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Racist victimisation in England & Wales

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Introduction

Students of 'race', class, ethnicity and violent crime in Europe and North America have been preoccupied by the reportedly higher rates of violence committed by ethnic minorities. Although it has been observed that, on both sides of the Atlantic, most crime is committed – unsurprisingly – by the white majority community, popular concern and scholarly attention have focused on the disproportionate rates of arrest and imprisonment among minority communities. As Russell (1998) suggests, a preoccupation with such concepts as 'black criminality' and 'black-on-black-crime' have tended to obscure or ignore the extent of 'white-on-white crime' or 'white-on-minority' violence, to the extent that the very terms seem odd. A further consequence of the narrow focus of the 'race and crime debate' is that, until recently at least, criminologists and others have tended to ignore racist violence; that is violence specifically targeted against ethnic minority communities and incidents that are aggravated by racism and racial prejudice.

In recent years, this situation has started to change significantly. In the 1980s, public concern about racist violence increased in north America (Hamm 1993a & b, Pinkney 1994), continental Europe (Bjorgø and Witte 1993) and Britain (Bowling 1999) which led to the development of new directions in research and public policy. During the 1990s, a number of well-publicised incidents heightened this concern about racist violence in numerous places. In the early 1990s in Germany, for example, there was a spate of arson attacks against asylum seekers' hostels and the homes of people from ethnic minorities. Of these crimes, the most atrocious was an arson attack on November 23, 1992 in Molln by two neo-Nazi skinheads in which three members of the Arslan family, of Turkish origin, were burned to death (Hamm 1993a).

Of the recent cases in the USA, the murder of James Byrd stands out as the epitome of a racist crime. On June 7 1998, John William King, Shawn Berry and Lawrence Brewer, three roommates, were out driving when they encountered James Byrd hitchhiking. After offering him a lift, the three then beat Byrd unconscious, stripped him and chained him to the back of their pickup truck and dragged him for two and a half miles until his head and right arm were ripped from his body. At the subsequent trial, it was found that King had been involved, for some years, in racist extremism and was tattooed with nazi SS symbols and a depiction of a black man being lynched. All three men were found guilty of murder. King and Brewer were sentenced to death by lethal injection while Berry – who had no history of racist activities – was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 40 years.

On April 22, 1993, while waiting with a friend for a bus in Eltham, South-East London, England, Stephen Lawrence, an 18 year-old black man, was stabbed to death. Stephen's friend, Duwayne Brooks later reported that Stephen, looking out for the bus further up the street, had been engulfed by a group of five or six white youths, one of whom shouted "what, what, nigger!". Stephen Lawrence was stabbed twice with a long knife, both stab wounds severing major arteries. After running some distance he bled to death on the pavement. In February 1997, an Inquest jury returned a unanimous verdict that "Stephen Lawrence was unlawfully killed in a completely unprovoked racist attack by five white youths" (Macpherson 1999).

The police investigation following Stephen's death failed to lead to the conviction of the killers and was condemned as 'palpably flawed' and incompetent. In July 1997, after more than four years of campaigning by Neville and Doreen Lawrence, Stephen's parents, the Home Secretary Jack Straw announced a public inquiry into the murder.. The

Lawrence Inquiry, chaired by Sir William Macpherson¹, took evidence from 88 witnesses and received 148 written submissions amounting to more than 100,000 pages of evidence (Macpherson, 1999). The report concluded that there was a series of fundamental flaws in the conduct of the investigation by the Metropolitan Police Service and that this was the result of “professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers” (Macpherson 1999: 317). It documented the denial of the racist motive for the murder among at least five police officers, and the racist stereotyping of Duwayne Brooks at the scene where he was wrongly assumed to be one of the protagonists in a fight between youths rather than a victim of an unprovoked attack. It went on to criticise the use of inappropriate and offensive language and the insensitive and patronising handling of Mr and Mrs Lawrence throughout the investigation.

The murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent flawed police investigation echoes the experience of many victims of racist violence in Britain. Rather than being an isolated case, it epitomises the extensive empirical and documentary evidence gathered over the last four decades.² The remainder of this chapter reviews the literature on the British experience of racist violence and points tentatively towards some explanations for the patterns that emerge. Also examined are some of the individual, community and statutory responses to victimisation, raising questions about the effectiveness of policing and law enforcement. While the focus is on the British experience of violent racism, the parallels in other European and North American countries points to the international nature of white-on-minority violence.

