A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH TO PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM. GAINING THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM PRIMARY PREVENTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The previous government developed guidelines for schools detailing primary prevention approaches that could be used to reduce risk and promote resilience in young people against extremist groups (DCSF, 2009). A community psychology approach is utilized in this research to gain the views of young people in one Local Authority (LA) about the most effective ways to implement the DSCF (2009) guidelines and build resilience locally. The guidelines will be adapted on the basis of the results so that implementation within the LA is relevant to local needs. Focus groups were designed using the structure of the Supply and Demand Model (Meah and Mellis, 2006) of radicalisation and were held with Year 9 students (n=22) from three secondary schools within the LA. A thematic analysis approach was taken to analyse the data gathered. The students developed their own thoughts about effective strategies to prevent violent extremism, which included: developing an environment that facilitates a sense of belonging in school; and providing opportunities for positive multi-cultural experiences. Students had concerns about approaches that encourage debates on current affairs (DCSF, 2009) because they felt this would create hostility in school. It was felt by participants that preventative approaches should focus on primary schools because secondary aged students already have established, fixed ideas. The utility of the Supply and Demand model (Meah and Mellis, 2006) as a risk and resilience framework for violent extremism is discussed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Community psychology emerged as a reaction to mental health practice that focused on individual factors and unduly neglected the relationship between the individual, their context and the wider dynamics of community life (Fondacara and Weinberg, 2002). Community psychology represents a paradigm shift away from a 'victim-blaming' approach to explore the impact interrelated systems have on an individual's functioning (Felner et al, 2000). One of the central tenets of community psychology is promoting psychological wellbeing through primary prevention at different systemic levels (MacKay, 2006). Primary prevention tends to be universally focused and aims to reduce the incidence of mental health difficulties by promoting resilience and reducing risk factors in 'non disordered' individuals (Felner et al, 2000).

The previous government's approach to social and emotional intervention in schools appears to be utilising some of the principles from community psychology to support the holistic needs of individuals in their community through primary prevention strategies. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) (DCSF, 2005a) and Healthy Schools (DCSF, 2005b) programmes target *all* students to try to reduce the incidence of emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD) (National Institution for health and Clinical Excellence, 2008). However, there are questions about how effective and appropriate such primary prevention programmes are in meeting their objectives (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008).

One of the more recent primary prevention education initiatives is part of the Preventing Violent Extremism – Winning Hearts and Minds (Her Magesty Government, 2007) policy

(hereafter referred to as 'Prevent')[1], developed by the previous Labour (Blair) government. The Prevent strategy aims to work in partnership with communities to intervene at different levels to stop people engaging with extremist groups. Education plays a key role in the Prevent policy and the DCSF developed a toolkit for schools titled 'Learning Together to be Safe' (DCSF, 2009) which documents primary prevention strategies that schools can use to target all children in primary and secondary schools to reduce the incidence rate of young people joining extremist groups. The government do not provide a definition of violent extremism in the policy or toolkit. In this paper violent extremism is understood as: the denial of other realities (Davies, 2008); holding one's own views as exclusive with absolutely no allowance for difference (Tutu, 2006) and the desire to impose these views on others using violence (Davies, 2009). Violent extremism is often referenced in the media synonymously with Islam (Thomas, 2009) although acts of violent extremism can occur from many groups and cultures, including political, animal rights and anti-abortion groups (DCSF, 2009).

Effective primary prevention programmes are based within a sound theoretical framework of risk and resilience factors, consider the impact developmental processes have on risk and resilience and take an ecosystemic approach (Kellam et al, 1999). In addition to this, primary prevention in a community psychology setting should take a consultation approach (Orford, 1992) where participants are included in decisions about the intervention and their participation (Fondacara and Weinberg, 2002). Children are very rarely consulted about educational intervention policy decisions, suggesting they are 'done to' rather than engaged as active participants in prevention processes (MacConville, 2006).

[1] The change of government in May 2010 to a Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government during the writing of this research means that the current preventing violent extremism policy and related education guidelines (DCSF, 2009) referred to may be subject to change. Lord Carlisle is currently reviewing the preventing violent extremism policies and is to be succeeded by David Anderson in 2011.

The current study has been commissioned by the Challenge and Innovation Fund (Communities and Local Government, 2009) following a research proposal from the Local Authority (LA) Partnership Preventing Violent Extremism Steering Group (members from Educational Psychology, the Advisory Teacher Service, Counter-terrorist Police Officers, Border Control, Housing and local colleges). The steering group was established to explore how the DCSF (2009) preventing violent extremism guidance could be adapted to ensure the initiative was relevant to young people in the LA to meet local needs. The focus of this research was to use a community psychology framework to gain the views of a selection of young people (aged 13 and 14) in the LA about local risk factors for engaging with extremist groups, and ways to reduce these through primary prevention in education. A focus group methodology will be used within a critical realist epistemological stance that recognises that research can gain a 'truth' from participants but that this is limited due to the impact of social actors and perceptions (Littlejohn, 2003). Young people's views will be fed back to the steering group who will adapt the strategies from the DCSF (2009) toolkit accordingly.

A co-researcher supported the data collection and analysis stages of the research. It is considered good practice to have two researchers to facilitate focus group data collection to ensure discussion can be developed whilst effective notes taken (Kitzinger, 1995). The co-researcher supported data analysis to promote inter-rater reliability and stability of analysis to increase the validity of the findings (Brock-Utne, 1996).

The purpose of the current study is to reflect the expertise young people have about the most effective ways to support their own needs in local policy. The toolkit is designed to support

primary and secondary aged pupils, although the steering group are initially focusing on rolling the programme out to secondary schools only. Secondary aged pupils (Year 9) will therefore be the focus of this research. The DCSF (2009) has written similar ‘preventing violent extremism’ guidelines for colleges; however other initiatives are being developed by the LA (for example, mentoring schemes) to support college-aged students in this area.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Key principles of community psychology to support the implementation of 'Learning Together to be Safe' (DCSF, 2009)

Community psychology embodies the application and practice of psychology outside the traditional, compartmentalised boundaries of clinic-based services (Orford, 1992). It aims to move away from individual blame to explore intervention at a systemic level (Mackay, 2006). This approach aligns positively with much of the preventing violent extremism literature with many authors moving away from 'deviancy' models of extremism towards community-based approaches to intervention (Moghaddam, 2005; Meah and Mellis, 2006; Davies, 2008; Jones, 2008; Kundnani, 2009). This literature review will critically explore preventing violent extremism literature that identifies risk factors for engaging with extremist groups, and considers the implications these have for school-based interventions within a community psychology framework, focusing specifically on:

- viewing the person in context;
- identifying risk and resilience factors; and
- primary prevention approaches.

2.1.1 The person in context

Clinical psychology and mental health settings have historically focused almost exclusively on modifying the behaviour, emotions and cognitions of the individual (Orford, 1992). Taking such an individualist, within-person deficit approach risks ignoring Lewin's (1951) equation

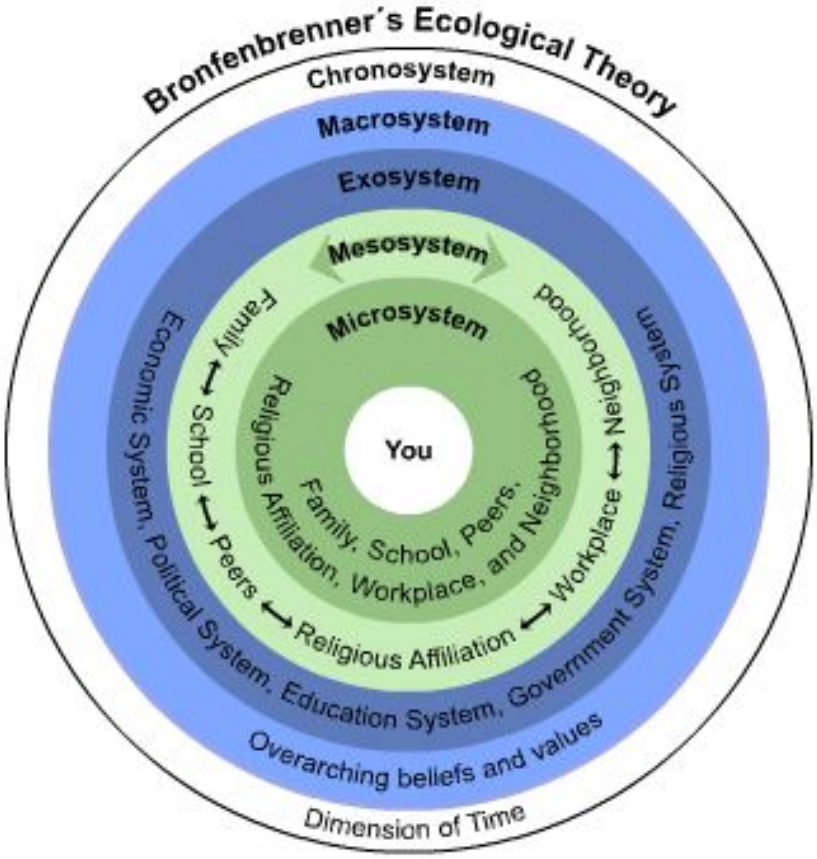
B=f (P,E) that proposes behaviour is a function of the person, environment and their interaction (Orford, 1992). Problem behaviour cannot be seen in isolation from the social context, and the interaction between the two needs to be explored (Bender, 1972). In response to this, community psychology takes a contextual and systemic approach to exploring problems and their solutions rather than emphasising individual traits (Lightburn and Sessions, 2006).

Felner et al (2000) refer to the transactional-ecological (T-E) model as effective in guiding practice to support the individual in context. The T-E model draws on transactional theory that emphasises the bi-directional influence between the individual and context (Cicchetti and Lynch, 1993). Transactional theory is not sufficient in itself as a guiding framework for intervention because it only explores the environments within which the individual interacts directly. There are some contexts that influence behaviour with which the individual has no direct contact or influence (Felner et al, 2000). Incorporating the ecological framework with transactional theory facilitates consideration of the influence that systemic processes have on an individual outside their proximal environment without there being a direct bi-directional influence (Seidman, 1988).

Bronfenbrenner (197) organises the ecosystemic approach into five levels: microsystem; mesosystem, exesystem, exosystem and chronosystem (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Diagrammatic representation of the eco-systemic approach (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 2005)



At the centre of the five levels is the ontologocial element, labelled ‘you’ in Figure 1. This acknowledges the impact the individual has on transactions in their environment (Lynch and Cicchetti, 1998). The microsystem represents the individual’s immediate context and is where most direct interactions with social agents take place (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The relationship between microsystems (for example school, home and church) form the mesosystems and each mesosystem has unique demands that shape the required transactions (Felner et al, 2000). The exosystem represents the link between the individual and a social setting within which the individual can be influenced by but may not be able to exert

influence over (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), for example the effect a husband's difficulties at work may have on his wife. Bronfenbrenner described this as 'an extension of the mesosystem embracing...specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which the person is found' (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 515). The macrosystem describes the prevalent culture and the influence of macroinstitutions such as the LA, another system within which the individual may not have a direct influence but which could have significant adaptive implications for behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The chronosystem encompasses the dimension of time in relation to development within ecosystems that can be external, for example the timing of a family divorce, or internal, for example the physiological changes that occur with aging (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Taking a T-E approach to community psychology is critical in understanding and supporting the impact systems may have on behaviour and variables linked to transactions within and between these (Cicchetti and Lynch, 1993). The individual is still in part responsible for problematic transactions; however these are viewed as systemic influences (Felner et al, 2000). Bronfenbrenner (2005) recognises this in his later bioecological model and refers to the importance of understanding the relationship between some aspect of the individual and some aspect of the context that influences the outcome of interest (Tudge et al, 2009). This emphasises that people are not passive recipients of the forces of their context, but that outcomes are influenced through experiential processes, such as demand characteristics (those that act as an immediate stimulus to another, such as sex or ethnicity), resource characteristics (mental and emotional resources, such as past experiences and skills) and force characteristics (differences of temperament, motivation and persistence) (Tudge et al, 2009).

Lynch and Cicchetti (1998) researched the utility of the T-E model in accounting for risk factors that contribute to poor outcomes for children. It was found that levels of the ecology influence each other and that these can interact with each other (for example community violence in the exosystem can contribute to maltreatment at home in the microsystem) and that individual functioning transacts with different levels of the ecosystem. A criticism of ecosystemic practice is we do not know how children process their environmental information and learn from their experiences, and until we do we cannot fully comprehend how environments influence human development (Schaffer, 2009). It is difficult to assess how effective a T-E approach is in supporting positive outcomes in practice. To support a T-E approach in education, professional services such as clinical psychology, educational psychology, housing, social services and youth inclusion support practitioners would need to work together to support the different ecosystems (Mackay, 2006). The previous Labour (Blair) government stated its commitment to providing integrated services in which children and families are at the centre (HMG, 2004: DCSF, 2010) and this has been a continued commitment in respect to special needs by the current coalition government (DfE, 2011). In practice however, this can present barriers with communication, resources and competing service targets (Moran et al, 2007). Laming (DCSF, 2010b) reviewed current integrated service support for families within LAs and concluded that there are still significant problems in the day-to-day reality of working across organisational boundaries, predominantly caused by poor information sharing practices. These have to be tackled to promote effective ecosystemic practice.

