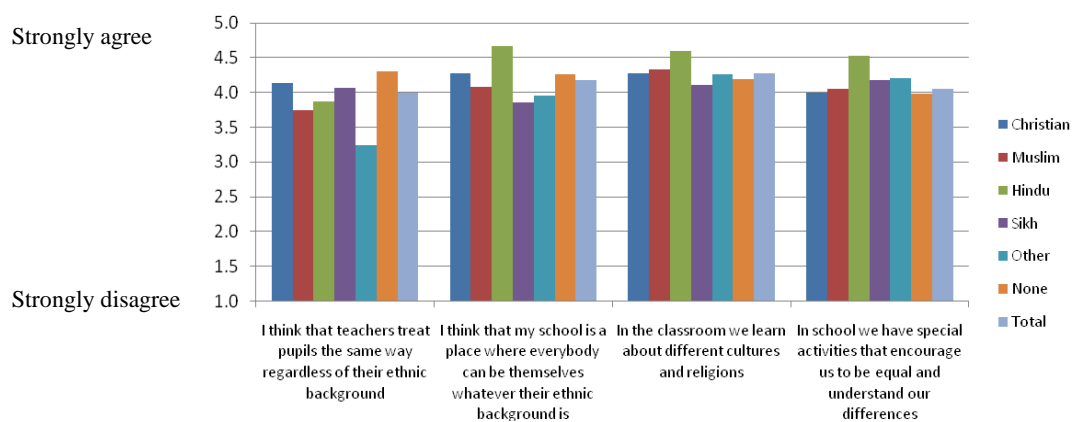


Figure 3. The school environment – primary

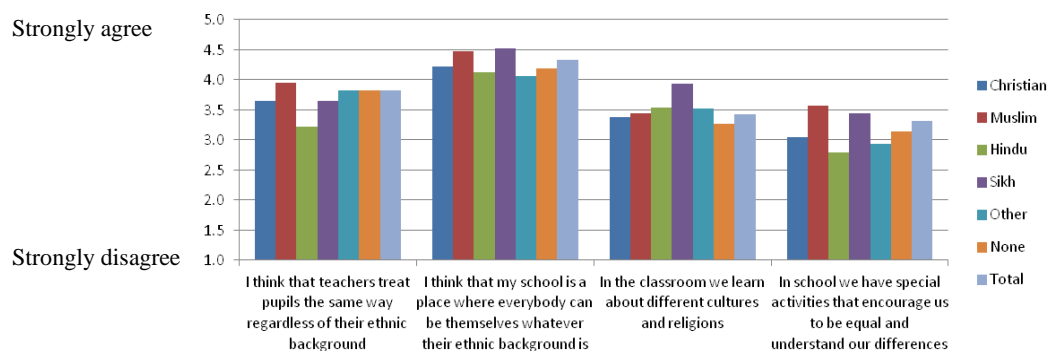


Figure 4. The school environment – sixth form

Pupils were asked to comment on their perception of how inclusive their school was, and whether it was a place where they felt all were treated equally irrespective of their ethnic background using a five point scale from 1- ‘strongly disagree’ to 5-‘strongly agree’. Figures 3 and 4 reveal the average (mean) scores for primary and sixth form pupils.

Chi square analyses reveal that students from all religious backgrounds were in agreement that their school was a place where teachers treated students equally and where an inclusive environment was promoted; there was no significant association between religion and perception of the school environment. Significantly less sixth formers than primary school pupils agreed that they had special activities in the classroom ( $\chi^2(700) = 82.02, p <$

.000) or learnt about different cultures and religions ( $\chi^2(700) = 136.34, p < .000$ ) However, in the sixth form this is likely to be due to the nature of the curriculum in that students often only attend classes in their particular examination subjects.