The extent and nature of racist victimisation

The history of racist violence in Britain is a long, but discontinuous one (see Panayi 1996, Bowling 1999). There is evidence of attempts at forced removal of people of colour since the time of Elizabeth I and example of attacks against Jews in Britain stretching back to the twelfth century (Fryer 1984; Panayi 1996). The violence targeting of black and Asian sailors in British ports immediately after World War I and World War II (in 1948) is well documented (Jenkinson 1996; Panayi 1996). The late 1950s saw several anti-black riots in London, Nottingham and elsewhere (Panayi 1996). During the 1970s, the emergence of the ‘skinhead’ youth culture, its link with the rise in popularity of extreme right political activism was accompanied by an apparent increase in racist incidents. These developments led to an increase in official concern, and, eventually in the 1980s the police and Home Office began to keep records of ‘racial incidents’ (Bowling 1999). These have shown steady increases since the 1980s, to stand at just under 14,000 incidents recorded in 1998 (see Figure 1).

Recent Home Office Research has shed some light on patterns of racially motivated incidents recorded by the police (Maynard and Read 1997). Based on a survey of all police forces in England and Wales, the authors found that there was wide variation in what was actually recorded and counted as racially motivated counted as racially motivated (see also Sibbitt 1997; Bowling 1999). Where the type of crime was known,

¹ See Macpherson (1999), Cathcart (1999); Norton Taylor (1999); Bowling (1999), Thompson (1988).

² See, for example, Thompson (1988) Gordon (1990), Hesse et al (1992), Virdee (1995) Human Rights Watch (1997), Bowling (1999).

38% of incidents comprised verbal abuse, 21% were assaults and 20% involved damage to property. Only two per cent were recorded as serious crime. However, where racially motivated incidents were recorded as serious crime - such as 'Grievous Bodily Harm' or murder - they were frequently not recorded as racial incidents. Thus, their categorisation as a specific type of serious crime overrode and negated their definition by the police as 'racial' (see also Bowling 1999: 151-4). To some extent this was what happened in the Stephen Lawrence murder.

The police forces that record the largest number of racially motivated incidents tend to be in metropolitan areas where there are significant ethnic minority communities. After calculating the number of racially motivated incidents per 1,000 ethnic minority population, however, Maynard and Read (1997) found that three provincial forces in the north of England had the highest victimisation rates of 14 or more per 1000 black or Asian population. Differences in reporting and recording practices dog attempts to make comparisons of the extent and nature of racist violence across time and space. Nonetheless, this finding supports earlier research that when people from ethnic minorities make up only a small proportion of the local population, they are at greater risk of victimisation than their 'inner-city' counterparts (see Smith 1989; Hesse *et al* 1993; Sampson and Phillips 1992, 1996; Bowling 1999).

Survey estimates of racist violence

Like any other form of crime, racial 'incidents' recorded by the police reflect only a small proportion of all those that occur – thus concealing the so-called 'dark figure' of unreported and unrecorded crime. In order to overcome the inadequacies of police records since the early 1980s, a number of local crime surveys have attempted to make quantitative estimates of racist violence. Each of these has identified low levels of reporting to the police (see for example Brown 1984; Jones *et al.* 1986). In Bowling's study in the London Borough of Newham, 21 per cent of Black women, 19 per cent of Asian men, 18 per cent of Asian women and 17 per cent of Black men had experienced some form of racist victimisation (1993b, 1999: 196). A small proportion of white people – eight per cent of men and seven per cent of women – also said that they had been racially victimised. In this locality, Bowling estimated that no more than five per cent of racial incidents were recorded by the police (see also Saulsbury and Bowling 1991, Bowling 1993b).

Every sweep of the British Crime Survey (1988 to 1996) has found that more than one third of assaults directed against Asians and Blacks were thought by respondents to be racially motivated, as were about half of the incidents involving threats. The use of racist language was the main reason given by both black and Asian respondents for thinking that the incident was racially motivated. Using British Crime Survey (BCS) data for 1988 and 1992 combined, FitzGerald and Hale (1996) found that of a national sample, four per cent of blacks, five per cent of Indians and around eight per cent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis had been the victims of racially motivated offences in the previous year. Population estimates using BCS victimisation rates suggested that there were about 143,000 incidents of crime and threats against black and Asian people in England and Wales which were thought to have been motivated by racism in 1997 (Percy 1998). This represented 15% of the estimated total of 984,000 incidents against them altogether. Around 41,000 of these incidents were reported to the police, compared with the 12,222 recorded by the police that year. Expressed as a proportion, 29% of the incidents are *reported* to the police, and about 8 per cent are *recorded* by the police.

The process of racist victimisation and its impact

Estimating the 'real' extent of violent racism is an exercise fraught with conceptual and methodological problems (Bowling 1993a, 1999: 150-168; Hesse *et al* 1992). Not only is the attempt to count so many complex events occurring across time and place difficult, it is in some ways misconceived. Considering the patterns of intimidation and harassment that provide part of the context for serious violence, it becomes clear that the issues of safety and perceptions of safety cannot realistically be 'measured'. Feminist research on violence against women has also observed that the experience of sexual assault or domestic violence can be better understood as a continuum, connecting 'everyday' abuse with extreme acts of violence (e.g. Kelly 1987; Stanko 1988). Similarly, conceiving of violent racism as a process allows connections to be made between the racist abuse at one end of the spectrum and murder at the other. Studies have confirmed the pattern of repeat victimisation among victims of racist violence (e.g. Sampson and Phillips, 1992; Phillips and Sampson 1998).