The DCSF (2009) guidance facilitates a T-E approach to initiatives focusing on preventing violent extremism in schools by offering guidance for reducing risk and promoting resilience in the ecosystems around young people and their transactions within these, rather than focusing on individual traits. The T-E model is a useful approach to exploring risk factors for engaging with extremist groups and developing interventions to promote resilience because it represents the complex societies within which we live. A T-E approach emphasises the complex interaction between factors within and across systems that influence thoughts, feelings and behaviours, an interaction that Meah and Mellis (2006) describe as an integral element of the radicalisation process.

2.1.2 Risk and Resilience

A key principle of community psychology is to develop interventions that counter identified risk factors and promote resilience within the ecosystems identified above (Felner et al, 2000), an approach adopted by the DCSF (2009) guidance. Early approaches to supporting children's development tended to focus exclusively on identifying risk factors that might increase negative outcomes. Dent and Cameron (2003) define risk factors as 'those life events and circumstances that combine to threaten or challenge healthy development' (Dent and Cameron, 2003, p.4). Numerous risk factors have been identified as contributing to poor outcomes for children, some of which include: parental conflict (Jenkins and Smith, 1991); overcrowding in the home (Rutter et al, 1975); parental psychiatric illness (Hammen et al, 1990); socio economic disadvantage (Bradley and Corwin, 2002) and early parenthood (Hofferth and Reid, 2002).

Focusing exclusively on risk factors has been increasingly criticised in recent years (Place et al 2002). There may also be negative psychological factors associated with being identified as an ‘at risk’ group as a result of unwarranted labelling (Orford, 1992). Being labelled ‘at risk’ could cause difficulties such as low expectations for the self and the self-fulfilling prophecy in which people perceive risk factors as fixed determinants of future outcomes. The risk model ignores the fact that many children develop successfully despite exposure to adverse circumstances (Werner and Smith, 1992). Whilst it is deemed as unhelpful to focus exclusively on risk factors (Howard et al, 1999), risk remains a useful construct. Identifying risk factors can lead to focused interventions to counter these. Resilience can be developed by supporting identified risk factors and both share the same fundamental aim of developing understanding about substantial threats to wellbeing and ways to overcome these (Luthar and Zelazo, 2003).

Identifying risk factors alone is therefore not sufficient in explaining children’s developmental outcomes and emphasis has shifted more recently to explore factors that enable some individuals to be more resilient in the face of adverse conditions compared to others (Howard et al, 1999). Dent and Cameron (2003) define resilience as ‘the concept that is used to describe the flexibility that allows certain children and young people who appear to be at risk to bounce back from adversity, to cope with and manage major difficulties and disadvantages in life, and even to thrive in the face of what appear to be overwhelming odds’ (Dent and Cameron, 2003, p.205). This definition highlights the ability of a resilient person not only to cope with challenging circumstances, but to spring back and return to a normal life balance. There are numerous definitions for resilience although the common theme appears to refer to the ability to ‘bounce back’ from adversity (Place et al, 2002). The concept of ‘being resilient’

has been questioned in terms of whether resilience arises from fixed, within person traits, or whether it is a concept that can be developed for all through the development of / exposure to protective factors, some of which include: being self reliant; having a positive outlook; utilising effective problem solving skills; having at least one close friend; having a positive role model; and being able to make a positive contribution (Place et al, 2002). The protective factors identified in the research (Cowen and Work, 1988, Place et al, 2002, Bernard, 2004, Edward and Warelow, 2005) demonstrate ontological and systemic factors. For the purpose of this research, resilience is therefore seen as a construct that arises from an interaction between protective factors within the individual and in the ecosystems around the individual (Edward and Warelow, 2005). The goal of interventions that aim to reduce risk and promote resilience should therefore be to build protective factors within and around the individual (Henderson, 1998). The DCSF (2009) approach to building resilience against extremist groups recognises that resilience arises from the interaction of ontological and systemic protective factors and targets intervention to build resilience to align with this (approaches are discussed in section 2.1.3.2). The evidence base for protective factors can be questioned and the reliability and validity can sometimes be questioned.

For example, Cicchetti and Rogosch (1997) explored resilience factors that contributed to positive outcomes in children who had been maltreated and children who had not been maltreated. They reported that for non-maltreated children relationship factors (such as emotional availability of a caregiver) were important in predicting adaptive functioning, whereas for maltreated children, ego-resilience, ego-control and self esteem were important. Luthar and Zelazo (2003) criticise resilience research for a lack of precision in identifying resiliency factors. Cicchetti and Rogoscho (1997) can be criticised in this respect for using

terms such as ‘ego-resilience’ without an explanation which negatively impacts implications for practice. Cicchetti and Rogoscho (1997) also treat the ‘non-maltreated’ children as a qualitatively different group from the ‘maltreated’ children yet their only evidence that the non-maltreated children have not been maltreated was that they were not identified as at risk by the Department for Social Services (DSS). Children in the non-maltreated group may experience similar adversity to those in the maltreated group in the absence of being on the DSS at risk register so conclusions about group differences may not be reliable. The children’s level of ‘adaptive functioning’ in the research was also assessed whilst children were at summer camp on the basis of peer report and counsellor observations of behaviour. These were combined with school information on attendance levels and academic achievement. Assessing children’s resilience and observing their behaviour whilst they were at summer camp may have produced different results than if they had been observed in the more natural home environment. This could lead to questions about the ecological validity of the research to make claims about factors that promote children’s general adaptive functioning.

A difficulty with risk and resilience research is that it typically examines largely unvarying lists of risk and protective factors (Luther and Zelazo, 2003). The generality of lists of risk and resilience factors generated by research suggests that a large number of disorders potentially arise from the same set of interacting factors (Felner et al, 2000). This does not explain what causes one person who experiences adversity to become depressed, another to become a substance abuser and another to perhaps turn to violent extremism. Luther and Zelazo (2003) and Felner et al (2000) seem to be suggesting therefore that when seeking to reduce incidence rates of specific difficulties in society it is important to take a more precise

approach to intervention based on the identification of more conceptually specific risk factors. This is difficult to achieve in practice because it is not possible to conduct experimental designs where life variables can be controlled and manipulated into randomised control trails. This is particularly the case for identifying risk factors for engaging with violent extremism as much of the research uses secondary source case studies in an attempt to track back across an individual's life span to identify retrospectively factors that contributed to one engaging with an extremist group. There are significant difficulties with the reliability and validity of this type of evidence (Wolpert et al, 2006) although it has been possible to identify some risk factors and map these on to approaches that could potentially build resilience (Moghaddam, 2005, Meah and Mellis, 2006, Davies, 2009). It is also difficult to identify specific risk factors for specific 'difficulties' in society because the variance in an individual's outcome following exposure to the same risk factors is likely to be the result of the interaction between the individual and their prior experiences.

For the purpose of this literature review, risk and protective factors identified as increasing or decreasing the likelihood of engaging with an extremist group are considered in terms of transactions within the micro, meso and exosystems of the ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This is because local education policy operates at the macrosystem (where the 'Learning Together to be Safe', DCSF (2009) guidelines will be developed) and has most influence in the micro, meso and exosystem. There will be brief consideration of the psychodynamic approach to understanding engagement with violent extremism and this will be acknowledged outside the ecosystemic framework. The psychodynamic perspective takes a psychological deficit approach. It could be argued that within person deficits fit within Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bioecological resource characteristics in the microsystem, but the concept of trait

deficits does not align positively with the ecosystemic approach in terms of the within-person focus. The psychodynamic approach does not appear to have been considered by the authors of the DCSF (2009) toolkit and focusing on a theory of within person deficit that lacks validity can be unhelpful, contributing to a 'blaming' culture (Fondacara and Weinberg, 2002). However, it is important to acknowledge the approach.

2.1.2.1 Within person risk factors

Psychological defence mechanisms

Post (1984) is a key proponent of the psychodynamic approach having observed that the psychological mechanism of 'splitting' (considered to be 'all' or 'nothing' dichotomous thinking) often presents with high frequency in terrorists. Post (1998) hypothesises that this is caused by 'deep psychological damage during childhood [that] produces narcissistic wounds which prevent the integration of the good and bad parts of the self' (Post, 1998, p.27). In this all or nothing, good or evil world, the idealised self is internalised, and the bad – the source of pain – is externalised and projected onto society (Post, 1984). To develop this hypothesis Post (1998) used secondary sources to demonstrate that terrorists often come from maladjusted families. However, these are descriptive data and cannot lead to causal explanations about engagement with terrorism. It is not clear in the research whether the identified 'dysfunctional' family backgrounds are any more dysfunctional than the family backgrounds of non-terrorists. It is also a big jump to conclude from a secondary source case study that maladjusted families cause splitting which causes one to become a terrorist. Using historical case studies can potentially be unreliable as the confirmatory bias of the author could act as a

mechanism whereby cases are only selected if they confirm / align with the theory. Far too often hypotheses are based on speculation or are derived from such a small number of cases that the findings cannot be considered reliable (Crenshaw, 2000).

Mechanisms such as 'splitting' may have been present in the cases studied by Post (1984), and may be present in people who have committed acts of violent extremism, but one cannot conclude from Post's research that this has been caused by the deep psychological trauma. Assuming static, within person qualities contribute to a young person engaging with violent extremism disregards the dynamics that shape and support the radicalisation process (Horgan, 2008). More recent research suggests that the dichotomous 'us' and 'them' thinking associated with splitting is more likely to arise as a result of cognitive biases associated with within and between group dynamics and community frustrations (Crenshaw, 2000: Stout, 2004: Taylor and Horgan, 2006: Horgan, 2008: Soucier et al, 2009). Despite this, counterterrorist operations and policies (for example the policy developed by the New York City Police Department, Silber and Bhatt, 2007) often rely on personality / trait based profiles.

2.1.2.2 Risk factors in the microsystem that may contribute to a young person engaging with violent extremism

Identity crisis and conceptual uncertainty

Experiencing a crisis in one's identity and uncertainty about one's place in society has been identified as a potential risk factor within the microsystem that may contribute to a young

person engaging with extremist groups (Meah and Mellis, 2006). Identity crisis can be considered within the microsystem level as it is suggested that it is not the result of within-person 'difficulties' but often the result of competing transactions between peers, family and community values (Heaven, 2001), or the result of questioning one's place in society (Meah and Mellis, 2006). The concept of 'identity' is difficult to define due to its subjective and personal nature. However social identity theory posits that it is constructed around group membership and affiliation (Tajfel, 1978). People generally have multiple identities which emerge depending on the group within the microsystem with which they are interacting (Heaven, 2001). These identities tend to develop in relative harmony, although an identity crisis can occur if there is conflict between the identities as a result of competing values (for example conflict between the identity one has at home and the identity one has at school) (Davies, 2009). There is however very little evidence that identity crises exist or how they are likely to be embodied.

Elsworthy and Rifkind (2006) propose that a crisis in identity can contribute to a young person feeling uncertain within themselves, which can provide an opportunity for extremist narrative to provide a sense of certainty about the social world and one's place within it. Wiktorowitz (2005) suggests that identity threat may be a particular difficulty for young British Muslims who have to reconcile being British and being Muslim, with little guidance on how to practice Islam in a Western country that is dominated by secular, political, economic and cultural traditions. Research suggests that some young British Muslims might be questioning what it means to be Muslim in Britain and 'A substantial percentage of those who pray regularly also appear to disagree with the traditional interpretation of Islam' (Sahin,

2005, p.174). This may then lead to conflict and questions about identity that extremist ideology can prey upon to provide answers and certainty (Meah and Mellis, 2006).

There is very little valid research that supports the link between a potential identity crisis and engagement with an extremist group. Testing hypotheses about identity crises as a contributory factor leading to extremism is very difficult as case studies of extremists can only be accessed retrospectively and the research would require the individual to be capable of the degree of self reflection necessary to support the identification of identity difficulties. Hogg et al (2007) has attempted to use a positivist design to explore the link between feeling uncertain about ones self and the strength of group affiliation and discusses this in terms of implications for our knowledge about risk factors for engaging with violent extremism.

Hogg et al, (2007) randomly assigned participants to high entitative (cohesive, structured, clear rules and a distinct aim) and low entitative (unorganised, unstructured with no clear aim) groups. Participants were then manipulated to feel conceptually certain or uncertain about themselves. To prime self certainty/uncertainty, half the participants in each group (high and low entitative) were asked to spend a few minutes thinking about aspects of their lives that made them certain about themselves and half were asked to spend a few minutes thinking about aspects of their lives that made them uncertain about themselves. Participants were then asked to write a few sentences about each aspect identified and were then given rating scale questions to assess how much affiliation they felt for their group.

Hogg et al, (2007) found that group identification was strongest among participants primed to feel uncertain in highly entitative groups. Uncertainty about oneself increased how strongly

one identified with the group, but only in the highly entitative group. This suggests that feelings of self uncertainty can increase feelings of affiliation with a group, but only if that group is structured, with clear roles and a distinct aim.

Hogg et al (2007) apply the findings of this study to an uncertainty reduction analysis of extremism. Hogg et al (2007) speculate that chronic levels of uncertainty or an identity crisis may motivate people to identify strongly with an extreme group which provide answers and structure to uncertainty and confusion within oneself.