### Personal experiences of violence within the school environment

Respondents were asked to state how safe they felt in various locations within the school. Levels of reported safety were high in both primary and secondary school, although slightly lower in primary school, particularly in relation to the toilets ( $\chi^2(710) = 37.80, p < .000$ ) and the playground ( $\chi^2(713) = 32.53, p < .000$ ), as figures 5 and 6 below reveal. Areas respondents felt least safe were the playground, which corresponds to other studies in this field (for example, Wolke *et al.* 2001), and also the toilets (Brown and Winterton, 2010). When analysed separately by religion, there was no statistically significant association between religion and safety in school in either primary or sixth form pupils.

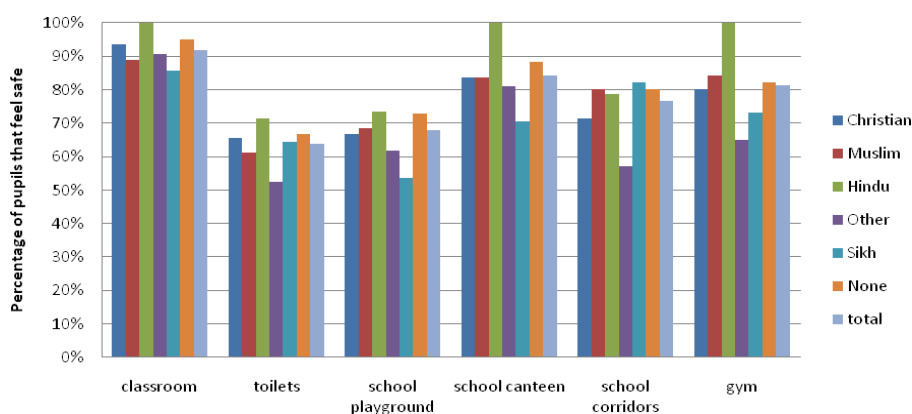


Figure 5. Safety in school – primary

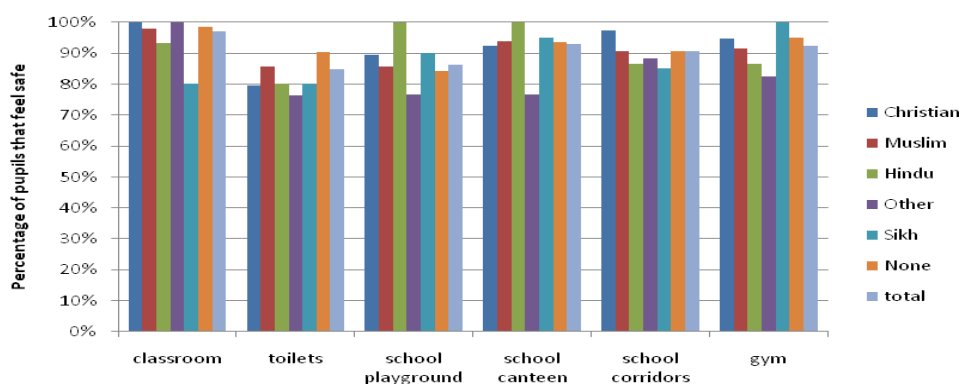


Figure 6. Safety in school – sixth form

### Levels of racial bullying per religious background

Figure 7 highlights the percentage of primary school pupils from different religious backgrounds who had experienced bullying at least sometimes in school in the last school year because of their ethnic background. Overall, the most common form of bullying reported was other pupils talking behind their backs (40%), followed by name calling (32%), which is a consistent finding in other literature (e.g. Smith & Shu 2000, Monks *et al.*, 2008). Prevalence of name calling was slightly lower than estimates given for racial name calling in previous literature (Eslea and Mukhtar, 2001). Twenty-five percent of primary school pupils

reported experiencing physical violence at least sometimes due to their ethnic background, which is slightly lower than that reported in other studies (e.g. Wolke et al. 2001; Monks et al. 2008).<sup>7</sup>

