

**The Hidden Truth:  
Racist Harassment in Northern Ireland**

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Racist Harassment in Northern Ireland**

**Paul Connolly and Michaela Keenan**



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September 2001



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The hidden truth

- 1.1.1 Racist harassment is a particularly pernicious element of any society. It represents a wide range of acts - from graffiti to verbal and physical abuse - directed at certain people simply because they are perceived to be different. The result of such forms of harassment is to make minority ethnic people feel victimised and vulnerable. It acts as a stark and constant reminder that they are not welcome by the majority population.
- 1.1.2 The effect of racist harassment is to underwrite minority ethnic people's exclusion from wider society. It can act as a strong deterrent to many minority ethnic people in terms of applying for specific jobs, choosing to live in certain areas and/or making use of social and health care services. It can severely restrict the type of social activities they feel comfortable in engaging in and, for some, can make them feel prisoners in their own homes.
- 1.1.3 The nature and extent of racist harassment, especially in large multi-ethnic cities, has become the focus of much research over recent years<sup>1</sup>. And yet, it is an issue that has received much less attention in relation to Northern Ireland. It has become a hidden truth, painfully obvious to many minority ethnic people living in the region yet largely ignored and/or denied by the wider population.
- 1.1.4 However, the first major study of minority ethnic people's experiences in Northern Ireland published in 1997 gave the first indications of just how serious the problem is in the region. In their survey of a sample of 1176 minority ethnic people, Irwin and Dunn (1997: 101) found that just under half (44%) had experienced verbal abuse and just under a third (29%) had experienced criminal damage to their property because of their racial identity. One in ten had actually been physically abused.
- 1.1.5 Moreover, such overall figures tended to mask significant variation between ethnic groups. The Chinese community, for example, appeared to be particularly vulnerable to racist harassment. Two thirds of those surveyed (65%) stated that they had been verbally abused and just over half (52%) reported that their property had been criminally damaged.

- 1.1.6 With a few notable exceptions (see, for instance, Mann-Kler 1997; Chahal and Julienne 1999; Connolly and Keenan 2000b), very little research has been conducted to date that has attempted to get behind these broader statistics to understand how racist harassment is actually experienced by minority ethnic people living in Northern Ireland and the impact it has on their lives.
- 1.1.7 Moreover, no research has yet been published that has attempted to understand racist harassment from the perspectives of the perpetrators and thus to begin to unravel some of the factors that tend to cause it. These are the key concerns that provide the focus for this present report.
- 1.1.8 The report is the third of four due to be published over the coming year. The reports arise from a major research study into the nature and effects of racism in Northern Ireland conducted by the present authors. It has been commissioned by the Inter-Departmental Social Steering Group, funded by a range of departments and agencies and managed by the Equality Unit Research Branch within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
- 1.1.9 The research has consisted of:
- detailed indepth interviews with 101 people from the four largest minority ethnic groups in the region: Chinese, Travellers<sup>2</sup>, South Asians and Black Africans;
  - a large-scale attitudinal survey of a representative sample of 1267 people:
  - more detailed and indepth interviews with 46 people drawn from a variety of backgrounds within the white, settled population; and
  - indepth interviews with key policy-makers and practitioners from a range of service areas.
- A detailed discussion of the methodology underlying the data collection and analysis for this present report can be found in the Appendix.
- 1.1.10 The two reports already published are:
- *Racial Attitudes and Prejudice in Northern Ireland* (Connolly and Keenan 2000a)

- *Opportunities for All: Minority Ethnic People's Experiences of Education, Training and Employment in Northern Ireland*  
(Connolly and Keenan 2000b)

1.1.11 The other report to appear later this year will focus on the problems and challenges facing service providers in relation to meeting the needs of minority ethnic people. Additionally, there is further potential for a fifth publication providing a synthesis and summary analysis of the data reported upon in the previous four substantive reports.

## **1.2 Defining racist harassment**

1.2.1 There has been much discussion and debate over the years regarding how racist harassment is to be defined<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps the most widely accepted definition to date has been that offered by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE):

Racial harassment is violence which may be verbal or physical and which includes attacks on property as well as on the person, suffered by individuals or groups because of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins, when the victim believes that the perpetrator was acting on racial grounds and/or there is evidence of racism.

(CRE 1987: 8)

1.2.2 This definition is useful for two key reasons. First, it focuses on the perceptions of the victim him or herself in terms of defining whether an act is to be counted as racially motivated or not. As Gordon (1990) has argued, in the absence of objective indicators and given the complexity of the phenomena, this is probably the most effective way in which incidents of racist harassment can be identified.

1.2.3 This focus on the subjective definition of racist harassment tended to reflect that already developed by the police since 1985 when determining whether to record an incident as 'racial' or not and is a definition that was strongly endorsed relatively recently by the Macpherson Report (1999). All police forces in the UK now use the slightly revised definition proposed in the Macpherson Report:

A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

(Chapter 47, Paragraph 12)

- 1.2.4 However, while such a definition is significant as it theoretically gives priority to the perceptions of the victim, it is important to bear in mind that in reality, as the Macpherson Report (1999) graphically highlighted, much still depends upon the willingness of individual reporting officers to accept such perceptions. Aye Maung and Mirrlees-Black (1994) for example, estimated that while approximately 50,000 racist incidents would have been reported to the police in Britain in 1991, only 7,882 were actually recorded as such by them (see also Chahal 1992).
- 1.2.5 Second, the definition draws attention to the fact that racist harassment covers a wide range of acts from verbal to physical abuse and to attacks on property as well as the person. In this sense it helps to highlight the 'low-level' and routine nature of racist harassment (Chahal and Julienne 1999).
- 1.2.6 However, the definition is limited to the extent that it focuses only on those actions that are clearly motivated by a desire to victimise someone on the basis of their racial identity. As will be seen in the chapters to follow, such a definition fails to recognise the many other routine processes and practices that equally combine to make minority ethnic people feel vulnerable and/or victimised even though the racial motivation may either be unclear or even unintentional.
- 1.2.7 The significance of such 'indirect' forms of racist harassment was recognised last year by the European Commission in its recently ratified Race Directive that defined racist harassment as occurring when:
- An unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin takes place with the purpose *or effect* of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
- (our emphasis)
- 1.2.8 This definition will be used for the purposes of the present report. As will be seen in the chapters to follow, racist harassment can take many different forms and, as stressed in the definition above, it can often be indirect and/or

unintentional as well as being designed purposely to harass. Moreover, while such a definition encompasses a vast range of incidents they all tend to be underpinned by a surprisingly similar core set of attitudes and beliefs on the part of those involved. While there is thus a significant difference between overt acts of physical harassment and well-meaning but ignorant comments, they both tend to reflect similar attitudes among those responsible, albeit to different degrees.

### **1.3 The present report**

- 1.3.1 These are key themes that will be elaborated upon in the chapters to follow. Chapters Two and Three focus on minority ethnic people's experiences of racist harassment. In line with the above discussion, a distinction is made between direct forms of racist harassment (Chapter Two) and indirect forms (Chapter Three). Each chapter sets out the range of differing experiences that minority ethnic people have of both forms of harassment. Chapter Four then examines some of the ways in which racist harassment has impacted upon the lives of minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland by exploring the differing ways they have chosen to respond to such incidents.
- 1.3.2 Chapters Five to Seven attempt to understand and explain some of the factors that tend to cause racist harassment. Chapter Five examines who is more likely to engage in acts of racist harassment and attempts to construct a profile of the typical perpetrator. Chapters Six and Seven focus on the indepth interviews with members of the white, settled population in an attempt to identify some of the causes of direct and indirect racist harassment, respectively. Moreover, while the characteristics of those typically involved in direct and indirect forms of racist harassment tend to differ significantly, it will be shown in these two chapters how they both tend to draw upon similar sets of attitudes and beliefs in relation to 'race'.
- 1.3.3 Chapter Eight concludes by offering a summary of the main issues raised in the report and then considers their implications for policy makers and practitioners. In this regard, a number of recommendations are made concerning what strategies - targeted at the white, settled population - might be most effective in attempting to reduce their tendency to engage in the racist harassment of others.
- 1.3.4 How agencies such as the police, the Housing Executive and schools have tended to respond to racist harassment in

their own areas of responsibility and recommendations concerning how they might best address this issue in future are matters beyond the remit of this present report. They are, however, issues to be considered in detail in the fourth report to be published later this year.

## 2. Minority Ethnic People's Experiences of Direct Racist Harassment

### 2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 This chapter outlines minority ethnic people's experiences of what we have termed direct racist harassment in Northern Ireland. As will be seen, direct racist harassment can take many different forms. However, what they all have in common is that they are motivated by an intentional desire, on the part of those involved, to violate the dignity of an individual because of their racial identity through hostile and intimidating behaviour.
- 2.1.2 We have termed it *direct* racist harassment in order to differentiate these overt and intentional forms of behaviour from those that may be unintentional and/or where the racial motivation is unclear. These forms of *indirect* racist harassment, as we have labelled them, will be explained and discussed in the following chapter.
- 2.1.3 This chapter will outline, in turn, minority ethnic people's experiences of the three most common forms of direct racist harassment: verbal harassment, criminal damage to property and physical harassment. In drawing upon the distinction made by Troyna and Hatcher (1992), all three can be seen as examples of 'cold' racist harassment in the sense that the perpetrator(s) are motivated primarily by a cold and calculated desire to behave in a hostile and intimidating manner towards someone because of their racial identity.
- 2.1.4 In contrast, the chapter will conclude by outlining some examples of what can be understood as 'hot' racist harassment. These are instances where the initial motivation of those involved was not to racially harass others. However, because of the circumstances, and in the 'heat of the moment', they chose to resort to racist harassment. While such forms still count as direct racist harassment in that they represent a clear and intentional attempt to intimidate and/or behave in a hostile manner towards someone because of their racial identity, the precise motivations are slightly different and, as will be argued, it is worth making such a distinction here.

## 2.2 Verbal harassment

2.2.1 Verbal harassment is by far the most common form of direct racist harassment experienced by minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland (Irwin and Dunn 1997; Connolly and Keenan 2000b). This tends to reflect a pattern found elsewhere in Britain (Virdee 1995; Maynard and Read 1997).

2.2.2 Unfortunately, as Chahal and Julienne (1999) argue, it can be described as a form of 'everyday racism' in the sense that it has almost become a daily reality for many minority ethnic people living in the region (see also Essed 1990). As is illustrated below, it has become part of the social landscape in Northern Ireland; occurring randomly and in so many different places that it is almost impossible for minority ethnic people to avoid it.

### *i. In the street*

2.2.3 One common place where verbal abuse occurs is in the street. as Wai<sup>4</sup> (Aged 37, Chinese Male), explains<sup>5</sup>:

There's a lot of people calling names and things [...] They [*white, settled people*] were drivin' around and you were just walkin' and they would wind the window and they would call you "Chinkie" [...] They see you [as] a Chinkie and they go past and call it.

2.2.4 The routine nature of such experiences is also evident in the quote from Carol (Aged 37, Black African Female):

*Interviewer:* You have mentioned name-calling [...] does that happen often?

*Carol:* If I'm walking to the gym Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays believe you me it does happen. Within those three days of going to the gym somebody is bound to shout Nigger or whatever.

2.2.5 This is also the experience of John Joe and Thomas (Aged 22 & 21, Traveller Males). As they explain:

*Interviewer:* Do you ever get called names?

*Thomas:* Ah, night and day. You get the young fellas and they come up and there's one name that they call and I can't understand why they call it, it really pisses me off. That's a "rice krispie bastard".

*John Joe:* Rice krispie

*Thomas:* Do you wanna know what that means? It's a slang word for gypsy. Krispie, gypsy.

2.2.6 As we discussed in some detail in our previous report (Connolly and Keenan 2000b), such acts of verbal harassment were not just reserved for adults but had also become a common experience for minority ethnic children, especially as they travelled to and from school. As Michael (Aged 11, Black African Male) explained:

*Michael:* It would be usually when I'm going to school or coming away it is not usually in the school grounds or anything

*Interviewer:* So it is to and from school?

*Michael:* Ah hum

*Interviewer:* How do you get to and from school?

*Michael:* I, ah, my dad takes me some of the way in the car then I walk.

*Interviewer:* So is it when you leave the car?

*Michael:* Yes

*Interviewer:* Does it tend to be in the main the older boys from this other school?

*Michael:* The other school yes

2.2.7 For some minority ethnic children, verbal harassment in schools was also a reality (see Connolly and Keenan 2000b). As Hemal and Malde (Both aged 14, South Asian males) explained:

*Interviewer:* So in what environments would this [name-calling] happen? [...]

*Malde:* At break-time, lunchtime. Sometimes when the teachers are like out of the class they might say something.

*Interviewer:* So it does happen in your class as well then?

*Malde:* Very rarely in class but not much. Mostly outside the class.

[...]

*Interviewer:* And would [you, Hemal, be called names] [...] when you're on your own or with your friends, or did it matter?

*Hemal:* It didn't matter actually, it mostly happened when I was on my own. When I was walking down the corridor on my own to go to the toilet, and they see me. They just make fun of me. That's the way it is.

**ii. On public transport**

- 2.2.8 Verbal harassment has also been experienced on public transport. This is illustrated in the following, particularly aggressive, incident recalled by Carol:

This guy just on the bus [aged] 25, between 25 to 30. [He said to me] "You fucking black bastard! Why don't you go back to your country!" Instead, I laughed because it happened so suddenly and unsuspectedly you know like everybody gets on the bus and then all of a sudden this one particular person just comes straight to where I was sitting "Oh you black bastard! Why don't you go back to your country!" So how do you respond to that?

**iii. While shopping**

- 2.2.9 This type of racist name-calling was also not uncommon in shops and when walking through towns and city centres. As Michael (Aged 23, Traveller Male) illustrates when recalling an incident when he went to the local garage to buy cigarettes:

I was getting fags and this young fella behind me [in the queue] said "why don't you go back to where you came from you dirty bastard ya!"

- 2.2.10 Similarly, as Laura (Aged 46, Black African Female) explained:

*Interviewer:* Have you ever experienced name-calling in any other settings? [...]

*Laura:* Yes coming through the town [...] walking, yes.

- 2.2.11 Such verbal insults, accompanied by the throwing of objects, can even occur in the main city centre. As Carol recalls:

*Interviewer:* So when that happens [*called names*] you are on the street?

*Carol:* On the street yes. Like she [*Ann*] was hit by an orange, I was hit by an egg when I was seven months pregnant.

*Interviewer:* Where is this?

*Carol:* Right outside Primark. Right outside Primark in the city centre!

**iv. In the workplace**

- 2.2.12 As discussed in detail elsewhere, verbal harassment also appeared to be a significant feature for some minority ethnic people in their workplaces (Connolly and Keenan 2000b). This was particularly true for those from the Chinese community working in restaurants and take-aways. As Yuen (Aged 39, Chinese Female) explained:

[We] would experience a lot of that [racist harassment] over the counter serving customers. For example in one case a customer bought twenty pounds of food away and then they came back the next day and they said "you didn't give me this you didn't give me that, you're cheating me of my money." [I] was able to tell him what [I] gave them etc etc. – "I didn't cheat your money no." And then he started saying calling [me] names like Chinkie and f – u – c - k you and all that and [I] just went: "if you don't go I'm just going to call the police".

- 2.2.13 Similarly, Lai (Aged 44, Chinese female) and Che (Aged 43, Chinese male) recalled another incident:

*Lai:* They do call us YB, you know what that name means?

*Interviewer:* No.

*Lai:* Yellow Bastard, YB. Or maybe [...] they call you [...] ching, ching, chang chang. Just that all this, they not call you names some times just, sometime [...] you have a few quarrels they say you are not the citizen here, go back to your home, go back to your China. That happened to me.

*Che:* Yeah

*Lai:* Go back to your own country. We are residents in here [...] we are the taxpayer. Who pay the tax, we pay the tax [...] so we have our right but what they say "Go back to your own country, you have not the freedom in here" [...] All kinds of abuse.

**v. In and around the home**

- 2.2.14 It would also seem that, for some minority ethnic people, they were not even able to avoid verbal harassment when in their own homes. A number of Travellers, for example, recalled incidents of being verbally abused when at home. As Ellen (Aged 45, Traveller Female) and Rosie (Aged 18, Traveller Female) explained:

*Interviewer:* Have you ever experienced any name-calling?

*Ellen:* Oh, hundreds of times! There were children comin' out of school the other day and I was at the washin' line. They started throwin' stones and shoutin' you "dirty smelly bastard".

[...]

*Interviewer:* Can I ask or can you remember the type of things they [*perpetrators*] would call you?

*Rosie:* Oh, "go up the house get a wash", "you smelly bastard", ah, "you don't come from here" and stuff like that.

- 2.2.15 For at least one South Asian family interviewed, the type of verbal abuse they were receiving via telephone calls appeared to be much more systematic. As Farha (Aged 53, South Asian Female) explained:

We started getting phone calls at night "you Pakis go back home!" [...] We got a phone call one morning, about two in the morning. And then my husband lifted the phone and somebody said "do you know where I am?" My husband said no. "Were you frightened of me?" My husband said no. "Well you should be because I am going to put a knife through your throat". [...] and kept on ringing in the morning also. Then we phoned the police and they tried. They said, they looked into the matter immediately but it was very frightening. It was very frightening. I was frightened to lift the phone and I started thinking oh I will go to places and we come back and I was frightened he was behind me and this and that. But thank God not after that I don't know.