This context also helps to explain ethnic minorities' elevated fear of crime (Genn 1988, Pearson *et al* 1989, Feagin and Sikes 1994, Bowling 1999). On a number of dimensions, people from ethnic minority communities are more fearful than those from white communities, and this is particularly the case in relation to fear of violent racism. The BCS probes further to attempt to measure people's perceptions of safety and unsafety. Percy (1998) showed that on the street, and especially at home alone at night, people from ethnic minorities felt less safe than white people and it seems likely that feelings of 'unsafety' affect individual freedom of movement. For example, people from ethnic minorities (Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in particular) avoided going out at night through fear of crime, avoided walking near certain types of people and were always accompanied when walking out after dark. More detailed analysis showed that while 13% of white respondents said they avoided certain places or events (such as football matches, night-clubs, theatres or pubs) because they feared crime or violence, this was true of 29% of blacks, 27% of Indians and 22% of Pakistani and Bangladeshis (Percy 1998: 33). Although the relationship between fear crime and victimisation is a complex one, fear of 'ordinary crime' among people from ethnic minority communities is fundamentally shaped by their *fear of racist victimisation*. Although this is not a frequent occurrence for most people, pernicious racist abuse does sometimes precede extreme acts of violence, as exemplified in the case of Stephen Lawrence. This experience provides a backdrop to the lives of many people from ethnic minorities in Britain today.

Police records and victimisation surveys, as previously mentioned, are the two most common methods of quantifying the extent of violent racism. Although this measurement has its value, alternative sources often provide richer and more meaningful information. Among these alternative sources are qualitative techniques (e.g. Chahal 1999); case studies employing mixed methods (e.g. Bowling 1999); journalistic accounts (e.g. Rose 1996; Bufford 1991); records of local monitoring groups (e.g. Newham Monitoring Project 1991); and public inquiries, such as that carried out by Macpherson into the events surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence (see also Hesse *et al* 1992). Indeed, like sexual harassment and domestic violence against women, the issue of racist violence emerged onto the public and public agenda only as a result of the work of activists campaigning for victims' rights who drew, for their evidence, on case studies and documentary methods.

There are, of course, some methodological limitations to using these sources. Journalistic accounts may be unrepresentative while reports of monitoring groups are typically partisan in nature. Nonetheless, both are often richer and more contextualised than academic sources that rely on interviews with someone once or, at most, on only a few occasions. Similarly, public inquiries provide the opportunity to learn about the way

in which individuals and organisations think about problems. By documenting the collective experience of thousands of people who have experienced such violence, a greater degree of insight can be gained regarding the victims' perspective.

We can now say with some confidence that racist violence affects a considerable proportion of the ethnic minority communities in Britain on an enduring basis, and that serious and mundane incidents are interwoven to create a threatening environment which undermines their personal safety and freedom of movement. What is now required is a shift away from the victimological perspective to an analysis of the characteristics of offenders, the social milieu in which violence is fostered, and the process by which it becomes directed against ethnic minorities (Bowling 1999: 305).

Racist offending: from profiling to explanation

The focus on victims has tended to obscure the importance of researching racist offenders. Moreover, there has been a reluctance to examine racist offenders, partly perhaps, because it risks appearing to 'understand' racist behaviour rather than simply to 'condemn' it (Bowling 1999: 306). Racist offenders have no allies in the political mainstream; they are doubly condemned because of their violence and their racist expressions. Police and politicians rarely get beyond epithets – 'yobs', 'louts' and 'thugs' – to describe such offenders. Even criminologists have frequently opted for shallow 'theoretotyping', constructing academic theories out of common stereotypes (Pitts 1993; Bowling 1999: 305). There has been a renaissance in research on offending and offenders in recent years, but there are still few studies that seek to explore racist offenders' backgrounds, experiences and motives.³ And yet, examining the offender's perspective is critical for developing ways of responding to violent racism.

Until recently, our knowledge of racist offenders relied principally on information from the victim. We know from victims' accounts that most of the people committing acts of violent racism are young adult males – aged between 16 and 25 – though young children and older adults have been reported (Mayhew *et al* 1989; Aye Maung and Mirrlees Black, 1994; Sibbitt 1997; Bowling 1999). Using 1992 BCS data, Aye Maung and Mirrlees-Black (1994) found that three-quarters of Asian victims of violent incidents (wounding, common assault and robbery) and threats involved more than one offender and two fifths involved four or more. Nine out of ten Asian council tenants interviewed in Bowling (1999) who had been victimised, were attacked by more than one offender. In instances of violence or threats reported to the British Crime Survey which were thought to be racially motivated, victims nearly always cited white offenders.