Analysis by religious group reveals an association between religion and interethnic violence experienced by pupils in primary school in relation to the following forms of violence: name calling ( $\chi^2(404) = 16.69, p < .005, \text{phi} = .28$ ); rumour spreading ( $\chi^2(404) = 16.69, p < .005, \text{phi} = .20$ ); social exclusion ( $\chi^2(404) = 16.44, p < .006, \text{phi} = .203$ ) and physical violence ( $\chi^2(403) = 14.03, p < .015, \text{phi} = .19$ ). As figure 7 below shows, Muslims, Sikh and pupils of Other religious background in primary school experienced higher frequencies of name calling (43%, 54% and 52% respectively), rumour spreading (49%, 44% and 62% respectively) and social exclusion (32%, 32% and 43% respectively) due to their ethnic background than other groups, with those in the ‘Other’ category particularly experiencing higher levels. Fifty-two percent of pupils from an ‘Other’ religious group reported experiencing physical violence at least sometimes, compared to lower percentages in all other groups. Numbers of pupils in ‘Other’ or Sikh category were quite small (N=21 and N=28), whereas Muslim pupils were quite a large group (N=139). Pupils from a Christian or no religious background generally reported experiencing all forms of violence less than other groups.

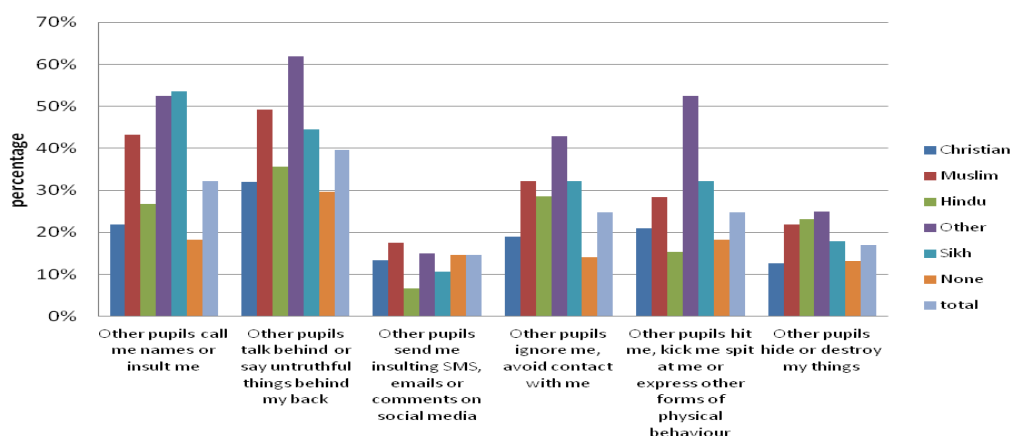


Figure 7. Experience of different forms of bullying due to ethnic background in primary school

Levels of interethnic violence experienced by students in sixth forms were lower than pupils in primary school, as Figure 8 reveals.<sup>8</sup> When analysed overall, the most commonly experienced form of violence due to ethnic background in sixth forms in our sample was name calling (20%). Levels of physical violence (5% at least sometimes) were significantly lower in sixth forms than in primary school ( $\chi^2(701) = 48.47, p < .000$ ). Chi-square analyses revealed no significant association between religious background and levels of violence experienced in the sixth forms in our sample.

<sup>7</sup> Data was missing from 2.6% of primary school children who failed to complete this section

<sup>8</sup> Data was missing from 4.5% of students in this section, as they failed to answer the questions