## 2.3 Criminal damage to property

- 2.3.1 Against this context of verbal abuse, a significant proportion of minority ethnic people also experienced other forms of harassment. Criminal damage to property would appear to be quite a common feature with just under a third (29%) of those surveyed by Irwin and Dunn (1997: 101) stating that they had experienced this.
- 2.3.2 For those in this present research, such criminal damage appears to have been directed mainly at their homes and businesses. As Beenal (Aged 42, South Asian Female) recalled:

Where I lived before I got my window broken in, somebody threw a brick in and once somebody wrote "Paki" on my front wall.

2.3.3 Similarly, Kim (Aged 25, Chinese Female) explained how:

[We] used to have NF [*National Front*] signs painted all over our driveway wall and every time we, me and my brother and my younger sister, went out to paint over it again they would paint it back on. And, ... ahm, my auntie had "Chinks move out" painted in her driveway in big white letters.

2.3.4 This type of criminal damage was also a common experience for some shop owners. As Meena (Aged 46, South Asian Female) explained:

*Meena:* So like if we ever put any sign outside the door that was always kicked away. Repeatedly. We spent an awful lot of money to put on the stands. It's not that that was in anybody's way standing just beside the wall. It was attached to the wall it's been taken apart. And the same time there's another shop never been touched. So what do you think? What will we say then? [...]

*Interviewer:* [...] You have shutters on your shop and you say that you have had to paint them on numerous occasions?

*Meena:* Yes ah ha. We, we paid to wash it from the shutter [...] It disgust you.

*Interviewer:* [...] Are they being derogatory about your culture when they're writing things on your shutters?

*Meena:* I don't know about the culture [...] They don't know who we are they will just call us you know like Paki. But we are not. We are not from Pakistan. And, ah, so that shows they just you know like. I think when you see so many documentaries on TV they show about England, London places like that where there is majority of ethnic people and they face so many problems there. Compared to that there is very minor but it is growing. It will not stop here now it will be a problem.

*Interviewer:* [...] You say that your shutters have been painted, have other people's shutters painted close by to you in other shops [...]

*Meena:* They, they get very little I think you know like.

- 2.3.5 More generally, racist graffiti could also be found in a wide range of places, including schools as Vicky (Aged 15, Black African Female) explained:

*Vicky:* Well whenever I was in, I think it was first form there was, I remember there was racist stuff written on the wall of the toilets.

*Interviewer:* Can you remember what it was?

*Vicky:* It was something like, ahm, ... [...] I think it was either Africans or niggers but it was definitely racist.

## 2.4 Physical harassment

- 2.4.1 Perhaps of most concern are the examples of physical abuse and harassment that some of the interviewees had experienced. According to Irwin and Dunn (1997), about one in ten of the minority ethnic population in Northern Ireland have experienced some form of physical abuse because of their racial identity.

- 2.4.2 As with the instances of verbal abuse, incidents of physical harassment also appeared to be largely random in nature and could occur in a wide variety of contexts. As in the example discussed earlier, a number of interviewees recalled how people had thrown objects at them while walking in the street. A not untypical example is that of Joanne's (Aged 24, Black African Female):

But when I first came here I was going down the [...] Road a boy threw an orange at me and I fell off my bike. A little boy, not a little boy kind of [*indicates with her hand the size of a boy of between 10 and 12 years of age*] and I fell off my bike in the middle of the road. That was the first time I, you know, and he yelled something like "Nigger!" or something like that. That was the first.

- 2.4.3 Ho and Chi (Aged 72 & 65, both Chinese Males) also recalled instances of having objects thrown at them, in this instance while travelling in their car:

*Chi:* They stone the [car] window you know

*Interpreter:* Stone throwing or scratching your car, or whatever

*Ho:* One time, one [aged] about 13 or so something like that was driving a motor bike, driving a bicycle I passing and spitting at me. Through the widow,

in the window. Spit in the window, "Chinkie! Chinkie! Chinkie! Chinkie!" all them called me.

- 2.4.4 Geeta (Aged 31, South Asian female) also described how she would have objects thrown at her, in this case by her neighbours at home:

We had a lot of [...] difficulties not with immediate neighbours like on this side or that but from maybe across the road or something. Kids throwing things. And you know dumping rubbish and that.

- 2.4.5 Physical harassment of members of the Chinese community, especially those working in the catering industry, appears to be particularly common as discussed in detail elsewhere (see Connolly and Keenan 2000b). Lai (Aged 44, Chinese Female), for example, who worked in one take-away restaurant explained how:

Children come into street, ten or half-ten night time, [walk] past and throw water or stone and when we walk past they call us everything

- 2.4.6 This type of physical harassment was also discussed by Fung (Aged 35, Chinese Female) in relation to the following incident:

Every single night [*he*] come over give me hassle, hassle.[...] Just the every time I phone the police come over, sometime they never come. [...] I just sort out myself. So first thing I argue [...] and he is drinkin'. He [*the customer*] [...] try beat me [...] he tried beat me up so I just get a cup oil, pour over [*him*] and he still come over beat me

- 2.4.7 Alongside these more routine acts of harassment, it would appear that minority ethnic people are vulnerable to attack at any time. As Cyril (aged 43, Black African Male) recalled:

I was at train station and really I wanted to find my friend who was coming from the South. The train came late. As I was running these guys came and say "Negro! Negro! Negro!" I say, I just say ignore, ignore it. I just rushed to the car and this guy, they came up to the car, tried to push the car, kick the car and, ah, I drove quickly. I went to the security at the train station and I, I told them that I need your help. And then the security were very nice. Quickly they say come sit here, phone the police.

- 2.4.8 Some of the interviewees also recalled instances where they or one of their family were physically assaulted in the street. As Kim (Aged 25, Chinese Female) explained:

*Kim:* My brother actually got beatin' up. He had a bruise. He was at a bus stop and, ah, he used to go to St. Malachys, and he was at a bus stop and got jumped upon by three boys.

- 2.4.9 This type of unprovoked attack was also experienced by Rosie (Aged 18, Traveller Female) as she explained:

*Interviewer:* Physical abuse, have you ever been attacked?

*Rosie:* Aye a few times

*Interviewer:* By who?

*Rosie:* By a gang of boys

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me what happened?

*Rosie:* They were drunk, they were messin', well they said so anyway. they just punched me and slapped me, that's about it

*Interviewer:* How many boys?

*Rosie:* There was about two or three

*Interviewer:* What age would they have been do you think?

*Rosie:* About eighteen or nineteen

*Interviewer:* And where did this happen?

*Rosie:* The bottom of the street

*Interviewer:* From where you live?

*Rosie:* [*Nods her head to indicate yes*] They were drunk

*Interviewer:* [...] How did you get away from the situation?

*Rosie:* Screaming and I roared.

*Interviewer:* Were you hurt?

*Rosie:* I just had a black eye for a few days.

## 2.5 Instances of 'hot' direct racist harassment

- 2.5.1 In concluding this outline of minority ethnic people's experiences of direct racist harassment, it is worth making the distinction between 'cold' and 'hot' forms of harassment. The many different examples described above can all be seen as 'cold' forms of racist harassment by the fact that the perpetrators appeared to be clearly motivated by a cold and calculated desire to act in a hostile and intimidating manner towards people because of their racial identity.

- 2.5.2 However, not all forms of direct racist harassment are as calculated. Some can be understood to take place 'in the heat of the moment'. In such circumstances, while the perpetrator(s) may not have initially set out to racially abuse someone, this is what they eventually do because of the way events unfold. This is illustrated in the following incident recounted by Meena, a shop owner:

*Meena:* One particular boy he was stealing things you know like and my husband always say unless you are one hundred percent sure don't tackle anybody. And, ah, that day I was one hundred percent sure. And I did see what he stealed. [...] I say do you want me to charge those things you got in the back. He said what things and I said those things you got in your pocket. Do you want me to charge it to this account or do you want to pay separate? So that's when he start calling names and abusing and shouting and. And I said there is no need to shout. I said, ah, just leave the shop and don't come back again. [...]

But that boy was getting very abusive [...] he came behind the counter and he start throwing things from the counter like behind the counter place, shelving's, ah, medicines and things like that we keep several things and he start throwing in every direction [...] I was trying to push him away and he grabbed my arm and he pulled me out of behind the counter, and pulled me outside the counter you know like [*into the main shop area*] and pinned me down with the shelves.

[...]

*Interviewer:* When you were attacked you said he was shouting names and abuse, do you know what he was shouting?

*Meena:* Just black bastard

- 2.5.3 In this instance, it was only when the boy felt that he had been caught out did he resort to racist abuse in an attempt to deflect the situation. Another example is provided by Niemma (Aged 26, Black African Female):

I think it was about a year ago I was walking down [the road] and I had, I actually had an African costume on and, ahm, or an African dress and my hair all wrapped up and whatever. Ahm, this, this man for want of a better word, walked into me you know. And he didn't even like apologise or wasn't even courteous to say

whatever. And so I said, I ran after him, I said "excuse me, you just bumped into my arm!" He said: "so what you're only a nigger!"

- 2.5.4 As before, it would appear that it was not the man's initial intention to racially abuse Niemma. However, at the heat of the moment, when he felt challenged for his previous bad behaviour he chose to resort to racial abuse.
- 2.5.5 It is important to stress that making the distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' racist incidents is not meant to imply that the experience of each is any less for those subject to it. Rather, it is simply to point out that the motivations underlying direct racist harassment can take differing forms. This is an important point when considering how to develop intervention strategies aimed at challenging racially harassing behaviour among the white, settled community.
- 2.5.6 As in Troyna and Hatcher's (1992) study of racist name-calling among school children, it is clear that some people are not motivated by a cold and calculated desire to intentionally intimidate others. Rather, they will tend to resort to racist abuse at times where they feel challenged or vulnerable.
- 2.5.7 Those involved in such acts of 'hot' racist abuse may be more likely to respond positively to an educational strategy that stresses the serious and significant impact that racist abuse has on the lives of minority ethnic people and thus how such forms of abuse are of a different order to those more commonly used.

## **2.6 Conclusions**

- 2.6.1 This chapter has outlined minority ethnic people's experiences of direct racist harassment in Northern Ireland. As has been seen, such types of harassment can take many forms from verbal and physical abuse to criminal damage against property. What they all have in common is the intention on the part of those involved to purposely intimidate and/or behave in a hostile manner towards others because of their racial identity.
- 2.6.2 What is particularly concerning is both the frequency with which such incidents occur and their essentially unprovoked and random nature. The majority of minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland have experienced racist name-calling. Moreover, for those fortunate enough not to have been victims of physical assault or criminal damage to their

property themselves, it can be assumed by the proportions involved that they will still probably know of a relative or friend who has had such an experience.

- 2.6.3 In addition, the fact that such harassment can occur anywhere and at any time can only result in a tendency for minority ethnic people to feel generally vulnerable and alienated from this society. That such forms of harassment can occur in extremely public and open places such as the centre of towns and cities, on public transport, in schools and in the street - with apparently little concern or intervention from those witness to it - is particularly concerning. Such incidents can only reinforce minority ethnic people's general sense of exclusion and of not being welcome by the majority population.
- 2.6.4 Attempts to address these more 'cold' forms of direct racist harassment will be difficult and need to recognise the complex processes that tend to give rise to them. Such processes will be discussed in some detail in later chapters. However, it is useful to distinguish between these and more 'hot' forms of racist harassment.
- 2.6.5 These latter forms of harassment may not be motivated to the same extent by a clear and intentional desire to racially intimidate and victimise others. Rather the use of racist abuse may be more of a defensive strategy used in the 'heat of the moment'. For such people, it may be that they would respond more positively to educational strategies that stress how racist abuse is of a different order than other forms of abusive behaviour. More specifically, how it not only represents a personal insult but tends to powerfully reinforce that person's status as a 'second-class citizen' and their general experience of social exclusion from society.
- 2.6.6 The ability of such strategies to clearly set racist harassment apart from other forms of abuse may well therefore have a positive effect among such individuals. This is something that will be returned to in the final chapter of this report.



## **3. Minority Ethnic People's Experiences of Indirect Racist Harassment**

### **3.1 Introduction**

3.1.1 The last chapter offered a detailed account of the range of incidents that comprise what we have termed direct racist harassment. This type of intentional victimisation - most commonly in the form of verbal and physical abuse and also criminal damage to property - is what most people would associate with the idea of racist harassment.

3.1.2 However, such direct forms of harassment only provide part of the picture. There are a number of additional processes that tend to reinforce violate the dignity of minority ethnic people, albeit in more indirect and sometimes unintentional ways. It is this notion of indirect racist harassment that will be outlined and discussed in this chapter.

3.1.3 The chapter will begin by outlining in a little more detail how the concept of indirect racist harassment relates to the more direct forms described in the previous chapter. It will then discuss four different forms of indirect racist harassment, in turn: racial distancing, benign ignorance, racist banter and deracialised harassment.

### **3.2 Understanding indirect racist harassment**

3.2.1 As stressed in the last chapter, the overall effects of direct racist harassment is much more than the sum of the individual incidents. Direct racist harassment ultimately creates a low-level fear and sense of vulnerability among many minority ethnic people. The essentially random and unprovoked nature of such forms of abuse mean that minority ethnic people can never feel totally relaxed and 'at home' within wider society. Ultimately, each successive incident of harassment tends simply to consolidate further the violation of their sense of dignity.

3.2.2 It is within such a context that we need to recognise that a number of other processes can occur that tend to feed into and reinforce this violation of dignity felt by minority ethnic people as a consequence of direct racist harassment.

However, these processes - as manifest in the actions and behaviours of the white, settled population - can often be much more subtle, indirect and sometimes unintentional.

- 3.2.3 As will be seen, it could just be reflected in a general 'coolness' experienced by minority ethnic people when they enter a shop or a club (what we have termed 'social distancing') or in the use of often well-meaning but ignorant comments ('benign ignorance'). Alternatively, it could manifest itself in the guise of racist banter or just a tendency for minority ethnic people to be at the brunt of generally anti-social behaviour and/or criminal activity than others ('deracialised harassment').
- 3.2.4 What unites all of these different processes is their tendency to emphasise minority ethnic people's sense of 'otherness' and thus reinforce an environment within which they feel degraded, intimidated and/or humiliated. In other words, these forms of indirect racist harassment tend to feed into and enhance the effects of the more direct forms of racist harassment.
- 3.2.5 Moreover, direct and indirect racist harassment can be seen as inherently complimentary and emanating from the same source. While they may manifest themselves in very different ways, they tend to reflect the same core sets of ideas and beliefs as will be shown in later chapters.
- 3.2.6 In order to help explain the nature of indirect racist harassment further, it is worth offering four differing illustrations in turn of the ways in which it can manifest itself.

### **3.3 Racial distancing**

- 3.3.1 The first example of indirect racist harassment is reflected in a process we have termed 'racial distancing'. It is often an extremely subtle and unconscious process rooted in the curiousness and/or unfamiliarity that white, settled people may have about minority ethnic people. It is probably a process especially relevant to areas where there are few minority ethnic people living locally.
- 3.3.2 Ultimately, it creates a social barrier and ensures that a racial distance is maintained between minority ethnic people and the wider population. A sense of how this can be experienced is given by Carol (Aged 37, Black African Female):

Even if they don't say something, they don't say anything to you but it's the looks. Sometimes the way they can just look at you. You know, like drop dead [...] The elderly people, yes. Or they would just bump into you, you know what I mean? They don't say anything it's the way they look at you or push you.

3.3.3 This is also an experience shared by Joanne (aged 24, Black African Female) who explained:

I just feel if there is anything, if there is anything that comes out to me about being in this country it's that [...] racism it's not really overt racism its covert. Things like they'd [*local people*] see me, and people that I've talked to have said it, they wouldn't necessarily see me as a person they'd see me as a black girl you know. That's the first thing people see.

3.3.4 The responses described by Carol and Joanne may reflect little more than an awkwardness on the part of those involved and/or a sense of curiosity as mentioned earlier. It may well be, therefore, that there is no intention behind such behaviour to intimidate minority ethnic people.

3.3.5 However, such processes need to be understood in relation to the wider instances of direct racist harassment described in the previous chapter. Against a backdrop of essentially random and unprovoked racist abuse, the type of racial distancing described above can only act to reinforce an intimidating and hostile environment for minority ethnic people.

3.3.6 The types of stares and silences experienced by Joanne and Carol not only underline their 'outsider' status but also makes them feel more visible and exposed and thus open to instances of abuse.

### **3.4 Benign ignorance**

3.4.1 A second example of indirect racist harassment is represented by the use of well-meaning but ignorant comments. This type of 'benign ignorance', as we have termed it, often occurs at times where white settled people may attempt to strike up a conversation and/or show interest in a minority ethnic colleague or friend but, in doing so, display their own ignorance.

3.4.2 One illustration of this can be found in the incident described below by Carol who recounts an experience she

had when she had first started working in a health care setting in Northern Ireland:

The very first week or day I went to the canteen. Ahm, I was sitting by myself. I didn't know anybody there and one of the nurses walked in, a staff nurse walked in, ahm, she [...] didn't really say hello to me you know. The first thing she said to me was "is your husband a soldier?" ... So I didn't know what that meant. I mean because I am black and there are black soldiers coming to Belfast so I'm just bound to be a, a soldier's wife! [...] I did find that very, very insulting you know because I think she should have maybe greeted me first and get to know me before she assumed that my husband was a soldier.

- 3.4.3 As with the process of racial distancing, such incidents can simply reinforce minority ethnic people's awareness of their own racial visibility and vulnerability and also creates a degrading and humiliating environment. This is also illustrated in another comment made by Joanne:

The racism we encounter is not overt - its not in your face, its covert. Its hidden, you know it's more, they wouldn't ask you "Oh, ahm, you're black what are you doing here?" it would be more like "Oh you speak very well, you're English is very good" and its not, I don't blame them. I keep stressing it. It hurts and its annoying but its, its, its their perception of Africa so how can you blame people who are ignorant. You have to educate them, you have to enlighten them, you know. But its still very annoying that even in the 1990s you're getting that kind of, you know. Because, how shall I put it, [...] if I was in Nigeria and someone came from Scandinavia and spoke very well I would just presume they have a good standard of education. I wouldn't think how on earth did this Scandinavian learn to speak properly you know. So that's the kind of aggravation we suffer.