There are obvious difficulties in generalising the results of this study to theories about extremism. Hogg et al (2007) ask participants to reflect on three aspects of their lives to produce self certainty or uncertainty. This does not equate to an identity crisis, or the 'chronic and extreme levels of uncertainty' (Hogg et al, 2007, p.141) that Hogg et al (2007) speculate are necessary for one to be susceptible to extremist ideology. The research also takes a positivist stance and was conducted in a laboratory, thus reducing ecological validity and making it difficult to know whether these processes would operate in a natural context. The groups used in the research were highly entitative but were not extreme, so one cannot conclude that the same processes would occur for extreme groups, without other factors (such as a person's morality, Bandura, 1998) disrupting feelings of group identification and affiliation.

Hogg et al's (2007) research does show that in a laboratory setting, self uncertainty can increase identification with entitative groups. Using a similar methodology, McGregor and Jordan (2007) found that low implicit self esteem may be a key vulnerability that predisposes

individuals towards defensive zeal, possibly to compensate for their uncertainty with their identity (McGregor and Jordan, 2007). Low implicit self esteem is not equivalent to an identity crisis, and throughout the literature identity crisis is not a variable that is well defined or necessarily measurable. It certainly is not measurable to the point where conclusions can be made about whether it is a risk factor for engaging with violent extremism.

The theory and research suggesting that an identity crisis might make someone vulnerable to extremist ideology is weak. Meah and Mellis (2006) incorporate identity crisis into their model of risk factors for engaging with extremism, although provide no references or evidence base to support the inclusion. Questioning one's identity is also a very normal part of adolescent development, particularly as teenagers balance the needs of their peer group and their parents within the microsystem (Heaven, 2001). Marcia (1980) even suggests that crises are central to identity formation. Therefore on their own, identity difficulties are unlikely to place someone in a position of risk for exploring violent extremism.

Davies (2009) agrees there is little evidence to suggest an identity crisis is likely to be a causal factor in engaging with an extremist group. Davies (2009) instead suggests that identity can be a risk factor in terms of the strong collective identity that can develop through group dynamics and affiliation, and that this can contribute to a 'hatred' for out-group members. This can then take complete dominance over other identities the individual may have held previously, contributing to the radicalisation process (Davies, 2009). This out-group hatred can arise from conflict between groups transacting in the meseosystem (Lilienfeld et al, 2009).

2.1.2.3 Risk factors in the mesosystem that may contribute to a young person engaging with an extremist group

Flunger and Zieburtz (2010) propose that several factors influence in-group, out-group attitudes in the mesosystem and can result in extreme in-group, out-group cognitive biases that facilitate ‘us’ versus ‘them’ thinking styles. These factors can include group size and minority versus majority status (Turner, 1999) which contribute to social comparison which can produce pressure for intergroup differentiation and conflict (Flunger and Zieburtz, 2010). Lilienfeld et al (2009) suggest cognitive distortions are the ‘significant contributors to ideological extremism’ (Lilienfeld et al, 2009, p.390) that present within groups to contribute to the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ thinking patterns:

- Confirmation bias (tendency to seek out evidence consistent with one’s own views and ignore evidence that contradicts them)
- Naïve realism (believing the world is as we see it)
- Bias blind spot (others are biased but we are not)
- False consensus effect (overestimating the extent to which others share our views)
- An insider perspective (failure to see how people outside one’s insulated group perceive a situation)

These cognitive biases are present in typical social cognition and many groups who do not engage in violent extremism. It would be overwhelming if we had to analyse every piece of data and decide what to do with it. Instead we rely on automatic processing of information that is quickly categorised and compared with our schemas (Harrington, 2004). Flunger and

Zieburtz (2010) argue that negative out-group attitudes are not generated through the cognitive processes of individuals, but through the cognitive processes of groups. Significantly negative out-group thought patterns that we can observe with extremist groups (Lilienfeld et al, 2009) occur when there is a risk that 'we' would be subordinated by 'them' (Flunger and Deburtz, 2010). Lilienfeld et al (2009) suggest that the most deadly political movements, such as Nazism, Stalinism, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge and Islamic fundamentalism share extreme forms of cognitive biases, particularly the unshakeable conviction that they are right and that their opponents are wrong. Lilienfeld et al (2009) have not directly researched case studies to evidence this claim, however and use secondary source case material.

Cognitive biases are present in many groups who do not commit acts of violence towards others (Sindnic and Reicher, 2008). There needs to be a clearer understanding of the conditions that make these cognitive biases so entrenched, leading to extreme in-group preference and out-group hostility and eventually violent acts (for example community frustrations which are discussed in reference to the exosystem, Moghaddam, 2005).

Bandura (1998) proposes that one mechanism by which an 'us' versus 'them' thinking style can lead to violence is through processes of cognitive reconstrual and moral disengagement. What is culpable can be made honourable by cognitively reconstruing the out-group as all bad and blaming the 'other' for any suffering experienced (Bandura, 1998). Bandura (1998) proposes that this cognitive reconstrual is facilitated through euphemistic language. Language shapes the thought patterns from which many people shape their behaviours. Activities can therefore take on different meanings depending on what they are called (Gambino, 1973). Extremist groups often take war-like names, such as the National Liberation Army

(Columbia), Revolutionary People's Struggle (Egypt), Palestine Liberation Front (Palestine), Animal Liberation Group (UK), dehumanising the out-group as 'Infidels' (Loza, 2007) to promote 'us' versus 'them' belief systems. This justifies and diffuses responsibility for one's actions (Bandura, 1998).

Cognitive biases such as 'us' versus 'them' thinking patterns are also strengthened through advantageous comparison where self-deplored acts can be made to appear righteous by comparing them with widespread cruelties inflicted on one's own people (Bandura, 1998).

McAlister and Bandura (2006) sought to clarify the role of moral disengagement and cognitive biases in the public's support for military force against Iraq. The modes of moral disengagement were assessed through a ten-item scale probing:

- Moral sanctioning of lethal means
- Disavowal of personal responsibility or military campaigns
- Minimisation of civilian casualties
- Attribution of blame
- Dehumanisation of one's foes
- Support for military force

Respondents were drawn from a nationwide (US) random digit dialling interview system. Results showed that moral disengagement accounted for a significant share of the variance in support of military force against Iraq. People in favour of military action against Iraq tended to reconstrue violent means as moral actions; minimised civilian casualties; and dehumanised

the foe. This suggests that conflicting relationships between groups in the mesosystem can contribute to moral disengagement.

The information given in McAlister and Bandura's (2006) methodology section suggests that the interviewers had a strict schedule that relied on Likert scales rather than open ended questions that would allow people to qualify their responses. Likert scales could have distorted the results, forcing people to select a number to indicate how much they agree with the concepts used to assess moral disengagement. People may have given quantitative, numeric responses without thinking about their opinions. Asking for qualitative qualification may have given a greater insight into the thought processes behind the moral disengagement and cognitive biases and increased the validity of the results. This would have taken additional time however and McAllister and Bandura (2006) may not have been able to select as many participants (1,499 participants were identified with a response rate of 59%), leading to a less representative sample.

McAllister and Bandura's (2006) research was not conducted with members of extremist groups, although demonstrates that for a selection of the US population, violence and military action can be justified through the above processes of moral disengagement and cognitive reconstrual. Demonstrating these processes in the general population suggests that similar mechanisms may operate in extremists and that moral disengagement may serve to entrench cognitive biases and justify violent actions against an out-group (Moghaddam, 2005 and Meah and Mellis, 2006).

The evidence for the development of cognitive biases through group identification in the mesosystem and moral desensitisation suggests that there is a trend for groups to experience in-group, out-group thinking styles (Lilienfeld et al, 2009, Flunger and Ziebertz, 2010) and that these may become entrenched through processes of moral desensitisation to contribute to the moral sanctioning of violence against an out-group. In addition to these processes risk factors in the exosystem, such as community frustrations are likely to compound this effect (Stout, 2004: Moghaddam, 2005: Meah and Mellis, 2006: Jones, 2008).

2.1.2.4 Risk factors within the exosystem that may contribute to a young person engaging with violent extremist groups

Meah and Mellis (2006) propose that frustrations in the community (alienation, discrimination, poverty, injustice and inequality) interact with factors in the micro and mesosystem to increase risk of engaging with violent extremism and enhance cognitive 'us' versus 'them' distortions. Frustrations such as a perception of in-group powerlessness and perceptions of incompatibility with the out-group have been shown by Sindic and Reicher (2008) to increase separatist attitudes towards out-groups.

Moghaddam (2005) proposes that the first step to engaging with violent extremism is a perception of injustice and feelings of frustration within the community. Liese (2004) suggests that children who feel ostracised at school experience frustration and resentment towards the social groups they blame for their feelings. Once children experience resentment they seek others with similar experiences and once they acquire agreement from others about blame allocation, justification can be gained for actions towards the target group, that stem

from anger (Liese, 2004). This suggests a mechanism whereby community grievances can encourage people to affiliate with groups who share similar experiences and frustrations, facilitating the transfer of blame for one's feelings onto an out-group (Jones, 2008), contributing to the 'us' versus 'them thinking within the exosystem.

Cockburn (2007) researched the views of young, male, far right, British National Party (BNP) sympathisers. Participants were identified from a group who raised fascist salutes to those protesting against local gains by the BNP. Cockburn (2007) found that the young men felt they were 'oppressed in their own country' (Cockburn, 2007, p.554), reported that they had previously been bullied and isolated by Asian youngsters at school, and that the presence of different cultures in society represented a threat to white British values. The young men in Cockburn's (2007) study appear to be transferring the blame for their community frustrations, perceptions of isolation and cultural insecurity onto an identifiable out-group, viewing individuals as representatives of the group. The young men were quoted to be extremely derogatory against people of Asian heritage, possibly demonstrating the role that community tensions can have in developing extreme views against 'out-group' members. The young men in Cockburn's study refused to be tape recorded, so the data were recorded retrospectively. This implies a large degree of researcher interpretation which reduces the reliability and validity of the findings. Reporting data always requires some degree of interpretation (including positivist research designs) and Cockburn (2007) explicitly states his epistemological stance and that his methodology has led him to recall and interpret responses. This transparency ensures the research can be considered cautiously.

This sense of being isolated and bullied by 'out-groups' in the community can also be seen in memoirs written by Ed Hussain (who left radical Islam) about his journey towards radicalisation and talks of feeling isolated from peers in school as an influencing factor:

> '…[they] were new arrivals from Bangladesh who spent their entire weekends watching melodramatic Indian films…they lived in council flats…In contrast I was tucked away with news-watching parents in a Victorian terrace…I could not relate to the boys and they knew I did not fit in' (Hussain, 2007, p.7).

Hussain subsequently developed a close relationship with his 'Grandpa' (the sheikh who was master of five Muslim mystical orders), which led to him becoming 'even more of a misfit' within his local community (Hussain, 2007, p.19). Hussain joined a mosque where he met people with whom 'I could relate to…[and who] took me to a radically new level' (Hussain, 2007, p.27).

Hussain's (2007) personal reflections could demonstrate how difficulties 'fitting in' in the community and feeling rejected from his peer group were resolved through membership of an extremist group.

Feelings of humiliation in the community have been one of the most cited risks which may encourage you people to join extremist groups (Elsworthy and Rifkind, 2006). Linder (2002) analysed acts of terrorism using 219 interviews in Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi and concluded that feeling humiliated within society because of one's group membership initially

leads to feelings of depression but then develops into feelings of humiliation. Linder (2002) hypothesises that this then increases the likelihood of engaging with extremist groups and acts of aggression towards those who are perceived to be the humiliators. Linder's (2002) research is difficult to generalise to violent extremism within the UK because it was conducted in countries where feelings of humiliation and oppression are likely to be more intense. This research is still important when exploring preventing violent extremism in the UK because there is no doubt that individuals are humiliated in our society. Individuals do not have to be personally frustrated or humiliated, but can experience these strong emotions as a result of identification with people they affiliate with in other countries (Stout, 2004). Humiliation does not need to be experienced directly and can be by proxy (Jones, 2008). Mohammad Sidique Khan, thought to be the leader of the group who bombed the London underground, stated in a video:

> 'Your democratically elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world…Until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment, torture of my people we will not stop this fight' (cited in Jones, 2008, p.38).

Humiliation by proxy does not negate the fact that individuals in Western society have very real grievances and perceptions of humiliation. Feelings of discrimination and humiliation could also be strengthened by academic papers such as Loza's (2007) article, published in the journal 'Aggression and Violent Behaviour', which may be inappropriately suggesting that 'Arabic TV shows are filled with messages of hate and enticement against the West' (Loza, 2007, p.144). Feelings of humiliation may also be unwittingly strengthened by the Prevent

policy which identifies the Muslim population as a target group for preventing violent extremism interventions. Kundnani (2009) interviewed LA workers involved in implementing Prevent-related strategies, and reports that interviewees felt that Muslims were being portrayed as a suspect community, that Prevent fosters social divisions, encourages tokenism, facilitates violations of privacy and increases the risk of political violence. Kundnani's (2009) sample was small (27 Muslim's and 5 non-Muslims), so may not reflect an accurate representation of views on the Prevent strategy. People who agree to participate in research interviews tend to have strong opinions on the subject area which may also have led to a response bias (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). The research does give a good indication of some of the perceptions of Muslims who may be particularly affected by the policy, and is supported by the House of Commons' (2010) review report of Prevent. The report states that:

> 'The single focus on Muslims in Prevent has been unhelpful. We conclude that any programme which focuses solely on one section of a community is stigmatising, potentially alienating, and fails to address the fact that that no section of a population exists in isolation from others' (House of Commons, 2010, p.5).