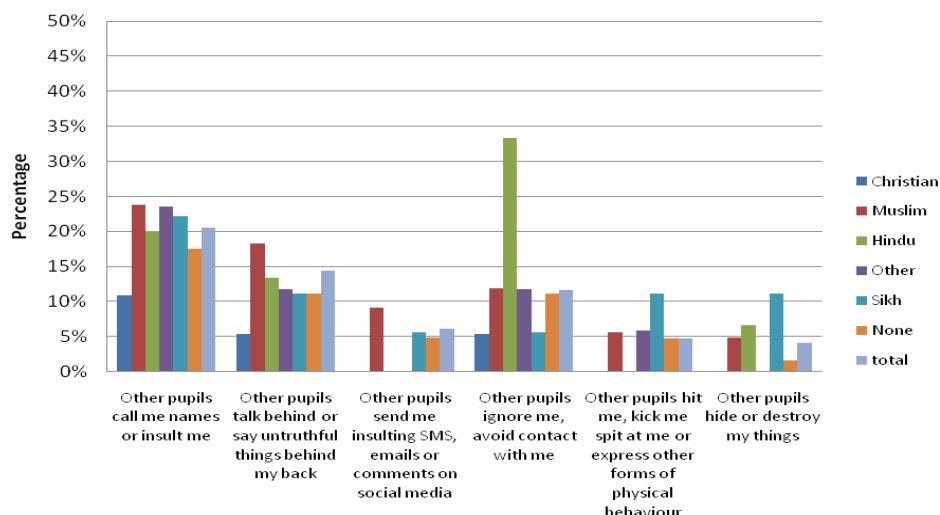


Figure 8. Experiences of different forms of bullying in secondary school

### Disclosure

Those pupils that reported experiencing violence due to their ethnic background were then asked to whom they disclosed this information. In primary school, of the sub sample of 40% of children who experienced some form of bullying because of their ethnic background, 54% of pupils would tell their mother / carer, followed by friends (51%) and teachers (39%). Chi-square analysis revealed no significant association between religious background and disclosure patterns. Of the sub sample of 20% of sixth formers who experienced violence due to their ethnic background, 64% reported they would disclose to friends and 21% would disclose to a teacher. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant association between religious background and disclosure patterns in sixth formers.

Thus, it would appear that in our sample, religious background is not a determinant in pupils' experiences of bullying due to ethnicity and that perceived levels of institutional violence are low as pupils in both primary schools and sixth forms in our sample reported feeling able to be themselves and that they would disclose to teachers when they experienced forms of ethnic bullying.

Pupils were asked about their perception of the level of respect afforded different religions in three arenas of their lives. As Figure 7 shows, only a very small percentage of our respondents in both primary and sixth forms felt that religion was not respected in their school or local area. However, in sixth forms a significantly higher percentage of students (47%) felt that religion was not respected in the media compared to primary school (19%) ( $\chi^2(693) = 61.03, p < .000$ ). Perhaps, indicative of the greater awareness of the media within this age cohort.<sup>9</sup>

	Primary	Secondary
In my school	7%	6%
In my local area	16%	12%
On TV, radio and in newspapers	19%	47%

Figure 9: respect for religion

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that data was missing from primary school children in relation to the question on school (3.7%), the question on local area (4%) and the question on media (4.9%). For sixth formers, data was missing from the question on school (4.6%), the question on local area (5.9%) and the question on media (6.5%).

When analysed by religious group, results reveal statistically significant differences in sixth formers in responses to perceptions of the portrayal of religion in their local area ( $\chi^2$  (287) = 16.75,  $p < .005$ ), as the percentage of those from Other or no religious background that felt religion was not respected was slightly higher than other groups (24.2% and 23.5% respectively). There were also statistically significant differences in sixth formers' perception of the portrayal of religion in the media ( $\chi^2$  (285) = 17.91,  $p < .003$ ) as the percentage of Muslim pupils who felt religion was not respected was significantly higher than all other groups (58% of 143 students), except Other (53%, however, numbers in this group were very low ( $n=17$ )).

The sub sample of pupils that reported that religions were not equally respected, were then asked to identify which particular religions they did not feel were respected. Of the 7% of primary school pupils who felt religions were not all equally respected in their school, 59% of this sub sample felt Islam was not respected in their school, 52% felt Hinduism was not respected and 30% felt Christianity was not respected. Of the 6% of sixth formers who stated religion was not respected in their school, 67% felt Islam was not respected equally, 47% felt Judaism was not respected and 26% felt Christianity was not respected. It should be noted that as the percentages of pupils who felt religion was not respected were so low, numbers in the sub sample are very small.