- 3.4.4 While probably well-meaning, both incidents betray a certain level of ignorance. In this latter case, the inability to see past the colour of Joanne's skin meant that those she talked to found it difficult to then reconcile her appearance with the fact that she could talk perfect English.

- 3.4.5 Moreover, and as a consequence, both incidents suggest that those involved find it difficult to see past the colour of a person's skin. It is this that can help to reinforce the general

sense of vulnerability felt by minority ethnic people. As with the process of racial distancing, it is another example of how they are made to feel highly visible and exposed because of their racial identity.

### **3.5 Racist banter**

3.5.1 'Banter' would seem to be a staple part of many relationships in Northern Ireland. It is often characterised by the trading of jokes and insults at each other's expense. This form of 'slagging' as it is also colloquially known works on the basis that it is meant to reflect the strength of the friendship between those engaged in it and is thus not meant to be perceived negatively.

3.5.2 In reality, however, it is often very difficult to know what the true motivations are behind the banter of others. This is certainly the case in relation to 'race' where it is often very difficult to distinguish between banter that is harmless fun and that which reflects deeper-rooted prejudices. As Prajay (Aged 17, South Asian Male) explained when talking about the banter that his friends directed at him:

They used to call me coco-pop, coco-pops but that was mainly sort of a joke. It wasn't, you know, and they were sort of half my friends.

3.5.3 Concern over the real motivations underlying the 'friendly' banter of others was also evident in Vicky's case (Aged 15, Black African Female). As she explained:

It was stuff like, they just called, it was mainly name calling, as well like. Just chocolate bar or something or, ahm, toastie or something like that. Burnt toast or something. And, ahm, I being teased about the way I spoke as well because of my accent.

3.5.4 It is obviously not possible to make any general claims about the motivations underlying racial banter such as that described by Prajay and Vicky above. For some of those involved, it is quite possible that it is entirely well-meaning and an activity that genuinely reflects a desire (however misguided) to demonstrate friendship.

3.5.5 However, as will be shown in later chapters, motivations are more likely to be mixed and more often than not tend to reflect a person's own racial prejudices. Eitherway, and as the accounts of Vicky and Prajay indicate, this sort of

bantering is more than likely to be taken as an insult, whatever the intention might have been.

3.5.6 This last point is the key one to understand. Many minority ethnic people subject to this type of banter will also have experienced more direct forms of racist harassment and/or will certainly be likely to know of a relative or friend who has. They are therefore already likely to feel slightly vulnerable and exposed. The trading of further racist insults - albeit under the banner of 'friendly' banter - can only act to reinforce that sense of vulnerability and victimisation.

3.5.7 Ultimately, it is questionable whether banter in whatever form is fundamentally 'friendly'. However, when it comes to racist banter it needs to be accepted that this is more serious and of a different order of insult. As will be developed further in the final chapter, any strategy aimed at addressing racist harassment needs to include an element aimed at persuading the general population that racist banter is ultimately a form of harassment and is thus unacceptable.

### **3.6 Deracialised harassment**

3.6.1 A final form of indirect racist harassment that we wish to illustrate here is that which we have termed 'deracialised harassment'. It represents those instances where certain minority ethnic groups feel that they are disproportionately experiencing particular forms of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity even though the motivations of those involved are unclear and/or where 'race' is not explicitly mentioned.

3.6.2 One possible example of this deracialised form of harassment is the perception among some within the Chinese community that they tend to be targeted more than others in relation to robberies. As Kim (Aged 25, Chinese Female) explained:

*Kim:* My sister in law's sister is a widow because her husband was beaten to death by baseball bats [...] he was locking up his shop on a Sunday night and two robbers came in and beat him with baseball bats and he later died from head wounds in, ahm, [...] Hospital.

*Interviewer:* [...] And do you think that was racially motivated Kim?

*Kim:* I think it was. I think Chinese people are sort targets. Ahm, ... I honestly don't know if they

intended to murder him but it doesn't excuse the fact that you know he's dead now and nothing can bring him back really.

- 3.6.3 This is also a perception held among some within the South Asian community. As Meena (Aged 46, South Asian Female) explained:

*Interviewer:* You have said that you have had windows broken in the shop countless amounts of time/

*Meena:* /Countless/

*Interviewer:* You've had two burglaries. Is it two burglaries or is it more?

*Meena:* Two and the one other physical attack on me.

*Interviewer:* The physical attack didn't happen during the burglary did it?

*Meena:* Yea it did. But the one before that

*Interviewer:* You have been attacked again?

*Meena:* Yes, ah ha before. Yes ah ha before four of five years [ago].

*Interviewer:* So can I ask you first before we talk about that can I ask you whether you would be aware of the local shops, you would be aware of the local environment do you know whether your shop has had more of this trouble than other local shops?

*Meena:* Yes because there is a shop near to us as well. Never had anything like that.

*Interviewer:* So do you have any idea why you have had more trouble?

*Meena:* Probably because of our colour. Because we've [...] been called the names.

- 3.6.4 Meena's final comment is extremely revealing and shows the relationship between direct racist harassment and how these other incidents are perceived. It is not at all surprising that some minority ethnic people, who already find themselves being victimised by way of verbal and/or physical abuse, are likely to interpret repeated burglaries of their homes as racially motivated.

- 3.6.5 The long-term impact of this type of victimisation is also evident in the following interview with Geeta and Rupal (Aged 34 and 56, South Asian Females). They were discussing the topic of racist harassment and Geeta offered the following example:

*Geeta:* Actually it happened to our friend [...] I think she was collecting money too from door to door

and, ah, I think a man came with a mask and everything/

*Rupal:* /yea a mask/

*Geeta:* /and put a knife or something to her as well.

But that really shook her up. She had to go on medication and everything. I think it must of lasted for maybe nine months. [...]

*Rupal:* They used to do business you see selling things door to door/

*Geeta:* /collecting money and the one house before she went into some man came from behind and [...] whatever money she had in the bag she just gave it. And then you know I think he pushed her to the ground. She was traumatised for quite some time. I totally forgot about that [...] It took a lot out of her she was really, really, we were shook up. We were so scared too.

- 3.6.6 Alongside this type of criminal behaviour, deracialised harassment can also occur in restaurants where customers become abusive and show little respect for those around them. This is a point made Mei (Aged 50, Chinese Female) in the following interview with the help of an interpreter:

*Interpreter:* There was one time they [*customers*] were throwing cutlery, a knife slashed the skull of, the top of Mr Lee's head and he had to get 13 stitches.

[...]

*Mei:* Because they [*the customers*] were trouble before I told them "don't do anything" because they pick up the knife and then, because we are quite long and because they stand at the door they picked the knife and they're inside you know. My husband in the kitchen and then he came out and suddenly one knife [*raises her hand to illustrate the knife cutting the top of her husband's head*].

[...]

*Interpreter:* Mei feels that if they were to make trouble in their restaurant then that is showing discriminatory practice already because you don't see them doing that in English and Irish restaurants.

- 3.6.7 Clearly, it is not possible with the limited evidence available to draw any conclusions as to the actual motivations of the perpetrators of the various incidents described above. Given the possibility that certain minority ethnic groups may

be being disproportionately targeted in relation to specific crimes and anti-social activity then it would seem to be important to at least undertake research to ascertain whether this is indeed the case or not.

- 3.6.8 Eitherway, the perceptions of those who are subject to such acts has to be paramount. As can be seen, for many they tend to define such incidents as racial in origin. As such, even though 'race' may not be explicitly mentioned, these incidents provide a clear example of indirect racist harassment in that they have the effect of making those minority ethnic people concerned feel vulnerable and victimised because of their racial identities.

### **3.7 Conclusions**

- 3.7.1 This chapter has outlined a number of different examples of what we have termed indirect racist harassment. While the examples differ markedly they all share the fact that they tend to reinforce the violation of minority ethnic people's dignity through creating and maintaining an intimidating, humiliating and/or degrading environment. What makes it indirect is the sense that the racial motivation of those involved is not clear.
- 3.7.2 In some cases, such as those of benign ignorance and 'friendly' banter, an individual's actions may be inherently well-meaning. However, the effects are still to make those minority ethnic people involved feel vulnerable and exposed.
- 3.7.3 Ultimately, each individual example may not appear to be so important, especially when compared to the more direct forms of racist harassment discussed in the previous chapter. However, it is the *combined* effects of the many different forms of direct and indirect racist harassment that have to be understood, especially as they then form a powerful and continual set of processes that ensure that many minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland live a life of apprehension, if not fear.
- 3.7.4 As regards the types of indirect racist harassment discussed in this chapter, it may well be that many of these cannot be easily dealt with by the introduction of a clear set of policies, practices and/or relevant legislation. Rather, it requires a change in people's mindsets. On the one hand, this involves a willingness to learn about other people's cultures and traditions so that they no longer see them as exotic or strange and thus we begin to move away from the

### *3. Minority Ethnic People's Experiences of Indirect Racist Harassment*

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kind of racial distancing and benign ignorance discussed above.

- 3.7.5 On the other hand, it means being willing to accept the profound impact that racism and racist harassment has on the lives of minority ethnic people. This, in turn, becomes the precursor to understanding that racist bantering and the use of racist insults is not acceptable.
- 3.7.6 The types of educational campaigns needed to address these matters will be discussed in a little more detail in the final chapter.

## 4. Minority Ethnic People's Responses to Racist Harassment

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 In reading the previous two chapters it would be wrong to conclude that minority ethnic people in Northern Ireland have adopted a 'victim' role, passively accepting the racist abuse and victimisation of others. In fact, the various minority ethnic communities have been extremely strong and vocal over the years in organising and campaigning against racism and racist harassment in the region (Mann-Kler 1997; Hainsworth 1998).

4.1.2 Rather than examining these more corporate responses, this chapter will focus on the differing ways in which individuals have chosen to respond to the particular forms of racist harassment they have faced. Broadly, and in line with existing research (see Chahal and Julienne 1999), responses seem to fall into one of four categories: tolerate, retaliate, report and avoid. Each of these responses will be briefly outlined in turn.

### 4.2 Toleration

4.2.1 Within this first category of toleration are a range of responses including those that simply attempt to ignore the racist harassment that is directed towards them to those that deny its significance. The former strategy is illustrated in the following discussion with Geeta and Rupal (Aged 34 and 56, South Asian Females) where they talk of simply ignoring the abuse they receive:

*Interviewer:* So would instances like that [*name-calling*] have any affect on you personally?

*Geeta:* No

*Rupal:* No, not really. I, we just ignore it.

*Geeta:* Yea, we just ignore it. You know the way if some people feel they are big, they're macho they were just you know for, for that reason. But it isn't effective.

4.2.2 Often, such a response is linked to a desire not to make matters worse. As Geeta went onto explain:

People would call you nigger or black you know things like that. But, you know, its just something you put at the back of your mind, you didn't let it bother you because it wasn't worth it [...] if you showed them [*the perpetrators*] that it bothered you they would have done it even more so you just didn't let it get to you.

- 4.2.3 Ultimately, however, such a strategy is unlikely to achieve complete success. As Rosie (Aged 18, Traveller Female) explains, the racist harassment does have an impact to a certain extent:

*Rosie:* Oh [they have shouted at me] "go up the house get a wash", "you smelly bastard", ah, "you don't come from here", and stuff like that.

*Interviewer:* When that happens how does it make you feel?

*Rosie:* I don't pass no heed on them I just walk down and let them shout it out.

*Interviewer:* You don't pass any heed, but does it upset you?

*Rosie:* A bit but you get used to it and you just shake it off.

- 4.2.4 This is also a point made by Farha (Aged 53, South Asian Female) who, earlier during one interview stated that:

you have to take all these thing [i.e. racist incidents] you have to be more tolerant.

However, she later admitted that she has found them to be:

very hurtful. You feel hurtful. You feel hurt, the hurt and the pain. The hurt is there but I think you don't want to discuss.

### 4.3 Retaliation

- 4.3.1 In contrast, a small number of those interviewed spoke of how they chose not to ignore those that were harassing them but decided to retaliate instead. However, as Kim (Aged 25, Chinese Female) explained, such a strategy is extremely risky and can result in further verbal and/or physical abuse:

*Kim:* When I was nineteen I was beaten up by a girl on the way to the shop at ten o'clock on a Friday night. And, ahm, they [*a group*] were just callin me Chink this, Chink that and the other. There

was about seven of them and I just went, I just sort of went like piss off or something and [...] she came up behind me and started beaten' me up and I was in shock really at the time because I didn't think that they would jump on me because normally people didn't jump on a girl by herself. But she was drunk I think and eventually her other friend came and told her to stop doin' it. And then I just ran home after that and called the police.

*Interviewer:* [...] Did you sustain any injuries from that incident?

*Kim:* Ah, I had a bruise on my face and, ah, most of my hair was missing. Chunks of my hair was pulled out.

- 4.3.2 More commonly, however, the unprovoked and random nature of such forms of harassment usually leave the victim taken by surprise with little time to formulate a response. Moreover, when they are able to collect their thoughts, as previously, there is a deep concern that to retaliate would be to make matters worse. This is illustrated in the following discussion with Poonam and Aisha (Aged 31 and 42, South Asian Females):

*Interviewer:* [Poonam] you still have problems in Belfast, does it have any affect on you now?

*Poonam:* Well its, I think it give you an immediate shock/

*Aisha:* /shock/

*Poonam:* /when you hear about it you know. And at the same time because you're in minority you don't want, you're scared you have to think of your security. You sometimes think well if I, you know I answer back or if I say something then this person is going to hit me because it tends to be you know they are always in a group. And you're the only one so you just keep quiet.

## 4.4 Reporting the incident

- 4.4.1 A small number of the interviewees explained how they had reported the incident. Generally, they only tended to report the matter when they felt it was serious. For those who reported incidents to the police, there appeared to be a mixed response. Some felt that the police failed to take the matter seriously. This is illustrated in the following quote from Lai (Aged 44, Chinese Female) who telephoned the police to report an incident involving customers who had become violent and abusive. As she explained:

I ring the police. The police [say there is] no problem he is coming straight away. [...] I try so many time. Over hour or two hour. Ring, ring the three or four times still no people coming you know. I think that he don't doing, doing the something for the Chinese restaurant you know. [...] You ask the every Chinese they know the, know the police don't do everything for the, for the Chinese people you know. In the moment I know the people is not ring for the police again you know.

- 4.4.2 For others, while they had no complaints about how the police dealt with the particular crime that had been reported, they felt that it was much harder to convince them that it had a racial motive. As Poonam (Aged 31, South Asian Female) explained:

I think you know in cases like that if there is money involved you know police don't really give you a straight out answer you know they say it could have been the money, we don't know it might not have been racial.

- 4.4.3 As regards racist harassment that has taken place in schools, some of the minority ethnic children and parents interviewed spoke of how they had reported these matters to the school. Such incidents have already been discussed in detail elsewhere (see Connolly and Keenan 2000b: 60-65). As with the experience of reporting incidents to the police, the response of schools tended to vary with some schools adopting an extremely effective and proactive stance compared to others, the majority, that tended to either underplay the incident or respond inappropriately.

## 4.5 **Avoidance**

- 4.5.1 In association with the strategy of toleration, perhaps the most common response among interviewees was to try to avoid situations where they felt that racist harassment may occur. For Kim (Aged 25, Chinese Female) this meant travelling everywhere by car. As she explained:

I got really upset [after the last racist incident] and I decided I would drive everywhere. So since driving everywhere you don't really get as much [harassment].

- 4.5.2 For others, this strategy has meant avoiding certain areas altogether. As Sheetal (Aged 46, South Asian Female) explained in relation to her own children:

If our children walked down maybe the Shankill Road or the Falls Road you have to make them more aware [...] you would have to tell them, not to travel in those areas [...] you will be called names in those areas and you can't fight back.

- 4.5.3 Similarly, as Gordon (Aged 18, Chinese Male) explained:

*Interviewer:* Do you ever face any problems outside school?

*Gordon:* Depends where you go.

*Interviewer:* Can you expand on that a bit more?

*Gordon:* Well, there's certain areas in Belfast, obviously, where if you walk through your bound to get some reaction from other people.

*Interviewer:* Areas such as, can you give me an example?

[...]

*Gordon:* Places like the village area, it's down near the Falls and the Shankill. And those are areas that we tend not to go to. Well, I tend not to go to.

*Interviewer:* That's your choice? And why is that?

*Gordon:* Well from experience, I would say and from what other people would say.

- 4.5.4 All of the conversations where this strategy of avoidance was raised focused simply on the avoidance of certain local areas. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that this approach may well also include avoidance of other social settings, such as leisure centres, local parks and local clubs and bars where it may be felt that racist harassment may occur.

## 4.6 **Conclusions**

- 4.6.1 This chapter has offered a brief outline of the differing individual responses that minority ethnic people have adopted in relation to their experiences of racist harassment. Retaliation was found to be quite rare and carried with it serious risks that many interviewees were only too aware of.
- 4.6.2 The majority of respondents tended to adopt the approach of simply tolerating the abuse and attempting to avoid it where possible. For many it had become a routine part of

life that they simply had to deal with. However, while a number of interviewees spoke of how they simply ignored it, it was clear that the continued exposure to racist harassment was difficult to deal with.