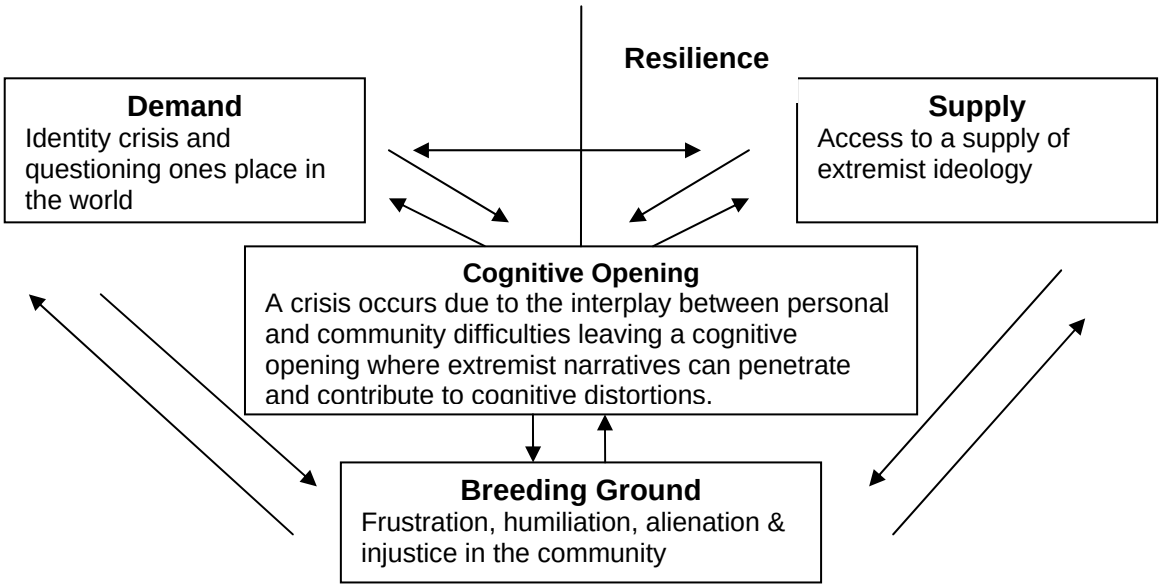
In a Guardian article Theresa May (coalition government MP) recognises that there 'has to be a new dialogue and relationship between government and Muslim communities' (cited in Casciani, 2010).

2.1.2.5 The utility of identifying risk factors for engaging with violent extremism

Identifying specific risk factors such as identity difficulties (whether this is linked to an identity crisis or group identification and 'us' versus 'them' thinking patterns), moral disengagement and community frustrations (such as perceptions of alienation from other groups, isolation and humiliation) is helpful in providing a framework to guide discussions with the young people in the current study about preventing violent extremism. The evidence base for the identified risk factors is predominantly based upon retrospective case studies or experimental designs, whose findings have been generalised, which negatively affects the reliability and validity of the results. The evidence presented is also weak in terms of the correlational links that are made between variables to draw conclusions about risk factors. However, it is difficult accurately to evaluate risk factors for engaging with violent extremism when access to a target population is likely to be limited and restricted to those who are willing to be identified as sympathising with groups (for example, Cockburn's (2007) participants) or through access to case notes from those convicted of violent extremist offences (for example Lilienfeld et al's (2009) research). In a scale of categories of evidence, secondary source case material is considered by Wolpert et al (2006) to rate as D on a scale A-D where A type evidence is considered to have strong implications for practice and D is considered to have lesser implications for practice. Wolpert et al (2006) suggest that evidence derived from randomised control trials has the strongest implications for practice; however it is neither possible nor ethical to conduct pre and post test research to identify risk and protective factors for violent extremism. In real world research it is sometimes the case that one has to work with the imperfect evidence to which one has access to draw conclusions, whilst recognising the implications this has for practice and the need to be cautious.

Following the identification of potential risk factors, it is essential to avoid the problem of over prediction through positive errors. Exposure to the above risk factors does not mean that a person is going to become a violent extremist. Meah and Mellis (2006) developed the Supply and Demand Model of violent extremism that shows that the above risk factors have to interact with each other and a supply of extremist ideology to increase a person's risk. Even if one is exposed to an interaction of risk factors, resilience factors (which the authors do not identify or elaborate on) may override the interaction between any risk factors. The model was developed for Islamic extremism but demonstrates the complex interplay between individual and systemic influences on a person that might encourage them to engage with violent extremism, without pathologising the person.

Figure 2:
A diagrammatic representation of the Supply and Demand Model (Meah and Mellis, 2006)



A criticism of the Meah and Mellis model is that they give no information to elaborate the resilience strand they identify. A literature search of ways to build resilience against violent extremist ideologies revealed papers that proposed resilience factors based upon the knowledge base of risk factors (Moghaddam, 2005: Davies, 2008: Horgan, 2008: Davies, 2009). This demonstrates Luthar and Zalazo's (2003) point that despite being criticised (Howard et al, 1999), risk remains a useful concept from which interventions can be developed to promote resilience. Primary prevention strategies to preventing violent extremism are therefore developed by the DCSF (2009) toolkit to detail approaches deigned to build resilience against extremism, on the basis of what is known about identified risk factors.

2.1.3 Primary prevention

Identifying risk and resilience factors through the T-E approach and viewing the person in context leads to the third element of community psychology that is focused upon in this research: the use of primary prevention to reduce risk and promote resilience. Bender (1972) described primary prevention as a central tenet of community psychology. It aims to reduce the incidence of particular problems in living by strengthening resilience and reducing risk factors within ecosystems for the disorder-free community. Primary prevention efforts should therefore be mass or population-focused (Felner et al, 2000). In practice, resource limitations have led many preventative initiatives to focus on specific 'at risk' populations (Orford, 2000). Targeting resources at 'at risk' individuals attempts to promote social justice through equal access to resources (Kenny and Hage, 2009); however those in power within the

community generally determine which interventions and resources are allocated and to which target populations (Fondacara and Weinberg, 2002).

For primary prevention interventions to be effective in education it is important that they are mass focused and do not target specific groups, which can lead to alienation (Kundnani, 2009) and difficulties associated with labelling (increase of negative stereotypes and the self fulfilling prophecy). The Prevent policy has been extensively criticised for targeting resources at a target population (Muslims) (Dodd, 2009, Kundnani, 2009, Thomas, 2009) and the DCSF (2009) guidelines have avoided this by explicitly targeting the resource towards a number of subject areas (religion, political views and animal rights activists).

2.1.3.1 Primary Prevention in Education

Schools support a wide education agenda that teaches students academic skills alongside promoting social and emotional health through primary prevention initiatives (Greenberg et al, 2003). This is in line with the Every Child Matters (DCSF, 2003) agenda that advocates the school's role in ensuring children know how to be healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and become economically prosperous, rather than just focusing on academic achievement. The preventing violent extremism initiative fits well with the aims of the Every Child Matters (2003) agenda and the previous Labour (Tony Blair) government has made it clear through the DCSF (2009) toolkit that a universal primary prevention approach should be taken through the education system to support *all* children to prevent violent extremism. This is positive, as the Prevent agenda (that initiated the toolkit) allocates funds to

LAs to conduct preventing violent extremism work in direct proportion to the number of Muslims residing in the area (Kundnani, 2009).

Greenberg et al (2003) report that primary prevention initiatives in schools are often poorly thought out, short-term and fragmented. Teachers can feel untrained to teach to primary prevention strategies and are often under-resourced (Fagan et al, 2008). An additional problem, particularly with the preventing violent extremism agenda, could be that teachers may not feel it is their role to support children through primary prevention interventions. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) certainly feel that it is not the role of education to provide therapeutic intervention to support children's social and emotional needs and suggest that this can actually be disruptive and have a negative impact on children's development. Two teachers commented in a recent Times Educational Supplement (TES, 19.02.2010) article that violent extremism is 'a family problem, not the problem of the teacher' and asked 'Is there anything else the government would like us to do?' These statements reflect the views of only two teachers, but suggests that the toolkit may need careful consultation and collaboration with schools to look at feasible and practical ways in which school staff can support students in this area, rather than presenting them with a list of strategies (as has happened nationally with the Toolkit). Teachers are key stakeholders in the preventing violent extremism initiative and if they are not consulted with regards to implementation, the intervention is less likely to be effective (Timmins et al, 2006). Consulting with teachers about implementation will be one of the recommendations for the LA steering group to consider.

Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002) conducted a national study of delinquency prevention in United States (US) schools and found that many of the initiatives were poorly implemented

and not taught in accordance with the programme. The preventing violent extremism initiative in schools is at risk of suffering a similar fate nationally, as guidance has been sent to schools with little support for implementation. An article in the TES (19.02.2010) about the Toolkit and schools' role in preventing violent extremism clearly misinterpreted the agenda. The article led with the title 'Can you spot a terrorist in your classroom?' which gives teachers the impression that the Toolkit promotes early identification of potential terrorists, when in fact it provides educational strategies to reduce risk and promote resilience against violent extremism (as will be discussed below). To support teachers in providing effective primary prevention interventions, Fagan et al, (2008) found there need to be clear goals for the programme, high levels of support, programme monitoring, clear communication between staff and flexible, non-complex implementation strategies. The DCSF (2009) toolkit in itself does little to provide such support.

Despite difficulties schools face when implementing primary prevention initiatives, it appears that approaches to overcome these difficulties include consultation with staff and support that promotes consistent, structured implementation (Greenberg et al, 2003: Fagan et al, 2008).

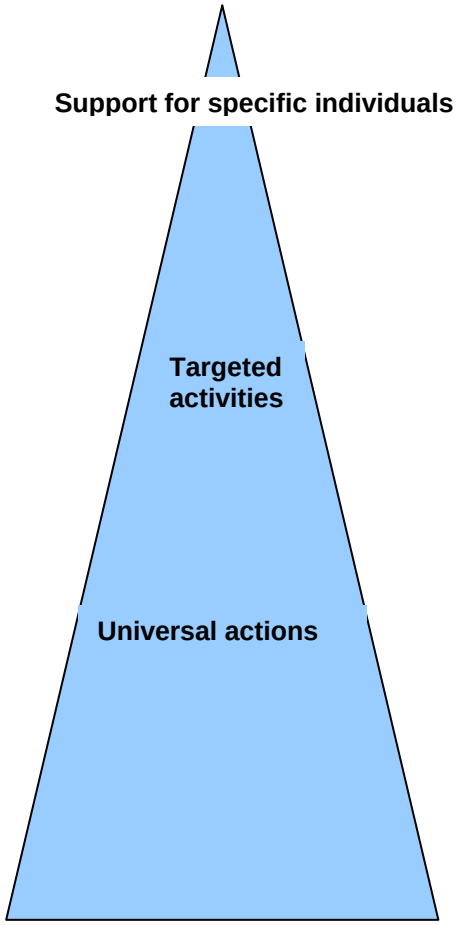
Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) suggest that there often appears to be an assumption that primary prevention in education is a positive adaption to the national curriculum. Primary prevention in education does not seek to gain the consent of children or their parents, which goes against key ethical principles of intervention (BPS ethical guidelines, 2009). Also, the interventions are selected and designed by experts and may not be culturally sensitive (Kundnani, 2009). These factors will in part be addressed by this research, in terms of giving some students the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of the guidelines to address

issues such as whether there are any strategies that students are unlikely to want to participate in and cultural sensitivity. It is acknowledged that only a small number of students were offered this opportunity and that although they were afforded chance to contribute, issues of consent and cultural sensitivity will remain unresolved.

2.1.3.2 The role of the DSCF (2009) toolkit in informing primary prevention of violent extremism

The toolkit primarily advises schools about universal intervention strategies to support all children and promote resilience against extremist group recruitment tactics. The toolkit also offers guidance for individuals who may be experiencing specific difficulties (such as experiencing contact with an extremist group), as considered good practice by Hage et al (2007). Figure 3 demonstrates some of the key aspects from the toolkit.

Figure 3:
A tiered approach to how schools can work to prevent violent extremism (adapted from the DCSF (2009) toolkit



- Effective pupil support processes
- Raise staff awareness on key issues
- Form good links with police and other partners for information sharing
- Access external support

- Use curriculum to challenge extremist narratives
- Increase staff confidence to create space to debate controversial issues
- Understand local issues and tensions
- Develop community contacts with mentor and role model links

- Promote Every Child Matters outcomes
- Effective anti-bullying strategies
- Narrowing the attainment gap between groups
- Promote wider skill development in teaching and learning
- Encourage active citizenship and pupil voice
- Develop links with families and communities through extended schools.