Of the 16% of primary school children and 12% of sixth formers who felt religions were not all equally respected in their local area, overall 69% of the sub sample of primary school pupils and 74% of the sub sample of sixth formers stated that Islam was not equally respected in their local area. When analysed for significance, tests reveal no association between religious background and perception of respect for religion in pupils in both age cohort's local area.

Of the sub sample of 19% of primary school children and 47% of sixth formers who felt religions were not all equally respected in the media, 69% of the sub sample of primary school children and 88% of the sub sample of sixth formers stated that Islam was not equally respected, as Figures 10 and 11 reveal. When analysed by religious group, results reveal no significant association between religious background and responses in primary school children. However, for sixth formers, a significant association was found between student's religious background and whether they felt Christianity ( $\chi^2$  (127) = 30.80,  $p < .000$ ) and Judaism ( $\chi^2$  (127) = 18.62,  $p < .002$ ) were respected in the media as more Christian students stated that Christianity was not respected in the media than was, and more students from an 'Other' religious background (including Jewish students) reported that Judaism was not respected in the media compared to other groups. There was no significant association for other religions.

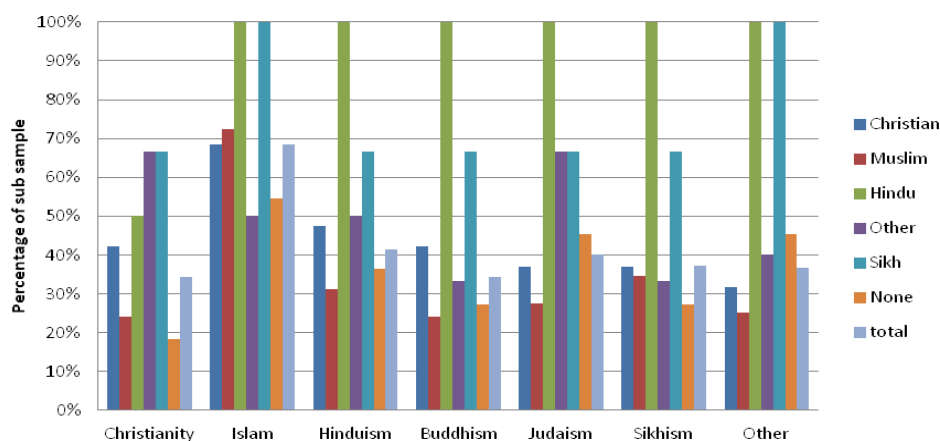


Figure 10. Which religion is not respected in the media – primary school

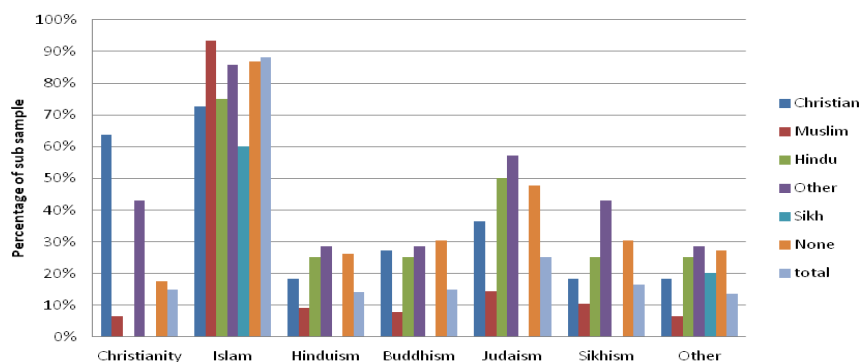


Figure 11. Which religion is not respected in the media – sixth form

### Discussion

Results from the 16 schools in our sample reveal that pupils strongly felt that their school was a place that was welcoming to pupils from different backgrounds, that teachers treated all pupils equally and that they felt safe at school. Pupils were likely to disclose to teachers if they experienced violence due to their ethnic background and there was no association with religious background and disclosure patterns. Thus, on the basis of the quantitative findings, perceived institutional levels of violence can be said to be low within our school sample for the manifestations of violence we examined (exclusion and educational attainment not being covered in this research).