- 4.6.3 Moreover, alongside the potential psychological impact of racist abuse, the strategy of avoidance tended to also place a significant limit on some interviewees' freedom of movement. In this sense, it seems reasonable to assume that the tendency to avoid areas and locations associated with racist harassment may well tend to provide a significant barrier to some minority ethnic people's take up and use of existing social and leisure services.
- 4.6.4 Finally, a small number of interviewees explained how they had responded by reporting the incident to either the police or the school (in the case of children and parents). The response of such agencies and organisations is beyond the remit of this current report and is something that is to be considered in detail in the following report due later this year. However, it is clear that there is a significant degree of variation in the responses received by minority ethnic people when reporting racist incidents. This is an important issue that needs to be addressed in any attempt to effectively challenge racist harassment.

## 5. The Perpetrators of Racist Harassment

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This and the following two chapters look more closely at the perpetrators of racist harassment. The aim is to increase our understanding of some of the causes underlying both direct and indirect forms of harassment.
- 5.1.2 This chapter begins this process by attempting to outline the main characteristics of those who engage in racist harassment. This is done by drawing upon the accounts of minority ethnic people themselves and also the larger-scale attitudinal survey of a sample of 1267 people drawn randomly from across Northern Ireland.
- 5.1.3 This process is complicated by the fact that racist harassment takes different forms and therefore the particular characteristics of those more likely to engage in harassment may well differ depending upon the type of harassment under consideration. With this in mind, the chapter will consider direct and indirect racist harassment separately.

### 5.2 Perpetrators of direct racist harassment

- 5.2.1 As discussed in detail in Chapter Two, direct racist harassment most commonly takes three forms: verbal abuse, criminal damage to property and physical abuse. It is extremely difficult to draw any firm conclusions regarding the likely characteristics of those engaged in criminal damage simply because most of those involved are never identified or caught.
- 5.2.2 However, it is obviously a much more straight-forward task to begin to develop a profile of those most likely to engage in verbal and physical abuse as we can rely upon the accounts of those minority ethnic people who have been subject to such abuse. From these accounts, two clear types of perpetrator emerge that appear to be most likely to engage in direct racist harassment.

**i. Groups of Children, Aged 10-17**

- 5.2.3 By far the most common perpetrators of racist name-calling and the throwing of objects would appear to be children. This was confirmed by many of those interviewed. As Gordon and Andrew (aged 18 and 15, Chinese Males) explained when asked who tended to call them names:

*Gordon:* They won't be adults. They won't be like grown men. They'd be teenagers.

*Interviewers:* Would it tend to be males or females?

*Gordon:* Both

*Andrew:* Yeah, they hang around in groups.

[...]

*Gordon:* If one person walks past he wouldn't say it. But if there's a group then they do.

- 5.2.4 This tendency for racist abuse to emanate from groups of children was also found by Kim (Aged 25, Chinese Female):

*Kim:* It could be from five-year-olds male, female to groups of kids male, female.

*Interviewer:* Would it ever be adults?

*Kim:* Ahm, ... [tuts] no its mainly teenagers. Its mainly, you know, young, young people.

- 5.2.5 Such experiences were also confirmed by Yuen and Kit (Aged 39 and 30, Chinese Females) in a separate interview:

*Yuen:* Children, children, more children. Adults not, not a lot, mostly children. Some children may have heard it from drunks who say things back to them [...]

*Interviewer:* What age of children?

*Kit:* About 10 or so

*Yuen:* 12, 13 [...] Its usually range from 12 to 16.

- 5.2.6 The broad age-range identified by Yuen was also confirmed by others. Joanne (Aged 25, Black African Female), for example, when asked what ages the children were who have abused her, she replied:

in all honesty that age group, 12 to 15, that would be silly and call you names, I find you know.

- 5.2.7 Finally, while the abuse would emanate from groups of children, it seems that it would often be initiated and/or led

by boys within the group. This is something that Meena (Aged 46, South Asian Female) explained during one interview:

*Interviewer:* Would it be adults or children?

*Meena:* I think the young generation you know like teenagers. Yes, ah ha, yes.

*Interviewer:* And would it tend to be teenagers on their own or in groups do you know?

*Meena:* In the groups I'd say.

*Interviewer:* And boys or girls. Could you generalise?

*Meena:* Both [...] But more boys.

- 5.2.8 Finally, while the racist harassment meted out by children tended to either be verbal abuse and, to a lesser extent, the throwing of objects, it did on occasion involve more serious activity. Lai (Aged 44, Chinese Female), for example, recalled an incident where she was working in her restaurant that was situated on the first floor above her takeaway. She explained that, on several occasions, children would creep up her stairs and start fires:

There were one case, serious case, 2 girls, 3 boys very young they were about 14 or 13 they came up they walk up stairs up to the landing we didn't even notice them. They rolled the paper and there is two lights on top of the landing. They throw the paper on top of the landing, the lights and start fire, smoke. And my staff started "Where smoke come from". So we went and all smoke [...] And one time they went to the toilet, you know the toilet you should have dustbin to hold all the paper, hankie everything. They threw the paper, light a fire. No respect, no respect.

### ***Groups of Young Men, aged 18-35***

- 5.2.9 The second key group that minority ethnic people identified as tending to engage in racist harassment more than others was young men, typically aged between 18 and 35. While they also tended to engage in routine verbal abuse in similar ways to the children, this group was also more likely to commit more serious physical assaults. This tends to reflect the incidents of physical harassment outlined in Chapter Two as recalled by Fung, Cyril and Rosie.
- 5.2.10 Again, one of the common characteristics tended to be that the young men were likely to be in groups and, as the incident recounted by Rosie in Chapter Two indicated, also

more likely to engage in such behaviour when under the influence of alcohol.

- 5.2.11 Alcohol was also mentioned by Bridget (Aged 45, Traveller Female) when asked who she was most likely to be harassed by. As she explained, it was 'kids and fellas when they're drunk'. It was also mentioned by Neelam (Aged 45, South Asian Female) who described how people she knew, when drunk, would still call her names in her shop. As she explained, although they would return the next day and apologise saying 'Oh I had a drink and that - you're my friend', it still upset her. As Neelam stated: 'I know they meant it, they meant it!'
- 5.2.12 This combination of groups of young men and drink would also seem to reflect the accounts of those working in Chinese restaurants and take-aways who, as touched upon in Chapter Two and discussed in more detail elsewhere (Connolly and Keenan 2000b: 40-44), tended to experience relatively routine forms of verbal and physical racist abuse.
- 5.2.13 Overall, it needs to be remembered that direct racist harassment is not confined to either groups of children or young men. Indeed the incident recalled by Kim in Chapter Two where she was physically assaulted by a group of girls is an example of this. The key point is that direct racist harassment can be perpetrated by anyone, whatever their background. However, the experiences of minority ethnic people living in Northern Ireland tend to suggest that groups of children and young men are *more likely* to engage in such behaviour than others.

### 5.3 Perpetrators of Indirect Racist Harassment

- 5.3.1 Given the often subtle, subconscious and implicit nature of indirect racist harassment it is much more difficult to identify, with any certainty, the characteristics of those who may be more likely to engage in it. However, there are three different sources of data that, when considered together, can offer some insight into the likely characteristics of those who tend to engage in indirect racist harassment.
- 5.3.2 These three sources are: the accounts of minority ethnic people themselves; the attitudinal survey of the majority population; and indepth interviews with members of the white, settled community. This chapter will consider the first two sources while the third will be explored in Chapter Seven. As will be seen, the data to be discussed in Chapter

Seven tends to corroborate the general picture gained from these first two sources.

***Minority ethnic people's accounts***

- 5.3.3 The first-hand accounts of indirect racist harassment as experienced by minority ethnic people have already been discussed in detail in Chapter Three. In reading through these incidents again, it is apparent that a wide variety of people, from many different backgrounds, have been involved in indirect racist harassment.
- 5.3.4 As regards the process of 'racial distancing', for example, while the elderly are mentioned as a specific group likely to behave in this way, another interviewee makes no particular distinction and simply refers to 'local people' more generally. In contrast, incidents of 'benign ignorance' tended to involve work colleagues in a health care centre and also a large departmental store. As regards racist banter, it was predominantly younger, school friends that appeared to be identified.
- 5.3.5 The varied nature of those responsible for indirect racist harassment is not particularly surprising, given the way we have defined it and thus the many different forms that it can possibly take. What the findings of the interviews with minority ethnic people suggest therefore is that indirect racist harassment is not the preserve of any particular section within society but can occur, albeit in many different forms, anywhere within the population.

***Attitudinal survey of the majority population***

- 5.3.6 This general conclusion tends to be supported by the data obtained from the large-scale attitudinal survey of a random sample of 1267 interviewees drawn from across Northern Ireland. The findings of this survey have been reported in detail elsewhere (see Connolly and Keenan 2000a).
- 5.3.7 In terms of attempting to ascertain the spread of indirect racist harassment among the majority population, two approaches can be taken. The first is to look at how levels of racial prejudice vary across Northern Ireland. It can be assumed that some of the forms of indirect racist harassment (especially racial distancing and benign ignorance) may well be associated with ignorant and/or prejudiced beliefs. If it is found that certain groups within the population as a whole are more likely to be racially prejudiced then this may constitute a degree of evidence to

suggest that these groups may also be more likely to behave in ways that constitute indirect racist harassment.

- 5.3.8 This is something that the first report gave particular attention to (see Connolly and Keenan 2000a: Chapter Four). Overall, a number of factors were shown to be associated with levels of racial prejudice. For example, there was a slight tendency for older people to be more prejudiced than younger people, tending to confirm the association between racial distancing and the elderly made by one of the interviewees.
- 5.3.9 Males were slightly more likely to be prejudiced on the whole than females, and Protestants slightly more prejudiced than Catholics. In addition, the lower the social class a person was from the slightly more likely that they would be more racially prejudiced.
- 5.3.10 However, the interesting point overall is that all of these relationships that were found were only small. In other words, there was still a large degree of variation in terms of racial prejudice within any particular social group. This was confirmed by what is known as a linear multiple regression analysis that was conducted on the data.
- 5.3.11 In essence, it showed that even when the combined effects of all these variables are taken into account they can only account for 21 per cent of the variation in racial prejudice found among those surveyed. In other words, the vast majority of racial prejudice cannot be predicted by considering a set of variables like age, gender and social class, rather it is largely independent of these.
- 5.3.12 Interestingly, a similar picture emerged from the second approach that can be adopted to ascertain the spread of indirect racist harassment among the population. Rather than measuring levels of racial prejudice, this second approach asked people whether and how often they had 'called someone a name to their face because of their colour or ethnicity?'
- 5.3.13 However, it is not entirely clear from answers to this question what it is exactly measuring. It could be measuring direct racist harassment (in the form of verbal abuse) and/or racist bantering (i.e. indirect racist harassment). However, given the significant degree of overlap between the two this slight confusion is inevitable. Eitherway, it offers at least some means by which an analysis can be undertaken as to whether there are certain groups within the majority

- population that are more likely to engage in this type of behaviour.
- 5.3.14 As discussed in the first report, however, there is even more variation in this form of behaviour across the population than with racial prejudice (see Connolly and Keenan 2000a: Chapter Five). A little over 4 per cent of the variation in incidents of name-calling could be predicted when considering the combined effects of every possible factor.
- 5.3.15 Only four factors were shown to bear any noticeable influence on levels of name-calling. These were: levels of racial prejudice, age, gender and amount of contact with minority ethnic people. The latter factor suggests that the more contact that a person has with minority ethnic people, the more they are likely to engage in name-calling. This is fairly obvious but does suggest that some of this is likely to be racist bantering.
- 5.3.16 Within this, it is not particularly surprising that levels of racial prejudice would seem to have some influence on levels of name-calling. What is interesting, however, is that the relationship between the two is actually extremely small ( $r=0.066$ ,  $p=0.024$ ). In other words, racial prejudice only has a marginal influence on the tendency for someone to engage in racist name-calling. This is an extremely significant finding as it suggests that the causes of this form of racist harassment do not particularly lie with a person being racially prejudiced but with other factors.
- 5.3.17 Finally, the influences of gender and age tend to suggest what these other factors may be. While both only had a slight influence on levels of name-calling, when the data is further analysed to isolate young men (aged 16-35) then it is found that they were four times more likely to admit engaging in racist name-calling compared to the population as a whole. More specifically, nearly a third of all those within this category (27 per cent) admitted that they had personally called someone a name to their face because of their colour or ethnicity.
- 5.3.18 Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, it is likely that such responses will tend to underestimate the true proportions involved. What this suggests is that racist abuse and/or bantering seems to be a significant part of the sub-cultures within which young men inhabit. If racial prejudice is therefore not a particularly strong cause of racist name-calling, then it would seem that much greater attention needs to be paid to the types of sub-cultures themselves

that give rise to such behaviour. This provides the focus for the next two chapters.

## 5.4 Conclusions

- 5.4.1 This chapter has attempted to increase our understanding of the likely characteristics of those that engage in racist harassment. Given the variety of forms that racist harassment can take, it stands to reason that different types of harassment may well be more likely to be perpetrated by different groups of individuals. This is certainly what the findings from this present research tend to suggest.
- 5.4.2 In relation to the more direct forms of racist harassment, including most commonly verbal and physical abuse and criminal damage to property, the findings suggest that two groups tend to be more likely to engage in such behaviour than others:
- groups of children aged between 10 and 17; and
  - young men aged between 18 and 35, especially when under the influence of alcohol.
- 5.4.3 Within this, while both groups tended to engage in verbal abuse to a similar extent, the throwing of objects seemed to be more likely to occur among children and serious physical assaults among young men.
- 5.4.4 In contrast, the data suggests that there is no specific group or groups within the population that tend to be more likely to engage in indirect racist harassment. In other words, such forms of behaviour would appear to be likely to occur among any particular grouping. Within this, the data tentatively suggests that some forms of indirect harassment may be more likely to be perpetrated by some groups more than others. Social distancing, for example, may be slightly more likely to occur among older people whereas racist bantering may be slightly more common among the younger age ranges.
- 5.4.5 There are two points to make in conclusion. The first is that these trends highlighted above are only indicative. Any particular form of harassing behaviour is not the preserve of any one group. Any specific form of racist harassment can occur within any social grouping within the population. All that is being highlighted above are the overriding *trends*.

- 5.4.6 Second, it is worth stressing again the finding that racial prejudice is only minimally related to the tendency for someone to engage in racist name-calling. In other words, racist name-calling is not particularly a reflection of a person's prejudice. Rather, and as will now be explored in more detail in the following chapter, racist name-calling would appear to be much more a product of the particular sub-culture in which it occurs.
- 5.4.7 This is a particularly important point to grasp as it has clear implications in terms of developing the most appropriate strategies for attempting to address racist harassment. In this sense, such forms of harassing behaviour will not be effectively reduced by developing racial awareness-type programmes as racist name-calling is not a consequence of ignorance or prejudice. Rather, strategies are needed that can address the broader elements of the wider sub-cultures that do tend to cause and give rise to name-calling.



## 6. Direct Racist Harassment and Male Sub-Cultures

### 6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 In previous chapters it has been shown how direct racist harassment tends to take the forms of verbal and physical abuse and criminal damage to property. Within this, it has been argued that there is not always a clear distinction between verbal abuse and racist bantering. Moreover, and as shown in the previous chapter, the data suggest that boys and young men tend to be central to this type of behaviour.
- 6.1.2 This chapter aims to offer a greater insight into the social worlds of young males and the types of sub-cultures that give rise to racist harassment. The chapter draws upon indepth interviews with boys and young men from a variety of areas in Northern Ireland - Protestant and Catholic - and attempts to show how they tend to perceive racist harassment and what place it plays in their own friendship groups.
- 6.1.3 The chapter begins by looking at younger boys living in areas that have become known over recent years for relatively high levels of racist incidents. It focuses on some of the key factors within their day to day lives that tend to provide the contexts within which incidents of racist harassment are more likely to occur.
- 6.1.4 The chapter then looks a little more broadly at slightly older males and examines the role that banter plays among them. With this as a context the chapter explores where 'race' fits into this culture of banter and will show how there is no real distinction between 'friendly' banter and racist abuse. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the broader implications of these findings for the development of strategies aimed at reducing direct racist harassment.

### 6.2 Racist harassment and young boys

- 6.2.1 As regards younger boys, there appear to be two key factors that tend to provide the contexts within which racist harassment is more likely to occur. It is worth exploring each in turn.

***i. Territory and belonging***

- 6.2.2 The first relates to notions of territory and belonging. For younger boys, especially in working class areas, it is not surprising to find that territory takes on a special significance. Meeting and hanging around local streets is a common activity. Given the levels of sectarian activity more generally, the local neighbourhood can be a place where children and young people can feel relatively safe and secure.
- 6.2.3 Because of this, the local area will often become a core part of their sense of identity. Being so central to their sense of who they are, the local neighbourhood can also be something that they will mark out and defend - as commonly witnessed by incidents of stone throwing between rival groups of children at interface areas (see Connolly and Neill 2001).
- 6.2.4 Within this context, it is not surprising to find that some of these boys will feel threatened by 'strangers' who move into their area. This is where 'race' can become significant as illustrated in the following discussion with Dean (16), Danny (13); Mark (12) and Stephen (14). As can be seen, the boys feel strongly that Chinese people are taking over 'their territory':

*Dean:* There's a wee Paki man lives up round the corner from him. Just down the street from him.

And there's Chinese lives next door to him.

*Danny:* The Chinese, the Chinese get paint bombed.

*Interviewer:* [...] Why does that happen?

*Danny:* Let our tyres down

*Interviewer:* Your tyres?