Sibbitt's (1997) qualitative study of the perpetrators of racist harassment adds the socio-economic dimension to this profile, using police records, case studies and interviews. Sibbitt found that the perpetrators' racist views were shared by the communities to which they belonged, and offenders saw this as legitimating their action. Thus, wider communities not only 'spawn' perpetrators but they reinforce their behaviour by not condemning it. Although Sibbitt's typology of racist offenders identifies three types (*'the pensioners'*, *'the people next door'* and *'the problem family'*), they are all united by their attitudes towards ethnic minorities which serve to focus individuals' grievances and sense of injustice on an external scapegoat. Frequently, racist offenders react to what they see as preferential treatment or access to scarce social and economic resources, such as housing, employment and education. This is illustrated by a comment

³ See, for example, Bufford (1993) and Webster (1997).

made a woman in Sibbitt's study: "They refuse to learn English – the kids have to get a special teacher in. *My son could do with a special teacher, but he won't get it, will he?*" (1997: 102)

The evidence that violent racism is concentrated in areas of multiple deprivation points to the relevance of economic and social factors. However, *per capita* rates of victimisation suggest that racist violence also afflicts rural, suburban and relatively prosperous areas as well as blighted inner-city locales.⁴ Moreover, the evidence for a relationship between economic changes and violent crime in general is mixed. Field (1990) found that violent crime increases during periods of increased consumption and declines during periods of economic downturn. The economic scapegoating of ethnic minorities is one of five main theoretical approaches to explaining why ethnic minorities are the targets of violence directed against individuals, their homes, places of worship or entertainment, and at other aspects of social and cultural life.

A second popular explanation contends that levels of hostility and violence are related to the size of minority populations, or an increase in numbers over a short period of time (Bjorgø and Witte, 1993). In 1958, for example, riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill were said by Labour and Conservative politicians to have been caused by the arrival of 'too many' black people, which had caused resentment among the 'indigenous' white population resulting in a violent backlash (Bowling 1999: 29-34). The 'upsurge' in racist violence in Germany in the early 1990s was blamed directly by many commentators on the arrival of a 'flood' of asylum seekers. In our view, this reasoning is flawed for several reasons. Historically, minority populations have come under attack in Britain even when their numbers were tiny - in the thousands or even mere hundreds, as was the case in the riots in 1919 (Jenkinson 1996). In Britain today, racist violence is also prevalent where black and Asian people make up only a small minority – sometimes only one or two per cent – of local populations. The 'numbers thesis' also fails to explain violence against Jewish people, their property, places of worship and burial, when they comprise only 0.5% of the population of the United Kingdom (UK) (Institute of Jewish Affairs 1994). Although actual numbers, or even increases in numbers, may not provide an explanation for violent racism, it may be that the meaning attached to these changes does. Research has indicated that racist violence is common in neighbourhoods where black and Asian people make up a small but *increasing* minority of a neighbourhood and where community sentiment defines this as problematic. Authors including Husbands (1983), Smith (1989) and Hesse *et al* (1992) point to the relationship between racist victimisation and white territorialism and exclusionism. 'White neighbourhoods' may be maintained because "[t]he prospect of violent intimidation is a strong disincentive to black households who might otherwise wish to move away from the poor properties in which they are over-represented" (S. Smith 1989: 161-2).

The attempt to explain the extent of violent racism as a reaction to "the numbers" is consistent with the assumption that policies to reduce the number of immigrants would reduce the extent of violence targeted against them. In contrast to this view, however, the empirical evidence from several contexts suggests that racist violence has increased dramatically *after* governments have advocated or implemented measures to restrict immigration and asylum. Among the periods of most ferocious racist violence in the UK was 1981 in the immediate aftermath of the 1981 Nationality Act which ended 'primary immigration' from former colonies in the Caribbean and Africa, and also severely restricted the rights of dependants to join families settled in Britain. In Sweden, a wave of racist violence started in May 1990 five months after the government tightened its liberal

⁴ see also Husbands (1993)

asylum policy (Bjorgø and Witte 1993: 7; Bjorgø 1993). In Germany, racist attacks and riots intensified dramatically after the government initiated a debate on reducing the numbers of asylum-seekers coming into the country (Bjorgø and Witte 1993: 7-8; Atkinson 1993).

Theories of culture comprise a third approach to explaining racist violence. Common in media representations of racist violence are depictions of racism as an aspect of 'national character'. Goldhagen (1996: 7) argues that the holocaust in Germany must be seen as a specifically German phenomenon, rooted in the pursuit of "German national political goals" (1996: 7). His approach is to "explain the culture's constitution, its idiosyncratic patterns of practice, and its collective projects and products." (1996: 15). England's history of racism is very different from Germany's. However, the history of chattel slavery, colonialism and support for South African *apartheid*, as well as the configuration of contemporary racism might suggest that racist violence has a specifically English cultural variant.