In terms of the different forms of violence experienced by pupils in our sample, overall 40% of primary school children reported experiencing rumour spreading and 32% experienced name calling because of their ethnic background which corresponds with findings in other literature on racial name calling (Eslea & Mukhtar, 2001). Primary school data also revealed an association between religion and experiences of violence, with those from a Muslim, Sikh and 'Other' religious background reporting higher frequencies of name calling and rumour spreading, with those from an 'Other' background reporting the highest levels. Further, those from an 'Other' religious background also experienced higher levels of physical violence. Children from a Christian or no religious background experienced lower levels of violence. Numbers of pupils in the 'Other' and Sikh categories were fairly low; therefore conclusions are difficult to draw. However, pupils from Muslim background were a large group, indicating that these forms of violence are a feature of their school experiences. Whilst, children in this age group's understanding of the questions may have been somewhat limited and we cannot be certain they were accurately reporting these forms of violence occurring because of their ethnicity, as opposed to another reason, the findings reveal an association that merits further study.

In line with other literature in this area (e.g. Smith and Shu, 2000), levels of violence due to ethnic background experienced in the sixth form cohort were lower, with the highest frequency of violence experienced being 20% of all students reporting having experienced name calling. In addition to lower levels of violence, the lack of association between religion and experiences of violence in sixth forms, points to older pupils showing greater understanding and tolerance of others' faiths and backgrounds.

As levels of reported safety in school were high and not associated with pupils' religious background in either primary schools or sixth forms, it would appear that respondents were not afraid in school and that such experiences were not definitively defining the majority's school experience. Such findings highlight the difficulties in researching interethnic violence and underline the need for more detailed analyses into children and young people's lived realities of interethnic relations and how they interact with one another.

We are hopeful that evidence from the focus groups and interviews with staff will draw out a richer detail of pupils' experiences.

Within the school environment, pupils feel religion to be equally respected, despite evidence of primary school pupils of a Muslim faith alongside pupils of other faiths (Sikh, and 'Other') reporting higher levels of some forms of peer violence. However, outside of the school and local area results reveal a different pattern as perceived by sixth formers who felt the media did not provide a particularly respectful portrayal of religion. When analysed by religion, all groups reported this perception, but significantly more Muslims, as identified by previous research (Cesari, 2006; Poynting and Mason, 2007; Lambert and Githens-Mazar, 2010). Particularly in sixth forms, there was a marked difference in the way respondents felt Islam was respected in the media, where a high percentage of students of all religious backgrounds felt Islam was not treated respectfully. Primary school children did not report this perception; perhaps their younger age means they are less likely to have such an awareness of the media.

This article covers only the first stage of the research and the quantitative findings reveal a pattern of fairly harmonious schools where religion and diversity are largely respected and where there are strong institutional processes and procedures to ensure that any discriminatory practices are dealt with promptly and effectively. However, the schools we worked with may well skew data in that all the schools were very multicultural with a strong Muslim presence and they could be more committed to race equality given that they agreed to take part in the research. One would assume that schools suffering from problems of interethnic violence would be less likely to wish to participate in a project of this nature. Thus, the picture might not be the same in different sorts of schools (e.g. less urban, faith schools; schools with a higher proportion of white pupils).

The research findings underline the importance of accepting and celebrating a multi-layered identity as central to effective citizenship in schools and in the wider society. Where the schools embraced diversity as positive and something to celebrate and had developed positive strategies to promote equality and combat inequality and discrimination, pupils felt safe and valued within their school environment and levels of violence were fairly low. In this sense, we may be in a position whereby pupils experience a form of citizenship in schools that is at odds with the wider society.

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