*Danny:* Yea

*Interviewer:* Why

*Mark:* Because he slabbers

*Danny:* Because they run out to you and they go "Ah! Ah! Aye!" Poke your eye out and they swing a hatchet saw at ya

*Nathan:* They are taking over our territory

*Stephen:* There's too many of them

*Micky:* They are becoming part of the community and they're not, ah, ... they're movin into the houses where other parts of the community could have. Where the Chinese don't mix with the community so why should [they] be in the community if they're not willin ta/

*Nathan:* /Mix

[...]

*Micky:* See in another couple of years you can call this place China Town if they keep movin in the way they're movin in!

6.2.5 This sense of threat is also evident in the following discussion that took place a little later among the boys. It would seem that a local Chinese man had asked them to move on from sitting on his wall outside his house:

*Mark:* See if you sit on a Chinese wall they come out with knives [...]

*Danny:* They sit and stare at you and your waitin for them to turn on you

[...]

*Mark:* They're annoyin people in the community. They're annoyin people.

*Interviewer:* How are they annoying people?

*Mark:* See if you're sittin on like the wall next door to them come out an/

[...]

*Micky:* /See one day I looked out the window and one of them was doin a shite in the garden! I'm not jokin ya! Not my garden.

6.2.6 This would certainly not have been the first time that a group of children have been asked to move on from outside someone's house because of the noise the disturbance may have been making. However, the fact that it was a Chinese man attempting to stop them doing what they always do in their local area, would seem to have been the significant issue for these boys. As can be seen, it also provides the basis upon which they begin to develop and introduce a range of fictional stories (such as the meat cleaver and defecating in the garden) aimed at emphasising Chinese people's strange and exotic nature.

6.2.7 For some of these boys, then, the only solution is to force Chinese people out of their homes. As they went onto argue:

*Danny:* They should be put out

*Mark:* They should be put out

*Micky:* Aye but they're takin houses where you could have like people's that are willin to be dead on an all an fight for our country

*Stephen:* They should be put out and if they don't get it they should be burned out

*Natham:* And if they don't get burned out they'd be shot out.

*Interviewer:* And what about people from/

*Nathan:* /They be shot out an get their windie put in

- 6.2.8 While most of the discussions of this kind centered on members of the Chinese community, a few boys from another community also talked about Travellers in a similar way. As can be seen from the discussion with Liam (17), Paul (16), Sean (17) and Pete (16) the sense of threat they feel to their territory (i.e. where they usually 'stand' and hang out) is also evident as is the construction of Travellers as a strange and dangerous 'other':

*Interviewer:* So would you all have had come in contact with people from the Travelling community?

*Liam:* Aye

*Sean:* Aye, slabberin

[...]

*Paul:* They'd be at the shops an all an that over across the road

*Interviewer:* Right

*Liam:* That's where we would stand. No one really likes them.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Why does no one like them?

*Liam:* Because they fight, they fight. They're always slabberin

*Sean:* And they think they're /

*Pete:* See if you look at some of them they're all like what are you looking at. You're only just I mean lookin at them.

*Liam:* Can't stop fights they have that big a families

*Interviewer:* You say they fight, how would you know?

*Liam:* Because one did me before.

*Interviewer:* What happened?

*Pete:* That's not a thing because loads of people fight

*Liam:* Not when you're kids.

*Interviewer:* And how did you end up in a fight?

*Liam:* Can't remember.

*Pete:* It's not fightin no more its all knives.

*Liam:* Just a fight and he bit me on the head an all.

#### **ii. 'Messing about' and 'having a laugh'**

- 6.2.9 This construction of certain minority ethnic groups as outsiders and a threat to the local community, provides the context within which they are more likely to become the

targets of the boys 'messing about'. Messing about can be seen as a key part of the boys' activities. It provides the means by which they can prove themselves to each other and maintain their status among their peers as daring and hard.

- 6.2.10 Messing about can include a wide range of activities that are seen as exciting and/or dangerous. They can include fighting, 'joy riding', drinking and drug abuse. Engagement in certain activities can then carry status for those involved as the stories are told and re-told. This is evident in the following incident that some of the boys discussed involving a stabbing:

*Dean:* Do you not, did you not hear about the wee fella? [...] He got stabbed

*Mark:* [*Laughs*] [...] That was him! [*pointing at Micky*]

*Micky:* That was my mate.

*Interviewer:* And what happened?

*Nathan:* He went to hospital.

*Interviewer:* Why did this person get stabbed?

[*group members talk together*]

*Nathan:* It was drink that started it.

*Micky:* My mate's house.

*Interviewer:* He went to your mate's house?

*Micky:* [*nods head to indicate yes*]

*Interviewer:* And then what happened?

*Stephen:* He started slabberin my mate [...] There was an argument. Then he stabbed him. My mate stabbed him back.

*Interviewer:* He stabbed your mate first?

*Group members:* Yip

*Stephen:* Then my mate's mate/

*Dean:* /And he had to give retaliation/

*Stephen:* /Give retaliation

- 6.2.11 The type of status gained from either being involved in and/or associated with such activity is clear in the nature of the discussion above. In this sense, it is not so much whether the above incident actually happened rather than the fact that this sort of behaviour is valued among the group.

- 6.2.12 This is also true of the next discussion among the other group of boys where they are discussing 'joy riding'. In this instance, the high status nature of the activity is seen in the fact that children and young people would congregate and wait for hours to watch the 'joy riders' and that, according to these boys, 'joy riding' attracts the girls:

*Interviewer:* So why did you try it [*joy riding*]? ... That's what I'm interested in?

*Sam:* Just getting a lot of grief in the house an all ... just get blocked ... get blocked and stupid, just went out

*Interviewer:* And did you steal a car then?

*Sam:* The others did, I didn't, I just got in.

*Interviewer:* So is it not very dangerous? Did you not think it was dangerous when you were actually driving along?

*Sam:* I wasn't drivin

[...]

*Interviewer:* Was anyone hurt?

*Sam:* Christ [*group laughs*] Was drivin round a corner lost control and went into a railin!

*Interviewer:* Really?

*Sam:* So I just got out and run

[...]

*Interviewer:* So do you think that's why people do it, a sence of boredom, depression?

*Liam:* Naw its all, its mostly you see people who always do it. They always think its hard to do it and if they get caught /

*Sean:* They get girls. A lot of people do it to get girls

*Interviewer:* To get girls?

*Sean:* Aye. Girls and they do get them

[...]

*Ant (16):* A lot of people stand on the hill and just wait on joyriders comin

*Sean:* And if you don't do that there then you're a fruit of somethin [...] They just stand there and just freeze. And the car drives up every hour and a half.

- 6.2.13 It is within this general context set by the need to 'mess about' that racist harassment can occur. As can be seen in the following discussion, it would often involve taunting and harassing local Chinese people for the excitement (or 'the chase' as Mark describes it below):

*Danny:* If somebody mixes everybody gets on with them

*Simon (11):* Like if we didn't mix people call us [*utters indecipherable noises*]

*Interviewer:* [...] You said that you call people from the Chinese community names and you said it was in the street, how did that come about?

*Danny:* Just walkin past them

*Interviewer:* And you would just call them a name  
*Danny:* Or you'd maybe just hit them  
*Mark:* Or else get a wee chase off them. You would  
*Interviewer:* You would chase them?  
*Mark:* Aye we brick one of the Chinese place and get  
a wee chase [...]  
*Stephen:* Chinese people got beat up in our school  
[...]  
*Nathan:* Thumbs up for racism!  
*Stephen:* Chinese got beat up in our school  
*Interviewer:* Why?  
*Stephen:* Because they were Chinese  
*Danny:* They don't mix or nothing they just give you  
the dirtiest looks you've ever seen in your life  
*Stephen:* They just slabber

6.2.14 As can be seen in the above, the targeting of Chinese people when 'messaging about' is justified by the view discussed earlier that they do not mix or integrate with the local community and therefore, presumably, deserve such treatment.

6.2.15 The way in which 'race' becomes a convenient focus for these broader activities of just 'messaging about' and 'having a laugh' can also be seen in the following quote. This time it can be seen how the activity of bullying, that some of the boys tended to use generally on occasions to demonstrate their strength and hardness to the others, can become racialised:

*Interviewer:* So have you ever seen anyone from the other communities getting picked on or anything happening?  
*Danny:* From other communities?  
*Interviewer:* Yea  
*Danny:* There's a wee lad he [*Mark*] picks on down the [road]  
*Mark:* Who?  
*Danny:* The wee boy about that size and you always kick him in the backside an all. He's about that size [*indicating small in height*]. He lives in [the road].

6.2.16 For the most part, such activities appear to have become a routine and unquestioned part of the boys' behaviour. Racist harassment, it would seem, is not an additional part of the boys' activities but is a logical extension of their existing sub-culture that seems to be predicated on the masculine values of territory, fighting and aggressiveness.

- 6.2.17 This is certainly evident in the responses of the boys when asked why they racially harass others. As can be seen in the quote below, while they certainly seem to be happy enough to admit that they engage in racist name-calling and criminal damage, they find it hard to explain why. In the end they feel forced to claim that they were only 'retaliating' to the harassment they first received from the Chinese people [sic] - a claim that even leads to an exclamation of disbelief from one of the group (Dean):

*Interviewer:* You have said that you've walked down the street and you've called people names for no reason

*Nathan:* Yeah

*Interviewer:* Do you think that's the proper thing to do? Do you think it's the right thing to do?

*Stephen:* Yip

*Interviewer:* But why do it? You are walking down the street you are walking past someone from the Chinese community why would you just call them a name?

*Simon:* Because they call us names

*Stephen:* They call us names

*Interviewer:* Would you call them a name first?

*Dean:* Yes you's do! Yes you's do!

*Stephen:* We give retaliation

*Micky:* I only slabber at them when they come out slabberin at me.

*Mark:* [*Sarcastically*] We wouldn't even dream of putting their types down or putting their windies through!

*Dean:* Shut up! Shut up your mouth!

*Mark:* Wouldn't dream of that stuff!

[...]

*Micky:* They aren't wanted

*Mark:* They're tubes

*Micky:* They're not wanted

### 6.3 Racist harassment and young men

- 6.3.1 As highlighted in the previous chapter, the other main group that tends to engage in direct racist harassment is young men. In this final section, it is worth examining this group in a little more detail. More specifically, two factors will be examined in particular: the role of banter among young men and how this can become racialised; and the role of fighting among young men and the physical harassment of minority ethnic people more generally.

***i. Racist banter and young men's sub-cultures***

- 6.3.2 In many ways, the main dynamics underlying their sub-culture is similar to that of the younger boys discussed above. However, rather than being so tied to their local area, the young men are more likely to drink and socialise in bars and clubs in town and city centres.
- 6.3.3 Moreover, while fighting still plays a part in the expression and maintenance of status within the group, for the most part the young men's displays of aggressiveness would seem to have become ritualised in the constant use of 'banter' and 'slagging'. For the young men, it is a practice they have carefully learnt since their early teens.
- 6.3.4 The meaning of the banter and the 'rules' associated with it are actually well explained by some of the older boys (aged 16 to 18) discussed in the last section. As can be seen, they're already learning the art of banter that is slowly becoming a key element of their relationships with their peers:

*Liam:* Slaggin

*Sean:* Slaggin all day. Everyone's slaggin everyone else and everyone just takes it

*Liam:* An at work as well [...] no one really cares. It doesn't affect you or anything.

[...]

*Sean:* Every day. Most of your times spent slaggin.

*Interviewer:* Do you think that's a proper thing to do, a nice thing to do?

*Sean:* Twenty three hours a day

*Liam:* But you don't. Everyone where we grow up with see if you stand with somebody an you don't slag them, that's like you're not acceptin them... to tell you the truth. If you stand with someone [...]

*Pete:* "Your ma's and da's slag"

*Liam:* "Your ma's and da's slag ye".

*Pete:* "An your uncles an all slag ye" an all

*Ant:* You grew up about it. Its just normal.

[...]

*Liam:* Gets the crack goin

[...]

*Interviewer:* So you never think about how that makes the other person feel?

*Liam:* No

*Pete:* No because we know how it feels ourselves. Everyone feels the same way.

*Sean:* Because it wouldn't be like, it wouldn't be one person in your crowd who everyone picks on it would be everyone

*Liam:* Everyone slag's each other

*Sean:* It would be like one day I might say somethin an will start slaggin me an' I'll just take it as a joke an laugh and someone else another day who was probably slaggin me I would slag him

6.3.5 From the above it can be seen that the slagging of each other would seem to be a way of male bonding - demonstrating that you 'accept' each other. Within this, the two key rules of bantering seem to be that it happens only with people you know (and thus who understand the way it is meant) and that no one person is singled out (i.e. everyone gets a slagging).

6.3.6 Unfortunately, these two rules do not appear to be applied by the young men when engaged in racist bantering. As can be seen in the discussion with Sammy (21) below, it would seem that simply being an acquaintance of a minority ethnic person is enough to justify slagging them:

*Sammy:* I give a wee Chinese man stick up there in the city but I know him, I know him well like my mate.

*Interviewer:* Your friendly with him

*Sammy:* I don't run about with him like or nothin like that but when I talk to him I give him stick an all, shout at him an all but he just laughs, he thinks its funny.

6.3.7 Similarly, simply being at a party where there are Chinese people present would seem to be enough to justify bantering with them as Keith (18) explains when asked whether he's seen minority ethnic people being called names:

*Keith:* Aye. A few, few times, a couple of parties like. Chinese, a couple of Chinese girls like I know [...] they get a bit of slaggin' like but they used to take it as a joke. They just give as good as they got like.

*Interviewer:* So what do you mean as a bit of slaggin? What does that mean? [...]

*Keith:* Well were goin back a while like but they were, somebody was takin the hand out of them anyway. Takin a hand out of their country like but

they were just takin it as, they were sort of slaggin us off and whatever.

*Interviewer:* So, on those occasions was it meant as a joke?

*Keith:* Aye. Like all of the ones I run around with a wile for a slaggin's like, but its only for a bit of craic like, for a laugh.

6.3.8 Moreover, this type of 'harmless banter' can occur when groups of young men decide to 'slag' Chinese people simply passing by them in the street. This is evident in the following discussion among Keith (18), Rob (18), Connor (19) and Dave (18). This is particularly interesting as they begin by reinforcing the 'rule' that banter should only occur between people who know each other and yet go onto excuse the slagging of strangers in the street:

*Interviewer:* What I'm getting from you is that you say things in slagging in a group of friends, would you ever say the same type of things to someone you didn't know?

*Keith:* Naw.

*Rob:* No

*Keith:* Not if I didn't know them, naw. I would need to know them first.

*Rob:* Do you know why, that's quite obvious because he didn't know that person, you don't know who the hell that person is, you don't know who you're like you're dealing with

*Keith:* How they'll respond to it. I've a couple of friends as well that they like a slaggin a bit of craic but they know when to stop you know because they know when they'll [*the person they are slagging off*] loose their head like.

*Interviewer:* So is it different then, friends and strangers are different?

*Keith:* Oh aye, of course

*Interviewer:* So what about in the street. Have you ever been with a crowd of people and there's someone form a different group, a minority group whether it be a Chinese person, a Traveller whatever walking past and they've got a slaggin?

[...]

*Connor:* Aye [...] Sometimes, aye [...] Just a couple of times it happened.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Was it friends of yours that would have said something?

*Connor:* Aye some, a couple would have said somethin'.

[...]

*Gerry:* You see students you know where I live walkin across and some of them will be Chinese. You'd see people from China come over here to do Uni and stuff like that there. Some, some lads standin' at the corner of the street start shoutin' you know Chinkie or whatever gook, whatever like that there. But they wouldn't take any offence at it they just walk on down start laughin.

*Interviewer:* But [...] these are strangers

*Gerry:* Aye

*Interviewer:* How do you know they don't take offence at it?

*Gerry:* Well if they take offence at it they would come over

## **ii. Fighting and harassment**

6.3.9 As mentioned earlier, alongside routine banter, fighting is also a key factor that tends to be used by the young men to display their masculinity and thus maintain their status among their peers. As with the younger boys, while fighting would seem to be a general aspect of the young men's behaviour, it can also adopt a racial focus by way of targeting minority ethnic people (especially minority ethnic young men). This is illustrated by an incident witnessed by Sammy:

*Sammy:* I seen a fella getting attacked one time.

*Interviewer:* Who got attacked?

*Sammy:* A Pakistani fella

*Interviewer:* He was attacked by someone else?

*Sammy:* Yip.

*Interviewer:* Who was he attacked by?

*Sammy:* Ahm ... a group of fellas.

*Interviewer:* And where were they from?

*Sammy:* Where from?

*Interviewer:* Ah hum, where were they from? ... Were they from here, locally?

*Sammy:* Yea

*Interviewer:* And what happened?

*Sammy:* They were clippin the head of him.

*Interviewer:* Why?

*Sammy:* Because they didn't like him. Coz they know he come out of [...] and then they didn't like him.

*Interviewer:* Was it on the street?

*Sammy:* Up that area, up round the city centre. You know, outside the Club. They were all thumpin the head off him.

*Interviewer:* And was he hurt?

*Sammy:* The bouncers come out and split it up. But aye he was hurt all right so he was ... young.

- 6.3.10 In addition, as mentioned earlier, a significant number of incidents would seem to occur at Chinese restaurants and takeaways at the end of the evening. This is illustrated in the following incident recalled by Chris (22) in a Chinese takeaway where he used to work:

A wee blatter comes in all the time. He threw up on the, the counter and it went over the counter onto the desk. And Daniel the fella you call him, the Chinese fella, he said to him "do you mind, do you mind doin this here look I mean could you sit over there or stand outside until your foods ready". And he turned round and started all this slabberin and getting on. I mean you get that with everybody I'm sure. Say you got people like us movin over to Chinese, China to live and startin up a chippy over there your bound to get all the Chinese fellas commin in startin their slabberin and stuff as well like you get it everywhere.