A fourth approach draws on the evidence that racist violence is associated with the consumption of alcohol either as a direct result of intoxication (by lowering inhibitions) or in the social context of drinking, such as crowd behaviour after bars have closed. Although it seems likely that alcohol can be seen as a contributory factor, the "drunken pranks" explanation is frequently used to suggest that incidents are unconnected with racism. Some practitioners have gone to ridiculous lengths to redefine racist incidents as merely drunken hooliganism (see Graeff 1989: 131; Pearson *et al*, 1989: 128). Heavy consumption of alcohol is common in diverse forms of violent racism. Anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia at the turn of the century (Klier 1993: 133-35), riots against Italian immigrants in France in the 1890s, numerous instances of racist violence in Britain, and fire bombings of asylum centres in Scandinavia and Germany in the 1990s, all appear to have alcohol as a contributory factor (Bjorgø 1993: 35-6, 41-2). However, the finding that offenders are often found to be under the influence of alcohol can be misinterpreted to mean that no further explanation is necessary. Alcohol should be seen as only one means for overcoming inhibitions once a situation arises. As Bjorgø and Witte put it, "even if an act of violence is perpetrated under the influence of alcohol, this certainly does not mean that it may not also be influenced by racist motives" (1993: 10).

Although the activities of extreme right-wing organisations⁵, and their links to ordinary communities are well documented in numerous contexts, this, fifth theoretical approach has rarely been used to analyse the experiences of ethnic minority victims in the UK. It is evident that many aspects of the ideology, language and practices of explicitly racist or extreme-right wing groupings are shared in common across Europe, and the United States (Bjorgø and Kaplan 1998). Löow (1993), for example, interviewed members of the Swedish 'white power networks', and found that the rhetoric of these networks is a mixture of national socialist terminology of the 1930s and the contemporary code of the Ku Klux Klan and other American white supremacist groups. Themes identified by Löow in Sweden – including a belief in 'ZOG - Zionist Occupational Government', denial of the holocaust, defence of the 'white race' against its 'enemies' (communists, homosexuals, Jews, immigrants and anti-racists) – appear to be common to similar organisations in other Scandinavian countries, Germany, the USA and Britain. The similarity between these materials is uncanny: and at their centre is a notion of a specifically *European* superiority and supremacy (see Bjorgø and Kaplan 1998).

⁵ There are numerous such groups including National Front, Column 88, British National Party, Combat 18, the Ku Klux Klan, White Aryan Resistance, etc; Choice; English Solidarity; International Third Position (See Searchlight, the international anti-Fascist magazine and the Campaign Against Racism and Facism (CARF).

In several different national contexts there appears to be a relationship between the most extreme forms of racist politics and the manifestation of both explicitly racist attacks and apparently *apolitical* acts of violence directed at ethnic minorities. It seems that politically motivated racists are able to influence - directly and indirectly - groups of young people who hold "anti-immigration" views or who are in some other way sympathetic to racist ideology. Although international neo-Nazi groups appear to have little centralised leadership or hierarchy, they do co-operate in a number of ways (Jensen 1993; Fekete 1991). The British National Party, for example, has participated with German neo-Nazi groups in paramilitary training. One crucial medium for spreading racist ideas and inciting violence is "Oi-music" with extremely brutal, racist and violent lyrics and its associated youth culture. A recent development is the use of computer networks by neo-Nazi organisations and racist supremacists. Internet newsgroups exist where racist ideology can be disseminated, Nazi memorabilia purchased and distributed, and information on bomb-making, 'hit-lists', and hate campaigning circulated.

One final approach to explaining racist violence that deserves a mention is a theory proposed by Beck and Tolnay (1995) which integrates some of the elements set out above. Their thesis is based on an analysis of violence towards African Americans in the era of the white lynch mob and can be expressed as a formula. Beck and Tolnay argue that the potential for racist violence is the product of the extent of racist ideology, the permissiveness of the State response to racist violence and competition for scarce resources (such as economic wealth, political power and social status). If each of these necessary factors are present, all that remains is some form of 'triggering event' to lead to an outbreak of anti-black violence.

Responses to racist violence

Individual and community self-defence

Although survey research has focused on fear of crime, the most commonly reported reaction to crime is anger. Bowling's survey in East London for example, found that 70 per cent of the victims of racist violence felt angry, compared with shock (44%), while comparatively few - 27% - felt fearful (1999: 216). The personal experiences of racist violence are so diverse, however, that it would be difficult to describe the ways in which individual people, families and communities have sought to shield themselves from victimisation. At the most personal, measures have included moving away from more spacious or well maintained property in localities where racist violence is prevalent to safer areas, and other strategies to avoid situations where 'trouble' may be found, such as particular pubs, or a particular area on football match-days. Individuals also put in place situational crime prevention measures such as shatterproof glass and fireproof letterboxes to reduce the impact of violent racist victimisation (Bowling 1999: 222).