The DCSF (2009) toolkit identifies resilience strategies (based on theories of risk rather than research on successful approaches) to overcome risk factors identified as potentially contributing to engagement with extremism, such as those discussed above: identity difficulties; cognitive distortion; moral disengagement and community frustrations. The House of Commons (2010) review report of Prevent criticises the policy for 'taking insufficient account of recent research and intelligence on this subject' (House of Commons, 2010, p.27). The authors of the DCSF (2009) toolkit avoided this criticism when developing

the guidelines by consulting with academic scholars who are considered experts in preventing violent extremism, and have drawn on research in the area.

The DCSF (2009) toolkit has some links with the identity research and attempts to support potential identity difficulties within the micro and mesosystems by encouraging schools to promote a valuing ethos that promotes a strong sense of belonging and supporting students at risk of isolation. Schools are encouraged to explore diversity and shared values, challenge prejudice and create a shared culture of openness to enable students to develop positive self identities. Creating such a culture aims to increase attachment and identity with the school so that young people do not have these needs met through other organisations, as may have been the case for Ed Hussain (2007).

At the cognitive level to reduce extreme in-group / out-group thinking styles and to reduce moral disengagement, the DCSF (2009) suggests strategies that align with a paper written by Moghaddam (2005). Moghaddam (2005) suggests that to prevent violent extremism, education needs to provide young people with critical evaluation skills so they can question and challenge information they receive, reducing the dichotomous ‘us’ versus ‘them’ thinking patterns. The DCSF (2009) toolkit encourages schools to lead debates in Religious Education and explore current local and international affairs. The aim is to promote critical, flexible thinking, human rights and an appreciation of differing views to reduce absolutism and the dehumanising of the ‘other’ (Davies, 2009). This suggests that if we can promote the moral engagement of young people through humanising their perception of ‘out-groups’, whoever they may be, in current affairs and blur the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ by promoting a balanced argument, we may be able to promote resiliency against extremist ideology

(Bandura, 1998: McAllister and Bandura, 2006: Lilienfeld et al, 2009). Omar Bakri (Islamic militant leader) reports that he interacts with potential recruits in a way that encourages them to take on the group's views for themselves, so they have 'individual ownership over [their] decision', based on donated information (cited in Wiktorowitz, 2005). Education should also strive for young people to be able to have individual ownership over their decisions, but in a way that provides exposure to a range of views and critical thinking to promote informed choices, rather than absolutism and taking on 'group views'.

Critical thinking and debate in schools around current local and international affairs has been suggested for both primary and secondary school settings, although there would need to be careful consideration about how this is done with regards to children's developmental stages. Kuhn (2000) suggests that young people often experience absolutism, where knowledge is seen as objective and factually correct or incorrect. At a young age there is very little understanding that knowledge could be subjective or uncertain. Burr and Hoffer (2002) suggest that a core developmental task is to negate the tension between the subjective and objective aspects of knowledge. Debating current issues in schools addresses the aim to move students from an absolutist to multiplist view of the world in which all individuals are entitled to their own opinions, and where no one opinion is more correct than another (Burr and Hofer, 2002). Developing a multiplistic view of the world is a high order skill and will need careful consideration when encouraging students to debate current issues and the cognitive skills they will need to have learnt. The multiplist approach argues that all views are equally valid (including violent extremist views): there would have to be caveats with this approach in school to ensure respect and tolerance.

Focusing on increasing cognitive flexibility through debate ignores the impact affect can have on cognition. Affect surely serves as a strong maintaining factor for absolutism and this will have an impact on debate in schools and the ability of debate alone to reduce 'us' and 'them' thinking. Resnick (2008) meanwhile suggests that promoting autonomy and critical thinking on current affairs with a religious element is unethical. Resnick (2008) argues that religious education has a fervent commitment to tradition that values obedience over autonomy, and schools do not have the right to challenge this. Resnick (2008) proposes that instead education should reinforce the roots of tolerance. Whether schools encourage debate or not, Davies (2004) found that students want more information in citizenship education about current wars to order to be better informed. It is impossible to think totally critically and objectively, but we can be made aware of the subjective nature of our views, their origin and acknowledge multiple realities (Davies, 2008).

To support community frustrations and build resilience at the exosystemic level, the DCSF (2009) toolkit promotes the school's role in addressing community grievances by listening to and understanding tensions within the community. Providing a safe space to listen to grievances in the community may enable people to have their voice heard. Not having a voice in the community can be a contributory factor to feeling frustrated (Ross, 1993). Asking schools to support community grievances and hold community meetings role may require additional funding for training or specific guidance, neither of which are provided by the toolkit. Schools may not have the capacity to resolve the community grievances and the role may be to signpost to further support.

The above strategies are a sample of many listed in the DCSF (2009) toolkit and are based on theory but do not have a research base demonstrating them as effective in reducing recruitment of young people to extremist groups. The strategies are hypothesised to build resilience based on what research suggests are risk factors but it would be very difficult to test and measure the impact of promoting a sense of belonging in school, supporting the community and developing critical thinking skills around current affairs as one cannot implement such intervention and then conduct pre/post test measures on the number of people joining extremist organisations. The strategies recommended do fit well with other models of preventing violent extremism through education, such as the XvX model developed by Davies (2008) that advocates education's role in developing students':

- knowledge base: Media education, teaching about conflict, critical education and political citizenship (cognitive opening);
- value base: Education with a foundation in human rights, children involved in decision making throughout school, democracy and dialogue (breeding ground);
- operational base: Critical thinking and debate around current issues, restorative justice processes, advocacy and honesty (cognitive opening and breeding ground); and
- scaffolding base: Developing hybrid identities, emphasis upon commonalities and a perception that 'good enough' is 'good enough'.

The DCSF (2009) toolkit also fits well with Finkelstein (2004) and Moghaddam's (2005) views that violent extremism can in part be prevented by school staff who promote a critical understanding of religion, ensuring that different views are heard fairly, but that all are questioned, reviewed and discussed.

2.2 Using students' views to develop intervention to take a community psychology approach to preventing violent extremism in the LA

Aspects of the DCSF (2009) toolkit already fit well within the model of good practice primary prevention developed by Hage et al (2007). Hage et al (2007) recommend that preventative interventions:

- address both the individual and the contextual/systemic factors that contribute to psychological distress and well-being;
- reduce risks as well as promote strengths and well-being;
- consider the social justice implications of prevention research;
- promote, and support systemic initiatives that prevent and reduce the incidence of psychological and physical distress and disability;
- strengthen the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities;
- focus on multiple risk factors.

The DSCF (2009) toolkit is guidance for LAs rather than a statutory obligation, so some of the criticisms of the above strategies (such as the developmentally appropriateness of debating current affairs) can, in the case of the current study, be addressed by the LA steering group that commissioned this research. To align preventing violent extremism in the LA more fully with a community psychology approach to primary prevention, there needs to be less emphasis on professionals as 'experts' and greater emphasis on collaboration and consultation with stakeholders (Mackay, 2006). Primary prevention has historically failed to incorporate the voices, insights and experiences of the target population, yet working collaboratively with

communities to promote empowerment is a central tenet of community psychology (Fondacara and Weinberg, 2002). In addition to being an important part of community psychology, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) highlighted that children have a right to express themselves on any matters affecting them. Despite this there is research to suggest that children are commonly left out of decision-making processes and that more needs to be done to promote young people's involvement in educative processes (MacConville, 2006). Compliance with the UNCRC is monitored by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, a group of independent international experts on children's rights (Lundy, 2007). In 2002 the Committee documented its concern that:

> 'In education, school children are not systematically consulted in matters that affect them…(the UK Government should) take further steps to promote, facilitate and monitor systematic, meaningful and effective participation of all groups of children in society, including in school' (as cited in Lundy, 2007, 928).

This research seeks to gain the views of a sample of young people in the LA about violent extremism and their experiences of strengths and difficulties within the different ecosystems that may increase or decrease the likelihood of a young person engaging with an extremist group. If the LA were blindly to implement strategies from the toolkit, this would be without understanding whether these strategies are the best ways of supporting young people locally. Some of the strategies (particularly the school's role in community grievances and debating current affairs in school) are sensitive and it would be unethical to put an intervention into place without eliciting and considering at least some young people's views about any perceived potential negative outcomes. One of the key barriers to primary prevention initiatives is community readiness (Wandersman and Florin, 2003). Researching the views of

young people in this area will give an indication as to whether young people are ready for this type of intervention.

Eliciting the views of some young people in the LA about ways to prevent violent extremism is important in promoting a resilience rather than deficit approach. Some primary prevention interventions are criticised by Cowen (2001) for focusing purely on risk factors, so this research aims to talk to young people about strengths in the community that can be utilised and built upon to support young people: an approach in line with positive psychology (Bernard, 2004).

In line with a community psychology approach, primary prevention should also be empowering. Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as both 'individual determination over one's life and democratic participation in the life of one's community' (Rappaport, 1987, p.121). An empowering primary prevention should therefore gain consent from participants and participants should be actively involved in the design of the intervention and how it is implemented (Zimmerman, 2000). It is not possible to gain consent from every student in the LA about whether they wish to participate in the preventing violent extremism initiative because it has the potential to become a non-statutory embedded part of the curriculum (as has been the case with SEAL). This research aims to take steps towards empowerment by involving a selection of students in the design and implementation element (as advocated by Zimmerman, 2000). This appears to happen rarely in education (Lundy, 2007) and even Rappaport (1987) neglects the role of talking to children about educative intervention:

> ‘When such programmes are developed in schools we want to know something about the impact on the teachers, the administrators, the social climate, and the educational policies’ (Rappaport, 1987, p.133).

The current study has been commissioned to work with participants instead of advocating for them, moving away from the monolithic helping mentality (Rapapport, 1987). Feeding back to the students about how their views have changed the way the DCSF (2009) toolkit is being acted upon locally is an essential part of the empowerment process because it can be psychologically damaging for participants to feel their participation has been tokenistic (Gray and Wilson, 2004). Gaining students’ views on the design of the implementation also fits well with the very nature of the preventing violent extremism initiative that aims to foster a sense of involvement in community life through discussions about current issues and initiatives (DSCF, 2009).

Engaging with schools to work consultatively with students should also raise the profile of the toolkit in schools. In the LA the toolkit was presented to all schools by a counter-terrorist police officer, yet many of the pastoral staff approached for this research had no knowledge of the toolkit. It was hoped that an additional benefit from the research would be to encourage school staff to seek support to start exploring this area and some of the strategies with young people.

It is acknowledged that in addition to eliciting the views of students as stakeholders, research should also be completed to gain teachers’ views about how best to support students in this area and how comfortable they feel in discussing the subject area with students. Teachers will also need to advise on the sustainability and resources that will be needed to support the intervention as this can often be overlooked (Fondacara and Weinberg, 2002) to prevent the

intervention becoming poorly thought out, fragmented and short term, as can be the case with education initiatives (Greenberg et al, 2003).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research question

This research aimed to elicit the views of a selection of young people in the LA who will attend schools encouraged to deliver the 'Learning Together to be Safe' (DCSF, 2009) intervention guidelines. The research uses the views of the young people to inform the design of the intervention so that it would be based on local needs and be relevant to young people in the LA, utilising their expertise to identify the best ways in which schools can help to reduce risk and implement approaches to develop resilience to extremist groups.

The research questions ask:

Are young people able to identify local risk factors that could contribute to a young person engaging with an extremist group? Are young people able to identify approaches to reduce risk factors identified by themselves and the research to inform local preventing violent extremism education policy?

The research questions are subdivided into four discrete areas to generate data that will inform the research questions:

- What are young people's views about violent extremism?
- What do young people feel are risk factors that may encourage young people to engage with violent extremism?

- What are resilience factors that already support young people against violent extremism?
- What current/potential roles do schools have in promoting resiliency for all young people against extremism?

The research questions are also driven by National Indicator 35, a priority for the LA. National Indictors are a set of national priorities published by the government for LAs to select areas to target locally. National Indicator 35 aims to build resiliency against extremism and this research project meets two of its core objectives:

- Gaining knowledge and understanding of the drivers and causes of violent extremism
- Developing a risk-based preventing violent extremism action plan, in support of the delivery of Prevent objectives.

The Prevent strategy has been criticised for not engaging with the community (Thomas, 2009). This research aims to remedy this by engaging with schools and young people about how the DCSF (2009) toolkit should be delivered.

3.2 Funding

This research has been funded by Prevent resources (the Challenge and Innovation Fund, Communities and Local Government, 2009). The Guardian (Dodd, 16.10.2009) has published articles that describe Prevent funded research as ‘spying on the innocent to gather intelligence on the basis of religion rather than behaviour’. The Guardian reports that to receive funding

for Prevent-related projects such as this, councils have to sign information sharing agreements that state that data about individuals and groups gathered will be shared with the counterterrorist police (Dodd, 16.10.2009). To counter this, The Guardian published an article by David Hanson and Shahid Malik (Labour Members of Parliament), who propose spying allegations are 'factually incorrect and potentially damaging' (Hanson and Malik, 02.11.2009).

No information sharing agreements have been signed with any agency for this research. Participants are guaranteed confidentiality with regards to anonymising information that is reported back to the council (with the caveat that any information that suggests students are in potential danger will have to be shared with the child protection officer in the school). The LA Educational Psychology Service owns the data collected for this research and only the primary researcher and supervisors (Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologist and Principal Educational Psychologist) have access to the raw data collected.