- 6.3.11 It is interesting to note how Chris attempts to justify this type of racist abuse. More generally, and as with the younger boys, these young men would tend to justify the harassment of minority ethnic people in terms of the threat that they present. This is illustrated in the following discussion with Sammy and Ray (22). Here it can be seen that minority ethnic people are seen as a threat in terms of Sammy's perception that they could be saying things about him in their own language:

*Sammy:* They make a fool out of you too.

[...]

*Sammy:* Coz they could come in and make fun of him and what do you want in Chinese and laugh you don't know what they're sayin.

*Interviewer:* So what happens then?

*Sammy:* You get a wee bit, you get a wee bit paranoid and pull them you know what I mean. That's the only thing you can do, pull them else they'll make a fool out of you.

*Interviewer:* So when you pull them what do you mean by that?

*Ray (22):* Ask him what he's sayin

*Sammy:* Here boy, you slabberin there? Your big mouth, somethin like that.

*Interviewer:* So have you, have you ever called anyone names?

*Sammy:* No.

*Interviewer:* Never?

*Sammy:* I don't do things like that. [*group members laugh as they know Sammy is being sarcastic due to his tone of voice and hand gestures*].

*Interviewer:* Have you ever seen your friends do it?

*Sammy:* Aye.

*Interviewer:* In what situation?

*Sammy:* Just givin them stick in general.

*Interviewer:* Giving who stick?

*Sammy:* Pakistanis

*Interviewer:* Right. Tell me a bit about it

*Sammy:* Up in [the city centre]. Just slabber til them with drink in them. Right you, you black somethin or get that ... kebab over here an all things like that.

*Interviewer:* So it would be in a takeaway then

*Sammy:* Aye

*Interviewer:* And would it be ... can you tell me a bit about the situation, would it be after a night out?

*Sammy:* Aye, after a night out [...] See that Chinese man up there, Daniel, he's alright like. A couple people went in pulled his [menu] board off the wall, the menu board and started givin him stick. He let them stand there give an order. Ran out the back phoned the triads, two car loads of them come up/

*Chris:* /phoned the triads/

*Sammy:* /I'm tellin ye two car loads. You know big Keith, stike, stike I'll tell ye. It was him told me about it. They all came up, a couple of car loads of them they were there in about 5 minutes and the 3 fellas got a complete clippin.

*Interviewer:* Are there triads in Belfast then?

*Sammy:* Aye there's loads of them.

*Seamus:* There's triads in Belfast alright.

*Sammy:* Sure look at the one up there, the Chinese up there [...] they have a big gamblin casino of their own underground one so they have. They're all out gamblin. Yer man gambled some money he didn't have. They give hom a couple of weeks to pay it, he never paid it. See when he went into the Chinese they came down through the roof and then stabbed him, triads so they did. That was Chinese boy.

- 6.3.12 The above discussion is interesting as there are a number of parallels between the beliefs of the young men and also those of the younger boys discussed earlier. As can be seen, both tend to justify their harassment in terms of portraying minority ethnic people as a threat (in this case in terms of the 'slagging' they are perceived to be doing in their own language).
- 6.3.13 Moreover, both the boys and the young men also tend to construct and use a stereotypical image of Chinese people as different and strange. The use of the Triad images above can be compared, for example, with the boys describing how a Chinese man on their estate would chase them with a meat cleaver.
- 6.2.14 Finally, and in addition, the young men also felt that there was a tendency for minority ethnic people to be invading their territory. However, for the young men, 'territory' was not so much defined in terms of local area but in terms of their jobs and livelihood. This is illustrated in the following discussion:

*Interviewer:* Can I ask you all how you feel about people from minority ethnic groups [...] living in Northern Ireland?

*Ray:* Wouldn't bother me

*Seamus:* Free country

*Sammy:* Why should it bother us. Wouldn't bother me. Keep themselves to themselves

*Interviewer:* Anybody feel any differently to that?

*Chris:* No

*Interviewer:* No? ... Do you think that those groups should be allowed to move and settle here?

*Chris:* Small groups yes but not /

*Sammy:* Not families

*Seamus:* Not

*Sammy:* Not thousands of them.

*Seamus:* Commin over stealin our jobs

*Chris:* Exactly

*Ray:* Only a couple of them like

## 6.3 Conclusions

- 6.3.1 This chapter has explored some of the key elements of the sub-cultures of boys and young men that can help to explain why these particular social groups are more likely to engage in direct racist harassment. In examining both groups, it has been argued that racist harassment is not

something additional to their social worlds but is, rather, simply a logical extension of their general attitudes and behaviour.

- 6.3.2 The types of masculine competitiveness, bantering and aggressiveness so common among the boys and young men would appear to provide the main dynamics through which incidents of racist harassment occur. While minority ethnic people are certainly not the only (or even the main) targets of such behaviour, they do tend to provide a discrete focus for such given the more general levels of racial prejudice that exists within society and, more specifically, among the boys and young men in this study.
- 6.3.3 Overall, therefore, it would seem that two key processes are at work in the creation of racist harassment by these boys and young men. The first is their general masculine sub-cultures that tend to encourage aggressive and intimidatory behaviour more generally. The second is the general levels of racial prejudice held within society that tends to encourage the boys and young men to target their aggression and intimidation towards minority ethnic people.
- 6.3.4 The key implication of this is that strategies aimed at reducing racist harassment among boys and young men need to be similarly two-pronged. First, they need to increase their racial awareness and help encourage them to understand and respect cultural diversity and difference. Second, and crucially, they need to address the broader and more negative elements of the general masculine sub-cultures that give rise to racist harassment.
- 6.3.5 In other words, attempting to reduce the racial prejudice among boys and young men will not, in itself, be particularly successful in reducing their tendency to engage in racist harassment. Rather, a broader community development strategy is needed that can successfully engage them as *boys and young men* and encourage them to reflect upon and change the more negative aspects of their general masculine behaviour.

## **7. Indirect Racist Harassment: The Perspectives of White, Settled People**

### **7.1 Introduction**

7.1.1 This chapter offers a brief exploration of some of the factors underlying indirect racist harassment. More specifically, it offers an analysis of the perspectives of white settled people towards race relations and minority ethnic people. It will be shown how some attitudes, while clearly well-meaning, tend to lead to behaviour that can be defined as indirect racist harassment.

7.1.2 The chapter begins with a focus on two of the four forms of indirect racist harassment discussed in Chapter Three: racist bantering and racial distancing. After exploring the attitudes and behaviour that contribute to these, the chapter examines some of the broader beliefs that tend to underpin these. As will be argued, while they may differ in degree, they tend to follow the same broad patterns as the beliefs held by the boys and young men discussed in the previous chapter.

### **7.2 Racist bantering**

7.2.1 The issue of racist bantering has already been discussed at length in the previous chapter. While it was defined as a form of indirect racist harassment in Chapter Three, it was also argued that it was often very difficult to distinguish between 'friendly' racist banter and direct racist abuse. This was a point also clearly demonstrated in the last chapter. Given its often direct nature and also the fact that it tends to be particularly prominent among young men, the issue was discussed in the previous chapter when considering direct racist harassment.

7.2.2 For older people, and especially older women, they tend to be less likely to find themselves in social situations where racist bantering is likely to occur. As the following discussion between Anna (36), Brenda (56) and Alice (57) illustrates:

*Interviewer:* Can you tell me if you have personally seen any incidences of name-calling or arguments with a person from a minority ethnic community?

*Alice:* Not here, no.

*Brenda:* No.

*Interviewer:* Perhaps in a pub or a restaurant or a takeaway.

*Alice:* No, I've never come across it.

[...]

*Interviewer:* Not even in a joking situation?

*Anna:* You would have in the Chinese, drunk ones.

You know the way you'd be in at night and someone's getting their Chinese. You know, maybe young people drinking and they couldn't hold their drink they come into the Chinese and maybe have a few choice words to say.

*Alice:* No.

*Anna:* But everybody just ignored them anyway.

7.2.3 Interestingly, however, even though older people would be less likely to engage in such behaviour and would also, generally, find it distasteful, they would sometimes tend to excuse it in similar ways that the young men did in the previous chapter. This can be seen, for example, in the following discussion with Bill (39), Philip (34) and Peter (46):

*Bill:* I feel sorry if I'm in late at night in the Chinese and a crowd of drunk people come in and start callin them names or whatever else or whatever else happens on occasions. You know I don't think that that is fair. [...]

*Interviewer:* Have you witnessed instances of name-calling?

*Bill:* Yes and other types of abuse in restaurants and things like that just from people that have no manners. [...] It was late one night in the Chinese in Enniskillen I'd called in for ... nice fried pork fillet with gravy chip, good thing for you're cholesterol level and about 4 or 5 boys about 19 or 20 [years of age] came in and started to give abuse to the lady that was behind the counter.

And then she went and got her husband and they [*the boys*] stated f'in' and blindin' at him as well and all the rest of it. [They] ordered the food and wouldn't pay her the money. Eventually it ended up that the local constabulary came in and policed the thing. They couldn't do actually very much with them but you sort of eased them out of the

situation. But all the vitriol and all the badness and all the name-calling and everything just came out on them.

Now ... I have to say that they used those names but Peter has pointed out about being portly, I wouldn't be slim in any way either and can be called fat - "wee fat bastard" - as much as he can and whatever. And if I'd been behind the counter in that occasion and I was serving the food out or whatever, whatever badness or whatever names that I would have been called would have been called as well. It just happened that these people were part of the Chinese community. If it had of been Indians they would have had that. It's just this thing of labelling.

[...]

*Peter:* Its, its understandable some people sometimes it all depends what mood you're in too. The older Chinese could have been in bad humour that night to sure/

*Philip:* /At the end of the day everybody calls it a Chinkie like. Like it's the Chinkies. Like you're not going to the Chinese, doesn't always go to the Chinese, it's the Chinkie.

*Interviewer:* If you were in having your food would you ever consider calling the person, from whatever community, behind the counter names?

*Bill:* No

*Peter:* Not if they tell ya to come in twenty minutes for your meal and you're sitting waitin a bloody hour waitin to life it [*group members laugh and Gordon imitates a Chinese person speaking in their native language*]. [...] They have a part to play in it too. [*group members laugh*]

*Philip:* They should learn to read how to time.

*Peter:* They have a part, they can't read the clock the lot of them.

*Bill:* An oriental clock.

- 7.2.4 More generally, while older people would be less likely to engage in this type of direct racist harassment, they would still be likely to engage in other forms of racist bantering, possibly with family and friends. An example of this is given by Jemma (24) in relation to her grandparents:

*Jemma:* People do those things not to people but if they're talking about like my grandparents he is extremely [racist] and he tries, I think he does it to

wind me up occasionally, like black you know nigger [...] And I say well they're people and would you not want to be accepted of you went to their country?

*Interviewer:* And what's his response to things like that?

*Jemma:* I wouldn't go there.

- 7.2.5 Overall, therefore, it is important to stress that while the more direct forms of racist banter tend to be more likely to occur among the young, and particularly young men, it is not confined to this group. As shown above, not only do some of those who are a little older tend to justify racist bantering and abuse, they are also capable of engaging in it themselves.

### **7.3 Racial distancing**

- 7.3.1 It will be remembered from Chapter Three that racial distancing is a process whereby minority ethnic people feel that those around them cannot see past their racial identity. It is a process that is often subconscious and/or unintentional and yet makes minority ethnic people feel exposed, vulnerable and therefore intimidated. An example of such a process is described below by Peter (46) who lives in a rural community:

There would have been a coloured Christian worker come, ah, to the church. An he, he ... it took a while for the community to see him. He was very very black and he would have been walkin about the town there. He would have found it lonely enough at the very start, very lonely at the start. People were very wary of him you know. [...] Kept out of his road [*laughs*].

- 7.3.2 As can be seen, much of this type of behaviour may not have been intentional but rather born of a sense of awkwardness on the part of those involved. Eitherway, the net result is often to make those subject to it feel particularly visible and vulnerable. Such a process is also evident in the following incident discussed by Alice (57), Deirdre (47) and Anna (36). In this case, what would appear to be their genuine interest in the Indian wedding that was taking place may have also contributed to a behaviour that would have added to the vulnerability of those involved in the event:

*Alice:* Funny when you talked about the wedding we had one at the Manor House once too. It was quite a...

*Deirdre:* A large function.

*Alice:* It took over the whole place, it was really fascinating. And they even had to have a room for their prayers.

*Anna:* That's right.

*Alice:* I mean were sort of scratching our heads. I mean my two daughters were there and they were just fascinated.

*Anna:* Yeah, something different.

7.3.3 More generally, a lack of contact with and understanding of minority ethnic people can lead to a general sense of awkwardness when in their presence. This is illustrated in the following discussion with Brenda (56), Anna (36), Alice (57) and Bernadette (58). As with the other examples above, it is difficult to deduce with any certainty how such behaviour may have been interpreted by the Indian shop owners. However, it does serve as an example of how a general sense of awkwardness may lead to a sense of guarded behaviour directed towards the Indian shop owners that, again, may make them feel vulnerable:

*Brenda:* I think that when you go into [Indian] clothes shops here locally they can be quite offended if you don't buy anything. And they will actually show it – maybe I'm wrong now.

*Anna:* I know what you mean, aye, they sort of keep and eye on you sort of thing.

*Brenda:* Aye, that's right.

*Anna:* I'm not sure for why.

*Brenda:* You know they sort of, you think they are quite pushy. And they would maybe be offended if you didn't walk out and not buy something. I've noticed that. I think that would put you off, well put me off...

*Anna:* It does.

*Brenda:* From going back in again.

*Deidre:* I think it is probably the way they are, the way they stand. I don't think they mean it really to control, I think they are sort of that service. This is what I learned from my friend, so many things that would be really strange for us but it is just their nature to do this and then we find it strange. I know what you mean. I went into a shop to look for something and they were ever so helpful to get me all things. They were trying to help but at the

time I was sort of saying politely I don't want to spend your time. You know the way you would like to be on your own but there is somebody and you know that he means well.

*Alice:* Yeah.

*Bernadette:* Probably, it's an impression that comes over a wee bit. I don't know that's my only, my feelings about it.

- 7.3.4 Overall, it would appear that these examples of social distancing tend to result from a lack of understanding of minority ethnic people and thus either a sense of awkwardness and/or fascination when in their presence. While not intentional, the effects of the behaviour that follows is often to make minority ethnic people feel exposed and vulnerable. As argued previously, within the broader context of their experiences of direct racist harassment that tends to occur randomly and is unprovoked, these processes of racial distancing can only act to contribute further to minority ethnic people's feelings of exclusion and victimisation.

## **7.4 Notions of territory in the broader racial attitudes of white, settled people**

- 7.4.1 Finally, it is useful to briefly outline some of the broader beliefs held among those discussed above regarding race relations and minority ethnic people. It has already been noted that older people's attitudes towards the racist harassment of Chinese people in takeaways and restaurants are sometimes not dissimilar to those held by younger males, especially in relation to justifying such forms of harassment.
- 7.4.2 However, such similarities do not stop there. More generally, there is a sense of territory that is shared by many of those interviewed and which tends to inform their broader attitudes towards minority ethnic people in similar ways to those found among the boys and young men in the previous chapter.
- 7.4.3 As with the boys and young men, while the notion of territory may change (from a focus on the local area for the boys to a focus on jobs for the young men) there is still an underlying sense that minority ethnic people potentially pose a threat to that territory. This is illustrated, for example, by a quote from Peter (46) whose concern over minority ethnic people taking over entire streets is not

dissimilar to the younger boys' attitudes discussed in the previous chapter:

I think a lot of its got to do with the coloured person themselves, if they're prepared to adapt and live the way of life we live [...] I think anybody [can] come into this community and live the best if there didn't come a hundred of them and take over, as you say Bill, and take over a street or somethin'. That could be difficult you know.

7.4.4 If the 'territory' to be defended for the younger boys tended to be their local neighbourhood and for the young men it tended to be jobs, then for the older people interviewed, it tended to be their way of life. The need for minority ethnic people to 'fit in' with their ways of living is clearly illustrated in the following discussion about Travellers. The negative attitudes that these men had towards Travellers tended to reflect a general and relatively consistent attitude held by most of those interviewed regardless of age or gender:

*Philip:* I think you would find if you were goin' into ethnic groups that if anybody is goin to be nailed for trouble its gonna be the Travellin' community.

*Interviewer:* You would feel that way?

*Philip:* I don't have to feel that way ... they have, there's a strong element within that Travellin' community who ... would basically steel the eye out of your head and come back for what they could take afterwards.

*Interviewer:* So is this/

*Philip:* they don't endear themselves.

*Bill:* That's right.

*Philip:* In no way do they endear us towards them [...]

*Bill:* Well if four of them came in now [*to the bar where the interview is taking place*] they probably wouldn't get served at the bar.

*Philip:* No

[...]

*Peter:* I have to be perfectly honest. If I found out they were Travellers I'd move them on

*Interviewer:* You would move them on?

*Peter:* Ah ha

*Interviewer:* In what way?

*Peter:* Because , I , I. Number one I don't think I would put myself in that position ... I think because of their way of life and they put out their tins and they wash on the street and they leave

litter and they lets be honest that's what they do. And they peddle their wares on the side of the road and stuff. To be quite honest I wouldn't want that on my doorstep and I'm bein' dead honest because they wouldn't conform to my way of life.

*Interviewer:* So do you feel that they should conform to your way of life?

*Philip:* No but they don't have to be as dirty for a start. I mean, and that's not stereotypin' them, they are, some of the places when they leave somewhere that is an absolute tip. It doesn't hurt to buy a few bin bags. The council even leave them bin bags on the land. They leave them with bin bags and it wouldn't hurt to put the rubbish in the bin bags instead of firin' it all round. And when the place gets so dirty they can't throw anythin' else on the ground they hook up their caravan and they move on.