In response to a collective experience of victimisation, communities have also acted together in self-defence. In the 1958 racist riots, black transport workers provided escorts to and from places of employment. In response to racist assault in the 1970s and 1980s youth movements were formed to oppose racist organisations such as the National Front, who were staging provocative marches through areas of ethnic minority settlement. These grew in the 1980s into a strong self-defence movement, focusing on racist attacks and racism in policing, and were linked politically to the anti-racist movement (Newham Monitoring Project 1991).

The state response

Witte (1996) has noted that the state response to racist violence has been very similar in France, the Netherlands and Britain. At first, governments ignored the problem entirely or denied the racist nature of the violence (Gordon 1990). When this was no longer possible because of the extent of demands among ethnic minority communities for protection, racism became linked with questions of 'immigration' and 'integration' of victimised communities while racial prejudice and violence were seen as 'side effects'. Because migration was seen as the dominant topic, state responses largely consisted of migration-restricting policies (such as the Nationality and Immigration Acts (Solomos 1993)) - what Witte refers to as 'excluding recognition' - and simultaneous anti-discrimination policies (such as the Race Relations Acts 1965, 1968 and 1976). The resulting 'two-faced' state response is a result of being caught between "pressures from racist sentiments, parties and ideologies and pressures from anti-racism movements and ideologies" (Witte 1996: 201-3).

The moment that the British state officially recognised racist violence as a specific social problem was November 1981, with the publication of the Home Office report, *Racial Attacks* (Home Office 1981). Until 1981, as racially motivated attacks and harassment did not officially exist, there was no publicly stated police or government policy to deal with them. Two years later, this situation had changed dramatically. A range of governmental agencies – among them the House of Commons, Home Office, Metropolitan Police, Association of Chief Police Officers and the Greater London Council – each elevated racist violence to the status of 'urgent priority' (see Bowling 1999, chapter 3). Subsequent years have seen a rapidly increasing policy debate about ways of tackling racially motivated crime. This has focused on policing, the 'multi-agency approach' and new legislation.

The police response

Findings from the BCS suggest that satisfaction with the police response is significantly worse in dealing with reported racial incidents than with incidents in general. In Bowling's (1999) study of an area with a high rate of victimisation, just under one in ten people who reported to the police said they were very satisfied with the way in which the police handled the matter, while only 44% were very or fairly satisfied. This contrasted sharply with comparable 1988 BCS figures of 22% and 60%, respectively. This suggests that victims of racial incidents were much less likely to be satisfied with police service than victims of crime in general. The most common complaint among those who are dissatisfied with the police response, was that the police did not "do enough", that they failed to keep the victim informed and that they seemed not to be interested (Bowling 1999: 235-8). Some respondents were very critical of the police response, pointing specifically to what they saw as police prejudice against blacks and Asians. One commented, "They don't get the offenders. And if they catch them they don't charge them. If I was to offend someone like this the police would harass me instead of turning a blind eye which is what I feel they do in case of white offenders. And the offenders feel they can do anything they like as they are always let off." (Bowling 1999: 237). The same study found that only a very small minority – as few as five per cent – felt generally very satisfied with the way in which racist harassment was dealt with in their area and less than one third expressed any satisfaction at all. This picture resonates with the documented experience of minority communities. A long string of reports on the police response to ethnic minorities in general and to the victims of violent racism have been highly critical of their treatment (see Bowling 1999 for a review). Early studies indicated that "the police do not do enough to detect the everyday crimes that affect ordinary people" and went

further to say that reporting crime sometimes invited police harassment such as rough treatment, inappropriate questioning and immigration checks (Institute of Race Relations 1987). Such allegations continue to be made against the police today.

It is clear that the police continue to deny that racist violence is a problem and are, in practice, frequently unwilling to acknowledge the possibility of racist motives for many attacks even in the face of strong evidence. This can, in part, be explained by racist stereotyping by individual officers who define ethnic minorities as potential offenders rather than as potential victims. This was the experience of Duwayne Brooks in the aftermath of the murder of his friend Stephen Lawrence. There is evidence of widespread racist assumptions, prejudice and stereotyping in the culture of the police organisation too. As Bowling (1999: 248-256) documents, many police officers were not only not opposed to racism, but actually shared the values of the racists who are victimising ethnic minority communities. Some police officers empathised with the white man who 'resented having his area taken over', sympathised with white 'yobs' who felt that 'the system' which should be working for them was working also for black and Asian communities. Some police officers interviewed by Bowling thought it 'despicable' when Asian people spoke their mother tongue, and believed that 'failing to adapt' to English customs (wearing traditional clothes, for example) rendered them both 'threatening' and 'vulnerable'. These racist attitudes and prejudices were clearly reflected in police officers' behaviour towards black and Asian victims, witnesses, suspects, employees and the general public. Compounding the effects of individual and cultural racism, is the institutional racism that is built into the policies and practices of the police organisation. This is the systemic discrimination against people from ethnic minorities irrespective of the intent of individuals. It is to be found in the stereotyping of people from ethnic minorities as shifty, untrustworthy and devious. And it can be seen in such outcomes as black and Asian victims being left dissatisfied with how the police handled their cases, about how well informed they were, and what action (or lack of it) is taken. The ultimate consequence of individual, cultural and institutional racism is a failure to deliver either a quality service or equality of service and protection.