The funding is being used to explore the research questions, not to 'facilitate the systemic flow of information between counter-terrorist police officers and Prevent-funded local service providers' (Kundnani, 2009, p.30). Counter-terrorist police officers are part of the LA Steering group that will be using the data to develop an education policy to prevent violent extremism in the LA, however no members of the group had access to participant details, raw data or the names of the participating schools.

3.3 Epistemology

The research is located within a critical realist epistemology and accepts that it is possible to acquire knowledge about the external world that the young people in the research experience, but that this knowledge is perceived by the young people and the researcher and is therefore limited (Littlejohn, 2003). Critical realism is positioned between positivism, which maintains that there is an objective truth that can be measured (Cohen et al, 2000), and social constructivism that maintains that all knowledge is perspectival and contingent (Lyotard, 1984). In developing the critical realist stance, Bhaksar (1978) (as cited in Houston, 2001) differentiates realism (that there is an external truth) into three levels:

1) Empirical level – the events one experiences
2) Actual level – all events
3) Causal level – the mechanisms (and circumstances) that generate events

Critical realism therefore conceives reality in terms of a stratified ontology, where what is experienced is only a small portion of reality (Littlejohn, 2003). In addition to one's experiences there are other world events that are not experienced and the mechanisms by which all events arise. This acknowledges that there is a difference between reality (intransitive) and the theory we develop about reality (transitive) (Houston, 2001).

In researching the views of the young people in this research, attempts will be made to tap into the participant's empirical level and the causal level to answer the research questions. The author does not subscribe to the naïve realist perspective that one can 'give voice' to

participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006). An etic perspective will be taken to try to understand how participants view their world, and an emic perspective to acknowledge the way the author's conceptual and theoretical organising influences the interpretation of participants' social reality (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). The results will therefore reflect tendencies emerging from the data, rather than rules (Houston, 2001).

Taking a critical realist stance has implications for the generalisability of the research. Critical realism posits that there are no universal and unchanging conditions (as positivist approaches would accept) (Houston, 2001) so it is never possible to generalise research results completely. People do not experience the 'actual level' described above so generalising the findings of the research to young people in all LAs is not appropriate because the circumstances and mechanisms will be different (Danermark et al, 1997). The results of the research can be generalised to the point where they are used to guide the implementation of the toolkit within the local area because although it is acknowledged that the circumstances and mechanisms are different for all individuals, regardless of whether they live in the same local area, the results generated are likely to have greater applicability for those within the LA (Danermark et al, 1997). The research could be seen as contributing towards a theory at the causal level and although the research cannot be generalised in applying the findings of the research directly to another LA, it would be useful and interesting to compare the results to other LAs because where there are shared social and cultural forces there may be similar circumstances and mechanisms.

3.4 Reliability and validity

Research that does not utilise scientific, positivist methods has been criticised for producing ambiguous and untrustworthy data that are not reliable or valid (Howe, 1988). Reliability and validity can be conceptualised differently depending on the epistemological stance of the researcher. Positivist research, that seeks to identify an objective truth, reduces the opportunity for continual reflection and restricts the meaning of social interaction (Usher, 2005). In this respect the validity of positivist research can be questioned from a critical realist or social constructivist stance as it does not account for changing social contexts and may therefore be only temporarily valid, a point that is acknowledged within a critical realist perspective.

This research does not aim to have external validity in the positivist sense to the point where the findings can create general laws that can be applied nationally (Brock-Utne, 1996). This is not fitting with the author's epistemological stance or the research question. The research findings will be generalised to young people in secondary schools in the LA. Promoting external validity will therefore focus on ensuring that the findings of the research are trustworthy and authentic (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) so that they can represent the views and local context of young people in the LA as accurately as possible.

Kirk and Miller (1986) maintain that:

> 'Asking the wrong questions actually is the source of most validity errors. Devices to guard against asking the wrong question are critically important to the researcher' (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p.30).

The questions posed to participants in this research design were developed on the basis of theoretically researched risk areas that have been identified as potentially contributing to a young person's engagement with violent extremism to increase the validity of the research. The questions were also discussed with a secondary school Religious Education teacher who is completing a PhD in preventing violent extremism to ensure they would be as accessible as possible to the students.

When exploring qualitative research Guba and Lincoln (1994) replace internal validity with 'credibility'. The purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the eyes of the participant. The participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). To ensure the results are credible, Lewis and Lindsay (2000) suggest that it is good practice to present transcripts to participants to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and interpretation. Whilst this is not disputed, this research did not ask for participant feedback on transcript because confidentiality requires that individual data are not stored against responses. To promote credibility, the facilitators continually checked responses with participants during the focus group to try promote shared understanding of responses. Participants also had the opportunity to comment on the overall research findings during a feedback session in each school in December 2010.

To promote reliability, Kleven (1995) (as cited in Brock-Utne, 1996) finds that posing the following three questions is important in qualitative research studies:

> *(i) Would we have seen the same and interpreted what we saw the same way if we had happened to have made the observation at another time?*

(ii) Would we have seen the same and interpreted what we saw the same way if we had happened to pay attention to other phenomena during observation?

(iii) Would a second observer with the same theoretical framework have seen and interpreted the observations the same way?

To answer as close to 'yes' to these questions as possible, two researchers facilitated the focus group and completed the analyses. This promotes stability of observations and inter-rater reliability, reducing the chance of haphazard errors (Brock-Utne, 1996).

3.5 Method

The research aimed to collect data that were descriptive and explanatory within a critical realist paradigm. Qualitative methods facilitate an approach that aims to explore social phenomena and the experiences of young people (Nisbet, 2005). A key concern is for the research design to ensure that the information gathered is valid, in that it represents the view of the young person at that time (Lewis and Lindsey, 2000).

Within the qualitative paradigm, individual interviews and focus groups appeared to be the most appropriate methods of gathering the views of young people on violent extremism. Case studies of local young people who had already engaged with violent extremism would have been useful to explore issues that had led them to extremism; however, for obvious reasons of identification and access this would not have been possible. Interviewing young people individually would have provided the opportunity to talk about this sensitive area confidentially with the researcher and may have increased the validity of the data through reducing the social desirability effect that may influence responses in a focus group. Despite

the advantages of interviews, focus groups were used because they often facilitate richer discussion about social experiences because participants can build on each other's experiences and responses are based on discussion rather than questions and answers (Kitzinger, 1995). Discussion formed an important part of the research because young people may not have directly experienced violent extremism, or thought about it in relation to their local area, so may have found it difficult to talk about in a direct question and answer forum. Hess (1968) described potential effects of focus group interaction as: snowballing (a comment by one individual triggers a chain of responses by other participants); stimulation (as excitement about the topic increases in the group) and spontaneity (individual responses can be more spontaneous and less conventional because no individual answer is required to any given question). These effects were considered useful in generating discussion on this sensitive area. A problem with the snowballing effect however, is that it can lead people building on others' views to be part of an exciting discussion, rather than because they are reflective of real life or experiences.

A focus group also served to model discussion and debate on violent extremism in schools, a strategy that is considered effective by the toolkit (DCSF, 2009), Moghaddam (2005) and Kundnani (2009) as a way to prevent violent extremism.

3.6 Design

The focus groups were run by the researcher and a co-researcher (Local Authority Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologist). A co-researcher supported the data collection by enabling discussion to be developed whilst effective notes taken (Kitzinger, 1995). The

presence of a co-researcher was also important to support the management of potentially sensitive and emotive discussions within the group. The role of the primary researcher and the co-researcher were clearly defined to promote fluid delivery during the focus groups. The primary researcher led the discussion areas, activities and the pace of the group whilst the co-researcher took notes. Both researchers were responsible for clarifying responses, playing the role of 'devil's advocate' and using questioning approaches to generate greater depth of responses.

The focus groups began with a concentrated period of time devoted to the setting up of ground rules. Developing rules in consultation with the participants aimed to contribute to an environment where participants could talk freely but respectfully. Following the ground rules, refreshments were provided, acknowledging Maslow's hierarchy of needs in an attempt to ensure the students felt comfortable and relaxed (Kitzinger, 1995). At this stage (once the ground rules were understood) participants were asked to sign consent forms for their participation and permission was sought to audiotape and transcribe the discussion. Two dictophones were used to record the session. Following data collection the dictophones were stored in a locked cupboard.

Todd (2003) warns that when researching the views of students it is not sufficient simply to ask for their views. Activities need to be designed to facilitate an environment where students feel able to move beyond answers they think the researchers want to hear, and questions need to be pitched at the right level (Cohen et al, 2000). The facilitators played the role of 'devil's advocate' throughout the group to encourage participants to develop their views and move away from answers they thought may have been desired by the researchers. The focus group

questions had previously been explored with members of staff from the participating schools and a key researcher in the area of violent extremism research (Davies, 2008, 2009), to ensure they would be accessible to Year 9 students.

An initial warm-up activity was designed to build rapport within the group and to introduce the concept of group discussion around the ground rules. The warm-up activity asked participants to discuss what the word 'violence' means. This was designed to engage participants by donating a simple concept that they should have been able to access (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998). Following the warm-up activity the focus group was divided into the identified subsections of the research questions. Each section took a similar structure, asking participants for their views on the subject very broadly and only then narrowing down to focus on research that has been conducted in the area (Kreuger et al, 2000). Please see Appendix 3 for the focus group plan.

Section 1: What is violent extremism?

It was important to assess students' current levels of understanding about what violent extremism means to young people and how able they were to talk about this area with the right 'scaffolding'. Media coverage and government policy have been criticised by Thomas (2009) and Kundnani (2009) for linking violent extremism synonymously with Al-Qaida and Islamic groups, at the exclusion of animal rights activists, far right extremism and other groups who resort to violence to propagate their absolutist views (Davies, 2009). This aspect of the research explored whether young people take a narrow, media-led Islamic perspective on violent extremism or take a wider view of the phenomenon. This part of the focus group

also assessed how ready young people were to talk about violent extremism, because a key element of primary prevention is community readiness (Feinberg et al, 2004).

Participants were led by the facilitators to consider some examples of violent extremism and their own thoughts about some of the risk factors that may lead a young person to engage with violent extremism. The facilitators directed the discussion for participants to consider some of the ways which schools could help young people build resiliency against violent extremism.

Following the broad discussion above, the facilitators narrowed the discussion to focus on risk and resilience factors in different systems that have been identified by research as potentially contributing to young people's engagement with violent extremism (Section 2,3 and 4 of the focus group discussed below). Students were asked about their views on the research areas in relation to young people in the LA, and then asked to comment on specific strategies from the DCSF (2009) toolkit in each area. A solution focused, brief therapy approach was taken throughout the discussion to explore positives and strengths that already exist that could be developed to build resiliency against extremism (as recommended by Hammen et al, 1990). Solution focused strategies have been shown to afford effective ways to elicit the voice of the child (Hobbs et al., 2000, Roller, 1998).

Section 2: Community factors

The facilitators asked participants to consider issues within their community that might encourage a young person to engage with violent extremism.

Following this initial discussion, the facilitators provided cards with key words suggested by the research as constituting risk factors for engaging with violent extremism:

- Discrimination
- Unfairness
- Poverty
- Feeling left out

Participants were asked to discuss in small groups each word in relation to their local community, and rank them as issues within their community before feeding their views back to the main group. This is a common activity designed to focus group discussion on key issues and encourage participants to talk to one another rather than the group facilitator (Kitzinger, 1995). One risk factors had been identified the students were asked to discuss potential protective factors.

Section 3: Identity factors

The facilitator introduced participants to the concept of identity and asked the students to think of the different identities they had. Participants made notes on post-its and placed these on the outline of a body in the centre of the focus group to make the task less abstract. The facilitator initiated discussion about potential conflicts in identity and the impact this may have for individuals.

The facilitator led the participants into a discussion about the sources young people access for support when they experience identity/personal difficulties. The co-facilitator noted the responses on a flip chart and participants were asked to indicate which source they were most likely to use, to gain a measure of consensus (Kreuger et al, 2000). It is easy to make assumptions about support systems for young people as an adult, based on personal experiences, however for intervention to be effective, it needs to be based upon the structures young people will use.

Section 4: Cognitive factors

The facilitator introduced a discussion about cognitive factors that may contribute to a young person engaging with violent extremism at a group level. Specific emphasis was placed upon the DCSF (2009) strategies that aim to reduce categorical thinking styles through discussion about current affairs in schools and how this could be managed safely in school.

Closing the focus group

To conclude the focus group, the participants were thanked for their contributions and signposted to a designated member of school staff for further discussion or support on the topic.

Participants were informed that the researchers would return to school in December 2010 to feedback the findings of the research and how their views will contribute to LA policy.