*Interviewer:* Do you think it's a valid way of life?

Gordon If that's the way they want to live fair and be it. But its not the way I want to live.

*Philip:* No and I don't want it on my door-step either.

7.4.5 This quote is interesting because it offers some insight into the contradiction found in our first report (Connolly and Keenan 2000a) between the generally positive attitudes of people in Northern Ireland towards general principles concerning racial equality and diversity and their more specific, negative attitudes towards particular minority ethnic communities.

7.4.6 Here, it can be seen that while these men tend to support Travellers' rights to a nomadic lifestyle, in reality their attitudes are much more negative. Not only do they not feel that Travellers should have freedom of movement ('I don't want them on my doorstep') but also they tend to be extremely critical and judgmental of what they *perceive* to be their way of life.

7.4.7 Ultimately, the message from these interviews is that minority ethnic people are welcome but only in very small numbers and if they completely blend in - in other words, if they become 'trainee whites'. This is illustrated in the final discussion held among Bill, Philip and Peter:

*Peter:* Wait to I tell you [...] it's long, the days long gone about the black man not being accepted. The educated, clean, well dressed black man [...] as long as he's professional you see. It's the oul

black man come and goes got a big belly and white trousers, selling coloured knickers [...] he's not wanted. But your see black man with his Merc and his consultant in the hospital he's, he's very acceptable. But the old black man now with the big turban he's not wanted.

[...]

*Philip:* Not really a professional or in business but I mean if somebody comes down there [...] you got a black man comes down here and moves into one, into the estate there and he's lyin about on the dole and all the children they're crawlin about all over the place [...] he definitely wouldn't be well liked. Now if you get a fella who comes down here and he drivin a digger or workin for George Dean or somethin, he goes to work in the mornin, he comes home in the evenin, his wife and the family and basically they aren't annoying anybody else, they will be accepted. But if there not goin the normal way they won't be accepted. The same as if it was somebody else. You know from our own community they still wouldn't be accepted.

*Interviewer:* So is it like contributing to the community?

*Peter:* That's a good way of puttin it.

*Philip:* But not

*Peter:* An asset to the community.

*Philip:* Doesn't even have to be an asset to the community. It just has to be part of the community. You don't have to be doin anythin spectacular, sayin oh this is a brilliant man [...] just has to go to work, come home and do the same thing

*Bill:* Not detracting from the community

*Philip:* Yea, is a better way to put it.

## 7.5 Conclusions

7.5.1 This chapter has explored some of the attitudes and perceptions of white, settled people. It has attempted to show some of the ways in which these tend to encourage behaviour that can be counted as indirect racist harassment. Especially in terms of the incidents of racial distancing that have been discussed above, much of this behaviour would appear to stem simply from a lack of understanding and/or a well-meaning attitude. Nevertheless, the effects tend to be to make minority ethnic people feel vulnerable and exposed and thus contribute further to their sense of victimisation.

- 7.5.2 Moreover, it is also interesting to note that some of the key broader attitudes that these older interviewees had towards 'race' actually shared a very similar agenda to those of the boys and young men discussed in the previous chapter. At its most basic level, this was an agenda based upon some notion of territory and a feeling that minority ethnic people represent a threat to that territory.
- 7.5.3 What we want to argue from this is that while the forms that direct and indirect racist harassment take may be very different, they do tend to be based upon a very similar core set of attitudes and beliefs. In other words, the attitudes that tend to inform the actions of those who verbally or physically attack minority ethnic people are actually little different in principle from those that inform the more subconscious and subtle processes of racial distancing such as staring at and/or avoiding minority ethnic people in public.
- 7.5.4 While many of these more indirect forms of racist harassment cannot be practically legislated against and/or dealt with formally through the introduction of policies and procedures, their cumulative effects on the lives and well-being of minority ethnic people need to be recognised.
- 7.5.5 In this sense, in addition to a range of measures to attempt to deal with direct racist harassment - that will include the introduction of institutional policies and procedures alongside educational programmes and training - measures need to be taken to begin to address these more indirect forms. Most practically, this should include a general awareness-raising campaign and the promotion of respect and understanding for racial and cultural diversity. These are matters that will be addressed more explicitly in the following, final chapter.

## 8. Summary and Recommendations

### 8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 This final chapter provides a summary of the key findings of the present research. It then proceeds to assess the implications of these for policy and practice and makes a series of recommendations.

### 8.2 Summary of main findings

- 8.2.1 The main findings to arise from the present study are:

#### ***Racist harassment in Northern Ireland***

- Racist harassment is a significant part of life for many minority ethnic people living in Northern Ireland. Previous research has shown that a little under a half of those interviewed (44%) had experienced verbal abuse while just under a third (29%) had experienced criminal damage to their property and one in ten have actually been physically assaulted because of their racial identity.
- This report uses the definition of racist harassment proposed in the recent EU Race Directive that defines it as unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin that takes place with the purpose *or effect* of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- This definition is purposely used to stress the many different forms that racist harassment can take, from overt and intentional acts of abuse to more subconscious and unintentional actions. With this in mind, a distinction is made between direct and indirect forms of racist harassment.

#### ***Direct racist harassment***

- The report identified three principle forms of direct racist harassment experienced by minority ethnic people in the region: verbal abuse, criminal damage to property and physical abuse. What unites these differing activities is the motivation on the part of those involved to purposely violate the dignity of an individual because

of their racial identity by acting in a hostile and intimidating manner towards them.

- The research has shown that such incidents are essentially unprovoked and random. They can occur at any time and in any specific context. Minority ethnic interviewees, for example, have reported being verbally and/or physically harassed while walking down the street, while shopping in the city centre, while at train stations, on the bus and while driving.
- In relation to racist name-calling, a further distinction is made between 'hot' and 'cold' verbal abuse. Cold name-calling reflects a 'cold' and calculated desire on the part of the perpetrator to intentionally harass someone because of their racial identity. In contrast, 'hot' name-calling is more likely to occur at the 'heat of the moment', often when the perpetrator feels challenged and/or vulnerable themselves.
- Such a distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' racist name-calling is not meant to imply that one is any less serious than the other in terms of its impact upon minority ethnic people. Rather, it is to illustrate the fact that people will tend to engage in racist abuse for different reasons. In the case of 'hot' name-calling, the use of racist abuse may not therefore represent an initial intention to harass others.
- Overall, the fact that direct racist harassment can occur anywhere and at any time can only result in a tendency for minority ethnic people to generally feel vulnerable and victimised within this society. That such forms of harassment can occur in extremely public and open places, largely without any intervention from those around, tends to underline minority ethnic people's sense of social exclusion and their position as second-class citizens.

***Indirect racist harassment***

- Within this overall context of relatively routine incidents of direct racist harassment, the report argues that there is a need to recognise the existence of an additional set of processes that tend to feed into and reinforce the violation of dignity experienced by many minority ethnic people. However, as opposed to direct racist harassment, these processes are distinguished by the fact that they are more likely to be subconscious and

covert and where the racial motivation is either in doubt or completely unintentional.

- It is argued in the report that such forms of indirect racist harassment as it has been termed can take on a variety of different forms. Four particular forms are highlighted in the report as an illustration. The first has been termed *racial distancing* and represents those social occasions where minority ethnic people feel that those around them cannot see past their racial identity. It can often be reflected in prolonged stares, silences and/or avoiding behaviours. While such actions may well simply reflect an awkwardness and/or curiosity on the part of those involved, its effects are nevertheless to contribute to an intimidating and at times hostile environment for many minority ethnic people.
- A second form of indirect racist harassment is *benign ignorance*. This can often occur between white, settled people and their minority ethnic colleagues and/or acquaintances. It represents often well-meaning comments that are intended to encourage conversation but which, often unintentionally, betray an ignorance about the culture and/or lifestyle of the minority ethnic person involved. Again, such actions tend to make minority ethnic people feel degraded and/or humiliated in terms of their racial identity.
- A third form of indirect racist harassment identified in the report is *racist bantering*. Many of the white, settled interviewees were at pains to stress the 'friendly' nature of banter (or 'slagging' as it is also called) and how its use tends to reflect an acceptance of the person subject to it. However, the report shows that there is in reality very little distinction between 'friendly' racial banter and racist abuse.
- For the most part, minority ethnic people do not tend to perceive such racial jokes and 'slagging' as good humoured. Moreover, the data suggest that the underlying motivations of those involved is also highly questionable. The report argues for the need for racist bantering to be regarded as unacceptable and as a special form of bantering that is ultimately offensive and that should not be tolerated.
- The final form of indirect racist harassment highlighted in the report has been termed *deracialised harassment*. It represents those instances where certain minority

ethnic groups feel that they are disproportionately targeted for certain anti-social and/or criminal activity even though the motivations of those involved are unclear and/or where 'race' is not explicitly mentioned. Examples of such could include the perception among the Chinese community that they are more likely to be the victims of robberies because they are regarded as a 'soft target'.

- Overall, while a number of different examples of indirect racist harassment have been outlined and discussed in the report, what tends to unite them is the way they can contribute to the violation of minority ethnic people's dignity through creating and/or reinforcing an environment that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and/or offensive.
- While some of the examples discussed may not appear to be as serious and/or important compared to the more direct incidents of verbal and physical assault, it is their *cumulative* and long-term effects that are important. Taken together, the many different forms of direct and indirect racist harassment combine in a powerful way to underwrite minority ethnic people's sense of vulnerability and victimisation and thus ensure that many live a life of apprehension, if not fear.

### ***Minority ethnic people's responses to racist harassment***

- In exploring some of the consequences of racist harassment on the lives of minority ethnic people, the report identifies four core responses that they tend to adopt. The first is *toleration* whereby minority ethnic people attempt to either ignore or downplay the significance of the harassment they experience.
- A second, and much less common response is *retaliation*. In this case, minority ethnic people would attempt to challenge those who have verbally or physically abused them. As some of the incidents discussed in the report show, however, this is often a dangerous strategy and one that can lead to more serious physical assault.
- A third response is to *report the incident* either to the school (in the case of children in education) or to the police. However, the data suggest that the responses received by those who have chosen to report the

incident can vary enormously, particularly in relation to individual schools, indicating a lack of consistency of practice.

- Finally, a common response to racist harassment among minority ethnic people is *avoidance* - the tendency to try to avoid it altogether. This often means avoiding walking through certain areas or visiting certain social settings. While an understandable response, it is one that is of concern given the fact that it may lead to minority ethnic people feeling unable to access a range of facilities and services for fear of harassment.

### ***The perpetrators of racist harassment***

- The report also examines the evidence to ascertain the characteristics of those most likely to engage in racist harassment. In relation to direct racist harassment, the report identified two key social groupings: groups of children, especially boys, aged 10-17; and groups of young males aged 18-35. While both are likely to engage in verbal abuse, the former is more likely to harass minority ethnic people in the street and throw objects at them and the latter is more likely to commit more serious acts of physical assault.
- In terms of indirect racist harassment, the characteristics of the perpetrators would appear to be less easily identifiable and more likely to occur in any social grouping. However, within this, there does seem to be a tendency for younger people to be involved in racist bantering and older people in the process of racial distancing.
- Overall, however, the report stresses that these are only broad tendencies that have been identified. The data suggests that any form of racist harassment – whether direct or indirect – can take place within any social grouping.

### ***Racist harassment and male sub-cultures***

- The report also examines some of the key elements of the sub-cultures of boys and young men that can help to explain why these particular groups are more likely to perpetrate acts of direct racist harassment. It is argued that racist harassment is not something additional to

their social worlds but is, rather, simply a logical extension of their general attitudes and behaviour.

- More specifically, it would seem that boys and young men tend to draw upon 'race' as a resource to use within their general competitive, bantering and aggressive behaviour. In other words, racial prejudice provides the context within which boys and young men tend to target their aggressive and intimidatory behaviour at minority ethnic people.

### ***Attitudes underpinning indirect racist harassment***

- It is much more difficult to draw any firm conclusions regarding the attitudes that tend to underpin indirect racist harassment given its diverse nature and forms. However, it would certainly seem that in terms of racial distancing, much of this behaviour would appear to stem simply from a lack of understanding and/or a well-meaning attitude.
- However, it is interesting to note that some of the key attitudes that underpin the more subtle and indirect forms of racist harassment are very similar to those underpinning the direct racist harassment perpetrated predominantly by boys and young men. At its most basic level, this was found to be based upon some notion of territory and a feeling that minority ethnic people represented a threat to that territory.
- It is suggested in the report that while the forms that direct and indirect racist harassment take may be very different, they do therefore tend to be based upon a very similar core set of attitudes and beliefs. In other words, the attitudes that influence the actions of those who verbally or physically attack minority ethnic people are actually little different in principle from those that influence the more subconscious and subtle processes of racial distancing such as staring at and/or avoiding minority ethnic people in public.

## **8.3 Discussion and recommendations**

- 8.3.1 In considering the implications of these findings for developing strategies to address racist harassment, four key themes can be identified and these will be considered in turn.

**Direct Racist Harassment**

8.3.2 First, there is a need to develop clear and comprehensive policies and strategies aimed at addressing direct forms of racist harassment. Given that direct harassment can occur at any time and in any context, there is a responsibility on all organisations and institutions to take this matter seriously. With this in mind, the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 1:** All employers and service providers, whether public or private, should develop a clear and explicit strategy for dealing with incidents of racist harassment that occur within their areas of responsibility.

Such a strategy should:

- publicise the policy, making it clear to all concerned what racist harassment is and thus what is regarded as unacceptable behaviour;
- set out the consequences for those who engage in such behaviour in relation to disciplinary procedures and/or the application of sanctions where applicable; and
- include effective mechanisms for offering guidance and support to those subject to racist harassment.

In the absence of a broader guide on racist harassment (see Recommendation 2 below), organisations and institutions are advised to consult the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland's *Racial Harassment at Work: What Employers Can Do About It* (2000) to help inform the overall development of such strategies.

8.3.3 More generally, it is recognised that organisations and institutions need guidance in developing effective strategies to combat racist harassment. As mentioned above, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland have already produced a very useful guide for employers regarding addressing harassment in the workplace (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2000).

8.3.4 It would be extremely helpful if the Commission could build upon this to produce a more comprehensive guide to addressing racist harassment that could be of use to a range of organisations and institutions including statutory

and voluntary agencies and social clubs and community groups. As such it is recommended that:

**Recommendation 2:** The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland should produce a general guide on combating racist harassment of relevance to a wide range of organisations, institutions and agencies within both the statutory and voluntary sectors as well as social and community groups. The guide should:

- Offer a clear outline of what racist harassment is and the serious effects it has on the lives of minority ethnic people;
- Set out general principles that should guide the development of policies to combat racist harassment; and
- Identify a number of case studies, representing differing organisations and settings, and provide more practical and specific guidance on how racist harassment might best be addressed in relation to these.

8.3.5 Finally, there is a need to ensure that those people who are subject to racist harassment are given appropriate levels of guidance and support. It is recognised, however, that many of those who have been harassed do not feel sufficiently confident or able to make a formal complaint either within their organisation and/or by approaching official bodies such as the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

8.3.6 It would seem, therefore, that many people tend to simply suffer in silence. Of those who do seek advice and support, they tend to approach one of a number of minority ethnic voluntary organisations that currently exist. With extremely limited resources, however, this tends to place a significant strain on such organisations and limits the extent of the support they can practically give.

8.3.7 For the purposes of the present report it is worth drawing attention to two potential sources of funding that exist for organisations wishing to support those who have been racially harassed. The first is the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland which has the function of providing advice and assistance to those who suffer from racist harassment in employment, education and the provision of services. The second is the Office of the First Minister and Deputy

First Minister (OFMDFM) that has a scheme that can fund organisations promoting 'good relations'.

- 8.3.8 It is important that both sources of funding are more strategically used to help maintain and support minority ethnic organisations in their support of victims of racist harassment. With this in mind, the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 3:** The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), in conjunction with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland should consult with minority ethnic organisations to identify what needs currently exist in relation to offering confidential and independent advice and support to those who are subject to racist harassment.

The OFMDFM and the Equality Commission should ensure that they develop a co-ordinated and strategic approach to providing sufficient core funding to help support and develop existing services offered through minority ethnic organisations to meet the need that exists.

Alongside supporting direct services, funding should also be made available to enable such organisations to play a more strategic role in effectively monitoring developments and making proposals, where necessary, regarding further changes and improvements to the services that do exist.

### ***Indirect Racist Harassment***

- 8.3.9 Second, given the often implicit and unintentional nature of indirect racist harassment, it is obviously a more difficult issue to effectively identify and address. However, it is clear that certain forms - such as the incidents of racial distancing and of benign ignorance discussed in the report - do tend to be fed by a lack of understanding and the prejudices that often arise from this.
- 8.3.10 Education, therefore, must be at the heart of any strategy aimed at addressing these particular forms of harassment. Most obviously, schools can play a significant part in helping to increase understanding and encourage respect for racial and ethnic diversity. The CCEA (Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) has already developed some multicultural resources to this effect in the form of a CD-ROM for use in primary schools and is currently working on material for Key Stage 3.

- 8.3.11 Moreover, the CCEA is currently in the middle of a fundamental review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. It is therefore an opportune time for a more strategic consideration of the role that schools can play in addressing racism and encouraging understanding of and respect for cultural diversity within society. With this in mind, the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 4:** An intercultural dimension should run throughout the Northern Ireland Curriculum to increase pupils' awareness of racism and to develop their understanding of and respect for cultural diversity. To facilitate this, it is recommended that the CCEA should:

- Ensure that intercultural education is given due prominence in the new Northern Ireland Curriculum that is currently being developed through the curriculum review; and
- Develop further and carefully pilot a comprehensive set of intercultural resources for teachers to use across the range of subjects and within all four key stages.