The multi-agency response

One of the central planks of government policy on racist victimisation throughout the 1980 and '90s was the 'multi-agency', or 'partnership approach' (Home Office 1996). The origins of this approach lie in the history of post-war British rational scientific management and grew partly from the belief, which strengthened during the 1970s and 1980s, that the police alone could not be expected to reduce crime (Weatheritt 1986; Bowling 1999: 101-149). Complex social problems like racism and violence are rooted in such contextual factors as, housing, education, and the consumption of alcohol. Such problems call for a multi-faceted approach involving the police, local government, community organisations, schools and other social institutions. Against the logic of this idea, however, the research on the effectiveness of the multi-agency approach, has been equivocal at best, and damning at worst (see for example, Rein 1983; Weatheritt 1986; Bowling 1999: 140-5).

A multitude of problems beset attempts to develop a multi-agency approach to racist violence. Two Home Office-funded projects set up to develop the approach both fell short of their stated goals (Saulsbury and Bowling 1991, Bowling and Saulsbury 1993; Sampson and Phillips 1995, Phillips and Sampson 1998). Both studies identified major differences in the way in which organisations defined and understood the problem, a denial of the extent and nature of the problem, blaming victims for failing to 'integrate', and a reluctance to investigate or take action taken against perpetrators for fear of a white

backlash. Ethnic minorities who experienced violent racist victimisation were not defined as victims, were blamed for their own victimisation, or were informed that inaction against offenders was the most appropriate statutory response, *all at the same time*. Duwayne Brooks and Neville and Doreen Lawrence were all victims of this doublespeak following the murder of Stephen Lawrence, suffering what can certainly be described as ‘institutional racism’ and perhaps as ‘statutory victimisation’.

Racist violence in England and Wales after the Lawrence Inquiry

The Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence brought to light many of the issues central to this chapter. It demonstrated that black and Asian people in Britain are specifically targeted for ‘everyday’ and politically organised racist violence and that this enduring experience of being under attack fundamentally affects how members of ethnic minority communities think, feel and act. The inquiry demonstrated that racist violence undermines their sense of security as well as their actual safety; it curtails their freedom of movement including their ability to visit certain localities; it affects fundamental life choices such as where to live and work. Calls for protection by black and Asian communities have typically been met with denial either that a problem existed, that it bore any connection with racism, or that there were weaknesses in the subsequent police response. The Lawrence inquiry brought to light evidence that police are ‘racism-blind’, or have a world-view which favours racist offenders over black and Asian communities. Ultimately, it demonstrated the failure to meet the requirement to do justice, be fair, and ensure community safety (Bowling 1998, 1999).

The murder of Stephen Lawrence seemed to demonstrate the emptiness of the claim that the police and criminal justice system offered equal protection irrespective of race or ethnic origin. The main suspects – who had histories of committing extreme violence – committed a brutal murder and were then able to get away with it with impunity. Despite the exertion of a great amount of effort, police investigators were unable to collect sufficient evidence to put a case before the court. The Lawrence Inquiry’s acknowledgement that the initial investigation was “marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers” was symbolically important (Macpherson 1999: 46.1). Even more significant, was the empirical and documentary evidence that the Lawrence Inquiry unearthed and exposed to public view. As Jack Straw, the Home Secretary commented, in presenting the Inquiry report to the House of Commons, it had “opened all our eyes to what it is to be black or Asian in Britain today”. A renewed commitment to tackling racist crime, ensuring that ethnic minority communities are properly served and protected, in a new era of ‘anti-racist policing’ are grounds for optimism about the future. Stephen Lawrence will be remembered as one of at least 90 victims of racist murder over the past four decades in Britain. But if his death is to mean more than this, police protection and their use of coercive powers must now be fair, accountable and respectful of the fundamental human rights to life, liberty and security of the person.

Conclusion

The explicitly racist murders that have occurred in recent years in Britain, continental Europe and north America have extended the spectrum of topics in the 'race and crime debate' and have focused public attention on 'white-on-minority' violence in its most extreme form. What seems clear from the research evidence from England and Wales, however, is that explicitly racist murder is the most extreme tip of an iceberg comprised of less serious instances of violence, and instances where the presence and relevance of racism may be less clear-cut. This research evidence suggests a range of future directions for scholarship in this area (See also Bowling and Phillips, 2001).