3.7 Developmental and experiential considerations

It is anticipated that the young people participating in the research are not likely to have experienced contact with an extremist group and are unlikely to have directly experienced an act of violent extremism. Despite this, the research questions ask young people's views about local risk factors that could encourage one to engage with an extremist group, and approaches that schools can use to reduce such risk factors and build resilience. It is appropriate to expect young people to have a view in this area because despite not having direct experience of violent extremism, they do have direct experience with the systems around them. This can be applied to a local theory of risk and resilience at the causal level through the ability to understand the other's perspective and to attribute belief, desire and intent in others (theory of mind) (Kuhn, 2000). Dumontheil et al (2010) demonstrated that theory of mind develops throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood so that one is able to move from absolute to multiplist thinking styles. The participants in this research are aged 13 and 14 years old. Dumontheil et al's (2010) research demonstrates that at this age young people are not as proficient as adults in terms of theory of mind usage, but are more proficient than those aged below the age of 11 years 4 months. Epley et al (2004) also demonstrated that beyond the age of 12 young people are significantly less likely to make egocentric errors in reporteding the perspectives of others. This suggests that at the age of 13 and 14 young people are likely to be able to consider their environments from the perspective of another who may be likely to engage with an extremist group.

In terms of moral development, Kohlberg (as cited in Carpendale, 2000) suggests that young people aged 13 and 14 years old are likely to be negotiating the 'conventional morality' and

‘maintaining social order’ stages of development. This suggests that they are able to recognise good intentions behind typically immoral acts (such as stealing medicine to help one who is poorly), but move beyond this to recognise implications for society (one still cannot condone stealing – what would happen if we all broke the law for a good reason?), recognising the morality behind making decisions for society. The participants in this research are therefore likely to be in a good position developmentally to explore and discuss the concept of violent extremism from an individual and societal perspective. It also suggests the young people will be able to explore the underpinning intentions behind acts of extremism to inform their view of potential risk factors and ways to reduce these.

One of the sub-questions underpinning the research questions asks students directly about whether an identity crisis could act as a risk factor for engaging with extremist groups. At the age of 13 and 14, it is hypothesised by Erikson (1956) (as cited in Newman and Newman, 2008) that young people are likely to be developing their own identity by ‘trying on’ different roles. Erikson suggests that at this age the young people are likely to be resolving the conflict between fidelity (where one has a secure sense of self and can be friends with others considered to be very different from the self) and identity diffusion (where the young person has an unstable sense of self, feels under threat and potentially has one very strong identity that can lead to fanaticism). At this stage Marcia (1980) suggests that identity is in a state of flux. As a result of this, the young people are likely to be in an effective position to contribute to the elements of the design and research that refer to questions about one’s identity and affiliations and whether these could potentially act as a risk factor for engaging with an extremist group.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The current study was approved by the Birmingham University board of ethics, although it is acknowledged that there are some ethical issues with the research:

Raising sensitive issues with students

Violent extremism could be considered a sensitive issue due to recent events, and the contingent links the media (and government policy) appear to make between violent extremism and Islam (Kundnani, 2009, Thomas, 2009). It was important to ensure that Muslim students would not feel targeted or threatened by the subject matter. To overcome this, it was made explicit from the start of the research, and during any discussion with school staff or students, that the researchers were not taking an exclusively religious approach to violent extremism and that it was recognised that violent extremism can arise from many groups in many different contexts.

It was recognised that raising sensitive issues within a focus group forum may cause emotive debate or conflict. Steps were taken to prevent escalation through mediation by the researchers. A member of school staff was present throughout the focus group to ensure that if any difficulties arose during the group discussion, someone in school would be aware of the circumstances and be able to co-ordinate any follow-up support.

At the beginning of the focus group it was emphasised that violent extremism is very rare and that only a minority of people are directly affected, to reduce the potential the research may have had for causing anxiety in participants.

Confidentiality

Views expressed during a focus group could not be guaranteed absolute confidentiality because group members were able to attribute specific responses to specific individuals. Confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed with regards to the storage and presentation of data to the LA because individual details were not attached to raw data, nor was it possible to identify participating schools. It was made clear to participants that their views would not be attributed to them, but would be presented collectively in a research paper (BPS, 2004).

Ground rules were established in the group from the outset. Confidentiality was discussed before participation and participants agreed that comments made by individuals within the focus group would not be discussed with outside parties (except the member of teaching staff present). Participants were made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that if a disclosure made suggested that someone was in danger, safeguarding procedures (contacting the designated member of staff in school for safeguarding and outside agencies where appropriate) would be followed.

3.9 Role of the facilitator

In order to answer the research question, the facilitators needed to capture the voice of the young people participating. It was not sufficient simply to ask students their views, and care was taken to build rapport and establish trust to enable students to feel comfortable to share their views (Hobbs et al, 2000). Questions were designed to enable young people to move beyond responses they thought the researcher wanted (Cohen et al, 2000).

Open ended questions were used throughout the focus group to encourage participants to give in-depth answers and explore issues important to them (Kitzinger, 1995). Armstrong et al (1993) found that when young people were asked direct questions they gave ‘don’t know’ responses, and this research avoided this. Questions were structured using Kreuger et al’s (2000) description of quality questions for focus groups: conversational, clear, open ended and one dimensional.

Throughout the focus group, the researcher asked participants to elaborate on their responses to explore their rationale and thought processes, rather than to gain one-dimensional responses (Kreuger et al, 2000). The facilitators acted as facilitators and not performers, donating little but the discussion areas. The facilitators focused on: encouraging discussion; using active listening to encourage elaboration and mediating group responses to reduce domination and promote equal opportunities for participation (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

3.10 Participants

Participants were selected using a criterion-based sample of volunteers to ensure that all students were in Year 9 (aged 13-14) (Gorard and Taylor, 2004). Year 9 students were asked to participate because they are in the middle of the age range that will be affected by the implementation of the DCSF (2009) toolkit (that will span Year groups 7-11). Year 9 students would also normally be well established within the school without the exam pressures that can make it difficult for students to miss timetabled lessons to participate in research. Section 3.7 demonstrates that Year 9 students are in a good position developmentally to explore the research questions.

The details of the research were outlined by the researchers at a Year 9 assembly and it was made clear that participation was voluntary and that there was no pressure from the researchers or the school to participate. If too many students had applied, maximum variation sampling techniques would have been used in consultation with school staff to purposefully select a group that would be as representative as possible (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

Three schools participated in the research from the north, central and southern regions in the LA to gain a sample that represented the diverse socio-economic areas (Audit Commission, 2009). See Table 1 for participant data.

Table 1

Participant and school details

School	Number of Participants	Gender	Ethnicity*	OFSED** description of school
Central	8	Girls: 5 Boys: 3	3: White British 1:Indian/British Asian 3: No response 1: Did not return form	Most students are of White British backgrounds. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average…The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics is exceptionally high (2008).
North	10	Girls: 4 Boys: 6	5: White British 2: British 1: ½ Irish/British 1:Mixed race (white/black) British 1: Did not return form	A popular and over-subscribed secondary school, with more students than average experiencing aspects of disadvantage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and of those whose first language is not English is very low.
South	4	Girls: 4 Boys: 0	1: White British 1: African/Irish 1:Libyan/Muslim 1: No answer	The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few students do not have English as their first language. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.

*Ethnicity data were reported using students' own words and descriptions

** Office for Standards in Education Department

The focus group had the capacity for 6-10 participants plus the two facilitators. In total twenty-two students participated in the research which represents 0.13% of the secondary school population in the LA (including comprehensive, city technology, academy, specialised

and independent schools across the Year 7-11 age range). It is acknowledged that this is a very small sample and impacts the representativeness of the data that were generated. Sandelowski (2007) proposes that:

> 'Determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put' (Sandelowski, 2007, p.179).

It was felt that using an in depth focus group methodology would reduce the sample size (due to associated increases in data collection time compared with individual questionnaire methods), although increasing the depth, richness and validity of the data. It is acknowledged that the focus groups were dominated by white British students which may also reduce the validity of the findings. Across the LA white British students represent 81.66% of the secondary school population (using the same inclusion criteria for 'secondary' as above) and of the students who provided ethnicity data from the focus group (16 out of 22) 68.75% described themselves as white British. 4.9% of the secondary school population in the LA are described as mixed race and in the focus groups 18% of participants who provided data described themselves in this way. 2.9% of the secondary school population described themselves as Indian and 4% of the focus group described themselves in this way. This suggests that although the focus groups had higher numbers of white British students than students with an ethnic minority heritage, this is not disproportionate to the secondary school sample in the LA. Black, Chinese and traveller students did not participate in the focus group sample yet reflect 1.8%, 0.47% and 0.05% of the population in the LA respectively.

The research was also conducted with Year 9 (13/14 year old) students only, yet the preventing violent extremism agenda will be supporting students across all secondary school ages. The research may have had different findings with different year groups.

Research participants were informed of the underlying aims of the project and the research areas/questions. Students were required to sign an informed consent form to indicate that in relation to the research, they understood:

- Confidentiality
- Data protection
- Their right to withdraw
- How their views will be used by the researchers

Informed parental consent was also required for students to participate. Please see Appendix 4 for consent letters.

3.11 Data collection: Pilot

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of Year 9 students from Central School to test the recruitment procedure and ensure the research tools yielded appropriate data to explore the research question (Kreuger et al, 2000).

3.11.1 Participants in the pilot study

Participants in the pilot group were articulate and able to discuss and reflect upon their views, as expected in section 3.7. Eight students volunteered and this was disappointing. Students may not have volunteered because an explanation of violent extremism was not included in the recruitment assembly. This was because one of the aims of the focus group was to explore what students understood about violent extremism without information donated from the researchers. It may also have been because the Pastoral Head of Central School ended the assembly presentation by explaining the academic benefits to participating in this research: developing debating and critical thinking skills. Linking the project to academic tasks may have discouraged less academic students from participating. Academic links were not emphasised during future presentations about the research to students. Attempts were made during the assembly to ensure students did not feel the research would be focusing on religious extremism; however, concerns about this may have discouraged some students from participating.

3.11.2 Evaluation of the pilot group

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire to give feedback on their experiences of being part of the focus group. Notes and observations were also made by the researchers. Participants indicated that they felt comfortable within the group and understood the purposes and questions. One participant noted that s/he would have appreciated the opportunity to add any extra comments at the end of the focus group. This opportunity was provided during subsequent focus groups.

The researchers considered that the questions used within the focus group had been accessible to students and that everyone had been able to contribute. Initial data analysis suggested that the questions also yielded data appropriate to explore the research question. The researchers did note that the participants talked to the researchers rather than each other, minimising the opportunity to develop the group discussion and sharing of experiences that is hoped for in a focus group (Greenbaum, 1998). In an attempt to overcome this in future groups, the focus group design was adapted to encourage participants to talk to each other rather than the facilitator, so that:

- it would be emphasised in the ground rules that it is not necessary to raise one's hand in order to speak. The focus group participants began using this strategy to signal intent to talk at the start of the pilot focus group because this was how they were used to interacting with adults;
- participants would be asked about what they thought about another participant's contribution (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998); and
- students would be asked on some occasions to think about their views with a partner before feeding back to the group. During the pilot study this activity appeared to have yielded greater group discussion than asking for contributions immediately after introducing a concept or posing a question.

During the 'identity' section, students appeared to find it difficult to discuss potential conflicts in identity. Students appeared to understand the task, but found it difficult to discuss conflicts that could arise between different identities. This aspect of the focus group was retained

because it reflects a dominant area of the research in considering factors relevant to violent extremism (despite the underpinning research base being questionable).

The structure of the focus group was effective and students were able to give their views broadly before the researchers directed discussion around specific aspects of risk and resilience research in the area. It was felt that designing the focus group in this way enabled participants to give their views initially without being influenced by the researchers constructs. The pilot group did appear to agree with the research as it was presented, so we judged it important to emphasise in the following groups that we would like them to take a critical stance when discussing their views on the research.

It was decided that the content of the focus group should not change, although the role of the facilitator should be adjusted slightly (as bullet points indicate above). For this reason, the data collected as part of the pilot group were included in the data set and data analysis within the remainder of this report.

3.12 Data collection

3.12.1 School details

The pilot study was completed in a Central school, so schools were then asked to participate from the northern and southern areas in the LA (please see Table 1). The northern school has an academy status, though this was considered unlikely to affect the results. Academies do not have to follow LA guidelines on preventing violent extremism; however, the participating

academy had signed an agreement to follow LA guidance, so was included in the research study to explore students' views.

3.12.2 Participants

Participant numbers were still low in the South school despite modifications to the assembly presentation. This will be reflected on in the discussion section below. Please see Table 1, above, for details about participants in each school.

3.12.3 The focus group

The changes to the focus group procedure ensured that participants engaged in much more participant-focused discussion rather than participant/facilitator interactions: the transcripts revealed fewer responses from the facilitator and increased conversations between participants, as had been hoped. The focus group in the North school had 10 participants and was dominated by three group members despite attempts to include all students in the discussion. This will be reflected on in the discussion.

Students were more critical of the research that was discussed in the latter parts of the focus group and reflected on aspects they felt were relevant to their lives and aspects which were not. Students were also more critical of the DCSF (2009) strategies and shared their concerns about some, discussing how they could be implemented safely and effectively.

3.13 Data analysis

Data were collected through audio recordings of the focus group and transcribed by the researcher. Transcription data sets from the focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis seeks to apply meaning to data by exploring salient themes within a text at different levels (Attride-Stirling, 2001) and allows the context of the discussion to be maintained. Thematic analysis techniques were selected primarily because of the flexibility and variability with which they can be applied to provide a rich and detailed account of the data (Braun and Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is not wedded to a pre-existing framework as discourse or narrative analysis can be (Braun and Clark, 2006), and methods can be adapted to meet the requirements of the data set.

