The Voices of Community Representatives and Parents

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Abstract

In examining community representatives’ views it was clear that processes of structural discrimination in social and economic contexts, together with the power of white middle class norms and values were seen as central to understanding ethnic differentiation. Paralleling teachers’ views home circumstances were also seen as key to educational achievement, but they were much more ready to acknowledge racial and ethnic inequalities and discrimination. Community representatives were also critical of both the need to engage with and change aspects of community values and norms, as well as informal and formal practices which maintained ethnic boundaries within schools. Parents’ narratives confirmed the sense of cultural divide and conflict which existed between home and school and they pursued a number of varied strategies to both protect their children from discrimination and hostility and provide a range of forms of caring and support to facilitate their progression through life. This evidence contradicted teachers’ perceptions. Parents identified patterns of residential segregation as a key constraining factor on young peoples’ life chances, as did the young people themselves.