- 8.3.12 In addition, there is a need to also address the existing attitudes and prejudices found within the adult population in Northern Ireland. Within this, and as we found in our previous report (see Connolly and Keenan 2000a), specific attention needs to be given to addressing the general public's attitudes towards Travellers given the much more antagonistic and negative attitude towards them as a community in comparison with other minority ethnic groups. As such, it is recommended that:

**Recommendation 5:** The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland should take responsibility for facilitating, co-ordinating and monitoring a broader educational strategy aimed at reducing racial prejudice and promoting good race relations in the region. While including a focus on the diverse range of minority ethnic groups that exist, a particular emphasis should be placed on Travellers.

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The Commission should consider including the following within such a strategy:

- A Specific media campaign (including television and radio adverts, posters and leaflets); and
- The production of training resources for use by youth and community groups.

- 8.3.13 A further dimension of indirect racist harassment that has been identified within the report is that of racist bantering. As has been seen, while it tends to have a significant effect upon the lives of those subject to it, there remains a common belief that it is relatively harmless. A focused campaign aimed at increasing people's awareness of the nature of racist bantering and its negative effects is therefore necessary. It is therefore recommended that:

**Recommendation 6:** As part of the broader educational strategy recommended above (see Recommendation 5), the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland should include a specific focus on racist banter. Such a focus should aim to highlight the negative effects of racist bantering and to encourage people to regard it as an activity that is unacceptable and should not be tolerated in any form. Initially, the campaign should be targeted at younger people but should be broad enough to appeal to the population as a whole.

- 8.3.14 It is recognised that some important initiatives are already being developed, especially within the Youth Service, in relation to encouraging greater respect and understanding among young people for cultural diversity. This can be seen most notably in relation to the establishment of JEDI (Joined in Equity, Diversity and Interdependence) that has brought together a range of organisations and practitioners that work with young people. While Recommendations 6 and 7 are not just aimed at young people, it is hoped that the Equality Commission will work closely with existing initiatives such as JEDI in attempting to address the above two recommendations.

- 8.3.15 Finally, the notion of deracialised harassment was also found to be a significant concern for a number of minority ethnic people interviewed for the present research. At

present, however, there is little data available to indicate the nature or the extent of the problem. With this in mind, the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 7:** The RUC should undertake and/or commission research to ascertain the extent of the problem with regard to what has been identified in this report as the 'deracialised harassment' of minority ethnic people. More specifically, this could include a comparative study to identify whether minority ethnic businesses (especially in catering and retail) tend to be the targets of greater levels of criminal behaviour and activity than other similar businesses within the majority, white population. The findings of the research should provide the basis for the RUC to work closely with the minority ethnic communities involved to develop effective structures and strategies to deal with the criminal activity they experience.

### ***Community work with boys and young men***

- 8.3.16 Third, it is clear from the evidence presented in this report that boys and young men tend to be disproportionately involved in incidents of direct racist harassment. Alongside the general initiatives recommended above, the evidence regarding this specific social group is sufficient to warrant a more focused and specific strategy of intervention.
- 8.3.17 However, in considering how best racist harassment may be addressed among boys and young men, it is clear from the research discussed in this report that any strategy needs to include more than just attempting to increase awareness and reduce racial prejudice. Most significantly, it needs to address the more negative and aggressive aspects of the broader masculine sub-cultures that exist among boys and young men.
- 8.3.18 The problems evident within such sub-cultures have been recognised for a while now. A number of the Education and Library Boards have, for example, have employed outreach youth workers to try to engage and work with young men on the streets. Moreover, Youth Action is currently developing and delivering a project on young men and violence that is being written up as a piece of action research and is expected to be published shortly.
- 8.3.19 Overall, while there already exists a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the violent sub-cultures that exist

among boys and young men, such initiatives need to be drawn together into a more coordinated and effective strategy. Within this, such a strategy needs to address specific issues including, in relation to the present report, racism and racist harassment. With this in mind, the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 8:** The Department of Education, in conjunction with the Youth Service, should review existing initiatives being undertaken with boys and young men. Such a review should form the basis from which a more coordinated strategy is developed in relation to addressing the violent and negative sub-cultures that can exist among boys and young men.

While the strategy should be broad-based, it should include specific work on racism and racist harassment.

### ***Inter-agency forum on racist harassment***

- 8.3.20 Finally, it is clear from the issues raised so far in this report that racist harassment is a complex phenomenon. By their very nature, many instances of harassment require the intervention of a range of organisations and agencies. To tackle racist harassment on local housing estates, for example, this would involve the police and Housing Executive working together effectively. However, and as highlighted above, there is also an important role to be played by local schools and youth and community workers.
- 8.3.21 More generally, a wider need exists as we have already drawn attention to for a programme of action to help increase people's understanding and awareness of racist harassment in Northern Ireland and to ensure that relevant government departments, agencies and organisations are effectively encouraged to develop policies and procedures to deal with it in their own areas of responsibility. Both the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister have important roles to play in relation to these two areas, respectively.
- 8.3.22 With this in mind, it makes sense to bring together the different agencies into one forum that can monitor racist harassment in the region and effectively plan and co-ordinate a holistic, inter-agency approach to the problem. With this in mind, the following, final recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 9:** The Government should establish an inter-agency forum with the aim of driving forward a co-ordinated strategy to tackle racist harassment in Northern Ireland. The lead department/agency to take overall responsibility for the forum should be a matter for the Government to decide.

The forum should comprise representatives from all appropriate government departments, agencies and other relevant organisations. It should also include representatives from the main minority ethnic organisations and communities in the region.

Among its key responsibilities, the forum should:

- Facilitate effective communication and inter-agency working among those departments, agencies and organisations represented;
- establish effective mechanisms centrally for recording and monitoring incidents of racist harassment in Northern Ireland; and
- ensure that appropriate mechanisms are developed for encouraging individuals to report incidents of racist harassment as well as offering them effective support when they do.

## 8.4 Conclusions

8.4.1 Overall, racist harassment is a particularly pernicious and evil part of society. As has been shown in this report, it is embedded in the routine behaviour and processes within Northern Ireland society. It takes on many different forms from overt acts of verbal and physical abuse to more subconscious and often unintentional actions and behaviour.

8.4.2 The combined effects of racist harassment are to violate minority ethnic people's sense of dignity in society and to create an environment for them that is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and/or offensive. It ensures that many live in a constant state of low level anxiety while some live in fear.

8.4.3 Ultimately, it is a key element by which minority ethnic people's social exclusion within Northern Ireland is maintained. This report has offered a detailed analysis of

the nature, impact and causes of racist harassment in the region. It is now the responsibility of everyone to play their role in identifying and challenging it in all its forms.



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# Notes

1. See for instance, Aye Maung and Mirrlees-Black 1994; Bonnerjea and Lawton 1988; Chahal 1992; Chahal and Julienne 1999; Gordon 1990; Home Office 1981; Oakley 1992; Sibbit 1997; Virdee 1995.
2. For convenience, the term 'Travellers' is used throughout this report to refer to people identified as 'Irish Travellers' in the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997. The Order defines such people as: 'a community of people ... who are identified (both by themselves and by others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland'.
3. For debates about definitions see, for example, Bonnerjea and Lawton 1988; Bowes *et al.* 1990; Gordon 1990; Virdee 1995.
4. All names used in this report are pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.
5. Key to transcripts:
  - / Indicates interruption in speech
  - [...] Indicates extracts edited out of the transcript for clarity.
  - [text] Indicates word(s) added to help clarify what is being said.
  - [*text*] Indicates descriptive text added to clarify/highlight the nature of the discussion and/or behaviour of the interviewees.
  - ... Indicates a natural pause in speech.



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# Appendix: Methodology of the Present Study

## Introduction

This Appendix offers a brief outline of the methodology used in relation to the collection and analysis of the data reported in this present study.

## Minority ethnic interviewees

Data were collected from indepth interviews with 101 members of the four largest minority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland. The groups and their definitions are given below:

Black African	People who now live in Northern Ireland but whose families were originally from one of the African countries.
Chinese	People who now live in Northern Ireland but whose families were originally from China or Hong Kong.
Irish Traveller	People who <u>either</u> have no permanent address but travel from site to site <u>or</u> are now settled and live on a particular site or estate.
South Asian	People who now live in Northern Ireland but whose families were originally from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh.

For the most part, access to the interviewees was negotiated via particular minority ethnic organisations who played a key role in facilitating contact with individual interviewees from different areas and arranging interviews. To ensure anonymity of those interviewed, a full list of the particular organisations involved cannot be given. Where difficulties arose in relation to language, interpreters were used.

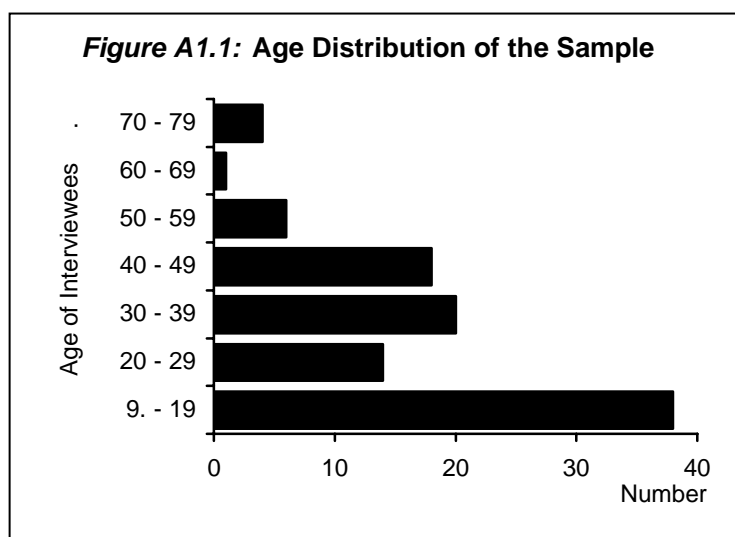
A breakdown of the main social characteristics of those interviewed is given in Table A1.1.

**Table A1.1: Social Characteristics of the Interviewees**

Minority Ethnic Group	Adults		Children*		Sub-total		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Black African	7	9	4	1	11	10	21
Chinese	10	9	6	2	16	11	27
South Asian	3	12	2	5	5	17	22
Traveller	5	14	5	7	10	21	31
Sub-total	25	44	17	15	42	59	101
Total	69		32		101		101

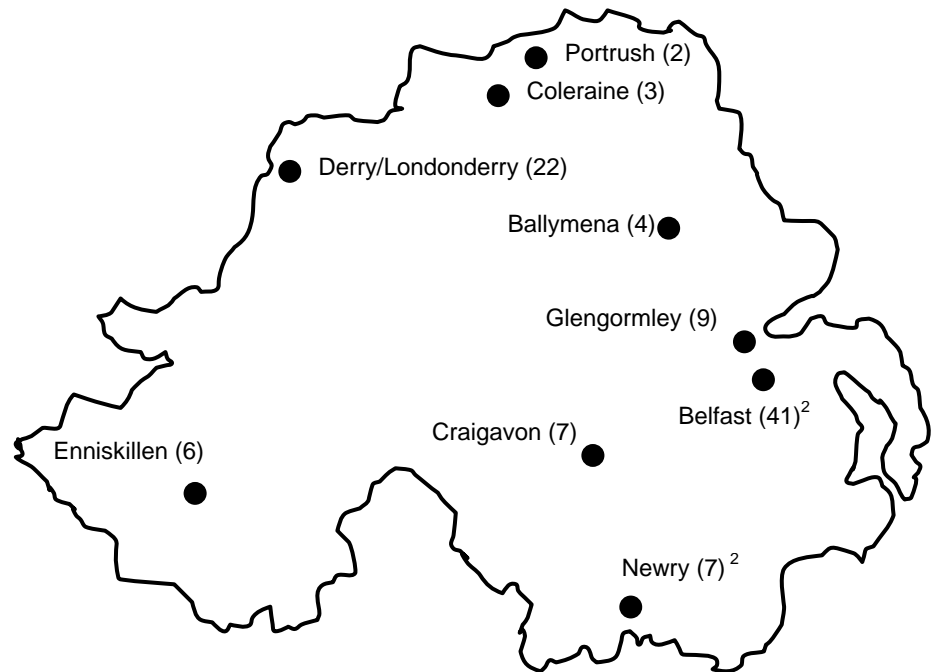
\*Children counted as all those aged 17 and under.

The age profile of the sample is illustrated in Figure A1.1 below. The mean age of the sample is 30 with a standard deviation of 15.62.



Alongside attempts to ensure that males and females were represented across all categories in the sample and that a range of ages were also included, interviewees were also chosen to include minority ethnic people living in different areas within Northern Ireland. The overall distribution of the 101 interviewees in relation to where they lived is shown in Figure A1.2.

**Figure A1.2: Distribution of the Sample by Area of Residence<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup>Numbers of minority ethnic people interviewed in each location indicated in parentheses (total number = 101).

<sup>2</sup> These figures include respondents from nearby rural areas who have been added to these totals to maintain their anonymity.

In order to maintain confidentiality and due to the small number of minority ethnic people living in certain areas, a breakdown is not provided in terms of the geographical distribution of interviewees from particular minority ethnic groups. However, for each group the aim was to ensure that similar proportions of interviewees were chosen from three different localities within Northern Ireland, one of which being Belfast. This aim was broadly met and thus there is a geographical spread in terms of area of residence of the interviewees for each of the four minority ethnic groups.

### **White, settled interviewees**

Alongside interviews with members of the main minority ethnic communities, nine focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 46 white, settled interviewees. The purpose of these interviews was to increase our understanding of the factors that tend to influence racially harassing behaviour.

With this in mind, the focus groups were not meant to be representative of the population as a whole. Rather they were chosen to represent those particular sub-groups within the population who were more likely to engage in racially harassing behaviour. The characteristics of the nine groups are detailed below (the total number in each group is given in brackets):

1. Catholic males aged 16 – 35 with relatively frequent contact with members of minority ethnic communities (5);
2. Protestant males aged 16 – 35 with relatively frequent contact with members of minority ethnic population (5);
3. Protestant males aged 16 – 35 with little or no contact with members of the minority ethnic population (2);
4. Protestant females aged 16 – 35 with relatively frequent contact with members of minority ethnic communities (4);
5. Protestant females aged 36 – 59 with relatively frequent contact with members of minority ethnic communities (5);
6. Protestant boys aged 10 – 15 (7);
7. Protestant girls aged 10 – 15 (7);
8. Catholic boys aged 10 –15 (6); and
9. Catholic girls aged 10 – 15 (5).

The first five groups were identified from the findings of our attitudinal survey (see Connolly and Keenan 2000a). A loglinear statistical analysis was used to identify which particular combination of social factors (in terms of age, religion, gender etc.) tended to have the most effect in influencing the tendency for individuals to admit to racist name-calling in the survey.

The final four groups were chosen on the basis of the interviews with minority ethnic respondents who reported that children were the most likely group responsible for racially harassing them. This could not be corroborated with the attitudinal survey as the survey only interviewed those aged 16 or above.

The focus groups took place in different locations across Northern Ireland including Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Cookstown, Magharafelt and Enniskillen. Access was gained via a range of organisations including youth clubs, local colleges and community groups.

## **The interviews**

All interviewees were assured that the comments they made would be treated in strictest confidence and that their identities would be protected in the final report. The names of all interviewees have therefore been changed in the body of the report to ensure anonymity.

### *Interviews with minority ethnic respondents*

Interviewees were generally interviewed in small groups typically comprising between 3 to 5 people from the same minority ethnic community. The interviewer had a list of topics for the group to discuss and would aim to steer the conversations through these topics. These topics consisted of their experiences and perspectives on education, training, employment and racist harassment.

Within this, however, the interviews were purposely left to be relatively unstructured. The aim was to allow minority ethnic people to raise those issues and concerns that they felt to be important rather than attempting to 'impose' an agenda on them.

This type of 'focus group' approach was chosen rather than individual interviews as it was felt that it would give interviewees more confidence and control within the interview setting to raise the issues that they felt were important. However, where issues of particular significance to the present research were raised, individual follow-up interviews were sometimes conducted with those concerned in order to gain further information.

### *Interviews with white, settled respondents*

A similar, relatively unstructured approach was taken in relation to the interviews with members of the white, settled population. General questions were asked in relation to their contact/relationships with minority ethnic people and their views on a range of race relations issues, particularly with regard to employment, education and racist harassment.

Questions were kept purposely vague, however, and the emphasis was upon encouraging the group to raise and discuss whatever issues concerned them within the overall subject focused on.

### **Analysis of data**

All interviews were transcribed and the data systematically analysed in order to identify common themes raised as well as document the range of experiences and perspectives expressed.

It is important to stress, however, that it was not possible from the sample chosen, or the type of data gathered, to develop reliable generalisations concerning the needs and experiences of particular minority ethnic groups and/or the attitudes of the white, settled population. Rather, a much smaller number of people were interviewed and much more qualitative methods used to allow the space to explore their perspectives and experiences in depth.

The main aim of the report therefore is to document the range of experiences and perspectives found among the minority ethnic population in Northern Ireland with regard to racist harassment and also to uncover and help understand some of the factors within the white, settled population that tends to give rise to these.

As it is not a truly representative nor large enough sample, it cannot therefore be claimed that the issues described in this present report offer a comprehensive and complete account of the factors and processes surrounding racist harassment. However, given the diversity of people interviewed in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and area of residence, this present report does offer important insights into a range of factors that are associated with racist harassment. By doing so, it plays an important role in identifying some of the key issues that service providers need to address and/or investigate further.