First, some analytical groundwork is required to establish the boundaries of the problem of racist violence. There are some cases in which both extreme levels of violence and explicit racism make categorisation unproblematic. However, there are also many thousands of instances of intimidation, verbal abuse and vandalism which may terrorise individuals and communities, but is not so readily recognised by law enforcement agencies or commentators as 'violence' (Jacobs and Potter 1998; cf. Bowling 1993a). Similarly, there are instances where questions of racist motivation or causation are troubled by the existence of other motives or explanations. It is perhaps too much to expect these conceptual issues to be resolved with any great finality, but they do require continued examination and exploration.

Secondly, there is a clear need to develop quantitative and qualitative techniques to estimate the extent and nature of racist violence at local and regional levels. This paper has shown, in common with other work in this sphere, that officially recorded instances of racist crime have some limitations, partly the result of the definitional issues mentioned above, but compounded by weaknesses in local police and federal recording systems. Alternative methods – using survey technology, secondary analysis of police records and case-studies – offer opportunities to shed light on this problem at both local and national levels. Thirdly, there is a need to develop theories to explain the manifestation of racist violence in specific localities, as well as its extent at a national level. Some theories have been set out above (most of which have been found wanting), but there are surely further lines of inquiry to be developed.

Finally, there is a need to know more about what works in practice to reduce racist violence. Laws enhancing penalties for hate crimes in the USA and for 'racially aggravated offences' in the UK have been introduced and their use and impact requires close monitoring, especially in the light of the sceptical appraisal of their likely effectiveness (Jacobs and Potter 1998; Malik 1999). Alternative sentencing approaches – including those designed to rehabilitate offenders – require close monitoring and evaluation. There are also a range of community-based crime prevention initiatives springing up in a variety of different jurisdictions including anti-racist youth work, educational programmes and the like. We hope that scholars working within the field of 'race', ethnicity and crime will rise to the challenge of this research agenda.

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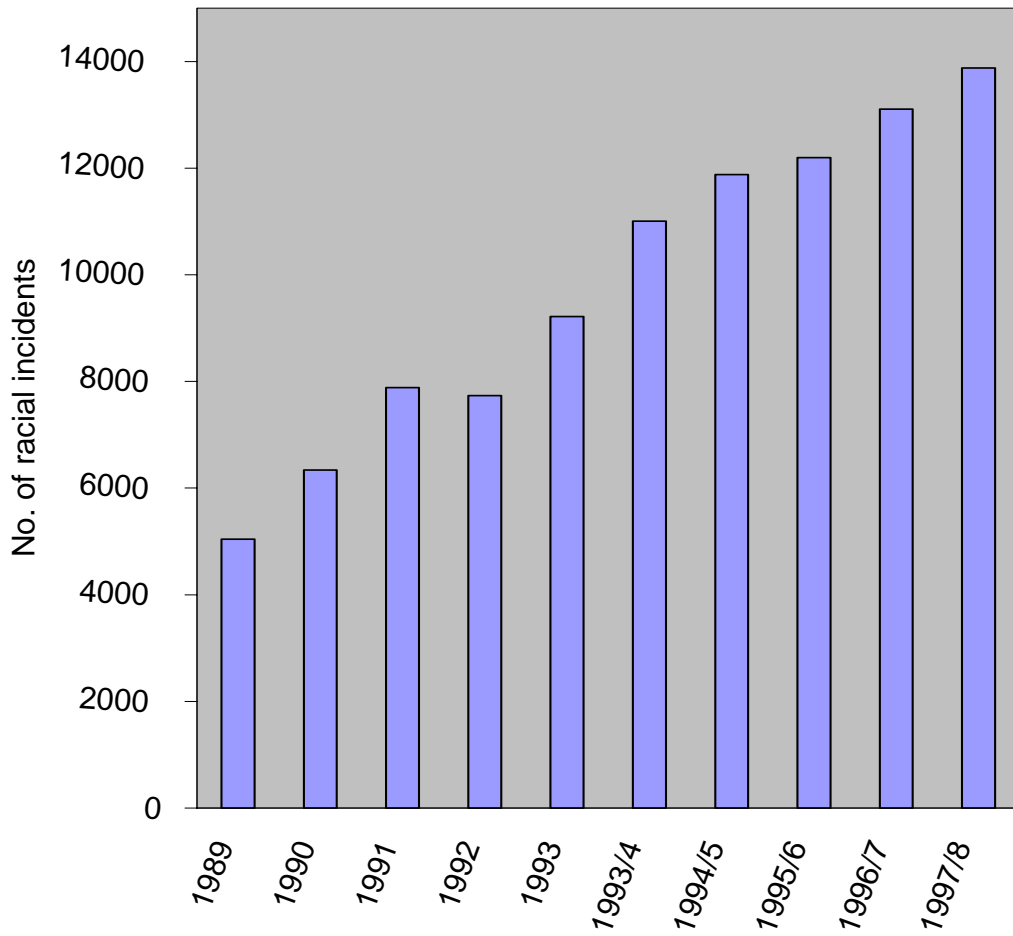
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FIGURE 1
Racial incidents recorded by the police in
England and Wales, 1989 - 1997/8



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