Other data analysis techniques were considered but deemed inappropriate for the data. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) would not have been appropriate as a method of analysis because it requires a homogenous sample (Brocki and Wearden 2009). This research aimed for a representative sample which, by necessity would be heterogeneous. IPA is ideally suited to research exploring individuals' experiences, and whilst that constitutes an element of this research, discussion was also directed around donated concepts (for example specific strategies from the toolkit). This would not fit well within an IPA framework that emphasises a non-directive approach (Smith et al, 2009). IPA donates a social constructivist epistemological stance with a 'bottom-up' data-to-theory framework (Lander and Sheldrake, 2010). Thematic analysis is flexible and fits within a critical realist stance (as has been taken with this research) and allows both bottom-up and theory driven analyses.

This research aimed to utilise a bottom-up data-driven approach to analysis, although recognises that theory has played a role in shaping aspects of the focus group discussion and therefore the generated data. Conversely template analysis takes a top-down approach to analysis, exploring the data within a theoretical framework (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) and would therefore also be inappropriate. Thematic analysis was judged the optimum choice because it has the flexibility to account for a bottom-up analysis that has been influenced by theory.

Decisions and boundaries about how thematic analysis is used to analyse data in the research are essential to avoid the 'anything goes' criticism that Antaki et al (2002) level at qualitative research methods. Details about these decisions and the processes involved in the analyses are presented below to demonstrate the active role the researcher has played in the analysis and so the research can be evaluated by others in the field (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

Taking a critical realist approach to the research recognises that the data analysis will be influenced by researcher values (Cohen et al, 2000). Fielding (2004) warns that there is a danger research gaining the views of children can be undermining when data are interpreted and distorted to conform to already established vocabularies and beliefs. Who is speaking to whom, and who is interpreting the data, turn out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said (Alcoff, 1995). To reduce the impact of researcher interpretation Fielding (2004) recommends that the following issues need to be addressed:

(i) Resisting redescription in our own interests

The research was being used to inform LA policy on preventing violent extremism. The researcher was not involved in the writing of the policy and so did not have a vested interest in the findings with regard to desiring specific responses. The data were coded and interpreted by two researchers to promote reliability and validity. Data were discussed alongside direct quotes, which, despite lacking context, aimed to help represent the students' views as accurately as possible.

(ii) Interrogating the impulse to control. How clear are we about the use to which the depth and detail of data are likely to be put?

There are limitations with regards to how much the government strategies can be changed in response to student voice. This will be reflected on in the discussion of the findings from the research, and participants were made aware that although changes would be made to the LA policy, there were inevitable limits to this.

(iii) *Facing up to issues of power and the necessity of being open to criticism. To what extent are we willing not merely to accept responsibility for what we say, but be genuinely attentive to criticism from those for whom we speak?*

The aim of the research was to look at strengths and difficulties of the toolkit which primarily involved listening to criticism and making adaptations on the basis of it. With regards to the research findings, they were discussed with the students following the write-up, and

opportunities were given to students to criticise the findings. The findings were then apted in accordance with the level of criticism.

(iv) *Understanding the dangers of unwitting disempowerment. Are we aware that, despite our best intentions, our interventions may reinforce existing conceptions of students that tend to deny their agency and capacity to take responsibility for what they do?*

Feedback demonstrating the impact their voices would have on LA policy aimed to negate this difficulty. There was a risk that the steering group would ignore the views, or that the agenda would be revoked depending on whether the new Coalition government withdrew the DCSF (2009) guidelines. Even if this occurred the steering group may have elected to still go ahead with implementing guidelines for intervention for schools.

3.13 Limitations of the research design

The research sampled the views of 22 students across the LA. It is acknowledged that this is a small sample size and that for an intervention to be truly empowering, all students should have had the opportunity to participate in the research. This would not have been possible because the LA are planning that all schools deliver approaches from the DCSF (2009) toolkit. Instead it was hoped that despite a small sample, the students who participated would have felt empowered and provided some of the views of young people in the LA that could help tailor the intervention so that it would be relevant and effective in meeting local needs.

A further limitation is the validity of the data. Focus groups can never be completely confidential and the presence of others and the social desirability bias may have impacted participant responses. This is particularly the case for focus groups that discuss sensitive subjects (Kitzinger, 1994), such as preventing violent extremism. For ethical reasons a member of the school's teaching staff was also present and this may again have impacted the responses given.

The results also only show insight from one group of stakeholders. Teacher views were not included in this research; however this is an area that needs further exploration to inform the development of the preventing violent extremism agenda in the LA, as has been discussed in the literature review.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Transcription

The data were transcribed by the researcher by typing the audio recordings. All words were included in the transcription although intonation and body language descriptions were not, as they were not central to the analysis. The transcription process was an essential part of the data analysis because it facilitated immersion in the data and allowed the initial formulation of emerging codes and themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Each response was labelled with a number to ease identification of responses during the thematic analysis. The audio recordings were occasionally difficult to hear and so a very small minority of data was lost during the transcription process. Appendix 5 demonstrates a selection of transcripts from each focus group during the 'what is violent extremism' element of the focus group.

4.2 Thematic analysis

The data were subjected to several levels of scrutiny following a framework described by Attride-Stirling (2001) to explore emerging themes:

- Level 1: Coding
- Level 2: Organising themes
- Level 3: Global themes

The data were analysed by the two facilitators who ran the focus group who had contextual awareness of the discussion. Two people were used to analyse the data to try to increase the trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility of the analysis and therefore its reliability and validity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Very few data were discarded in the analysis. Data were discarded when they were considered by the researchers to be irrelevant (when the students were making jokes about comments that had been made or about individuals) and did not contribute to the group discussion. Four comments were also discarded because it was felt that students were led into specific responses by the teacher observing the process.

Level 1 Coding: The most basic or lower order theme that is derived from the textual data (Attride-Stirling, 2001)

Following initial immersion in the data (through transcription and repeated readings), the thematic analysis process began with the researchers identifying codes within the data (Appendix 5 presents a section of a transcript to demonstrate the coding process). The central idea of coding is to move from a lower level of meaning (the raw text) to a higher level of understanding that can inform the research question (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). A code is defined as the lowest order premise found in a text and can be considered valid when supported by the data (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003) (see Appendix 8 for codes and a selection of corresponding quotations). Equal attention was given to each response in the data set and the codes developed captured the key meaning of each response. Codes could be stand-alone, single responses, or clusters of responses (providing the key meaning of each

response was the same) (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Each code was linked to the text response (each response was labelled with a letter to identify the transcript and a number so it could be located within the transcript) to retain the context for consideration in the discussion. Loss of context is a common criticism of thematic analysis (Bryman, 2001). Table 2 gives an example of the coding process. Appendix 8 details all codes and corresponding text references.

Table 2
Excerpt from the coding framework

Code	**Text reference**		
Crossing a boundary	A1	B9 B11 B12	
Linked to religious ideology			C47 C4 C49 C50
Method to deliver views	A6	B36 B42 B43 B44 B45 B46	C7

Letters A,B and C correspond to data sets 1,2 and 3

Codes were generated using an inductive reasoning (bottom-up) approach, where the codes identified emerged from the data rather than a pre-existing theoretical coding frame (Patton, 1990). This ensures the thematic analysis is data-driven, which is important when looking to explore young people's views, rather than trying to fit their views into a theoretical framework. It is important to note, however, that the researchers could not be completely free of the theoretical perspectives driving the research and that this will have influenced data interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Level 2: Organising themes

Once codes had been identified, commonalities were explored to develop organising themes. Organising themes arrange codes into clusters of similar issues. They bring together components/fragments of ideas or experiences, which are 'often meaningless when viewed

alone' (Leininger, 1985, p.60). The organising themes dissect the main assumptions underlying a broader theme that is significant in the text as a whole (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The codes were explored to consider how they could combine to form an organising theme within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This process was facilitated by re-reading the text segments associated with each code and looking for patterns. To form an organising theme, both researchers had to agree on the pattern identified and the link between the codes. Once identified, the organising themes were then refined (based on Attride-Stirling, 2001) to ensure that they were:

(i) *specific enough to be discrete; and*

(ii) *broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas within a data set.*

Themes such as 'potential emotional reasons for a young person engaging with violent extremism' were further divided to reflect positive and negative emotions so categories were specific and discrete. It is recognised by the author that identifying the organising themes required interpretation of the meaning behind students' responses and that this may impact the validity of the interpretation.

Level 3: Global themes

Global themes are super-ordinate themes that encompass the principal metaphors of the data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.389). Global themes emerged by exploring the organising themes and recognising links and patterns between them. Figure 4 demonstrates an example

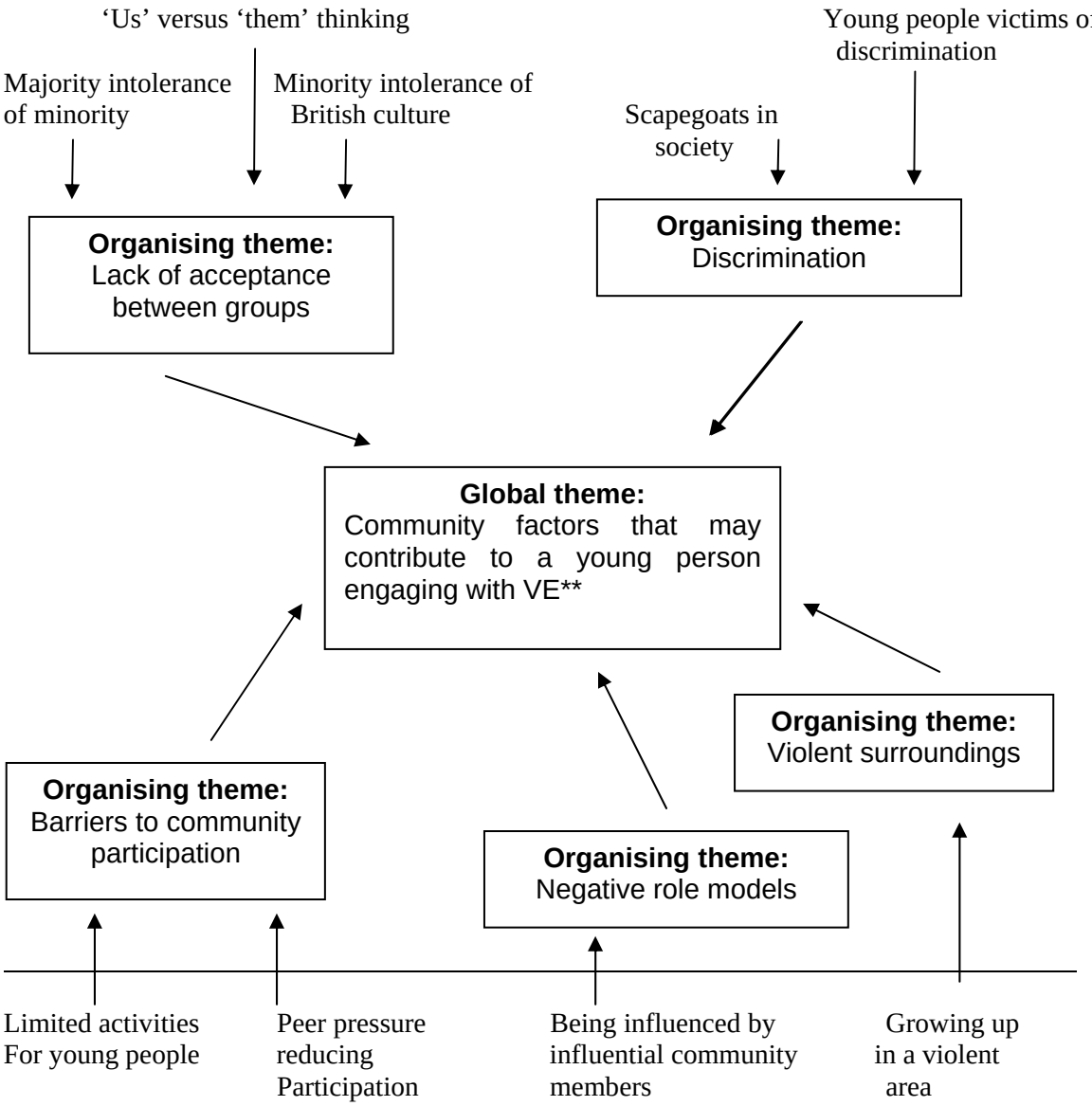
of a thematic network (the codes, organising themes and global themes) for one aspect of the data set and how they link together to form the overall global themes.

Figure 4
Example of a thematic network from the data set

*Text outside the boxes are codes

**VE = violent extremism

*** The figure shows only a small sample of codes. For a detailed representation of codes please see Tables 3-7 below.



The global themes were reviewed to promote internal homogeneity (where data within themes cohere meaningfully) and external heterogeneity (clear distinctions between themes) (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data set was re-read to consider the themes in relation to the data set and ensure they 'work' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Tables 3-7 demonstrate each global theme, organising theme and code for each section of the focus group. Alongside each code are the numbers of responses that were clustered together to form the code. The 'number of responses' column represents the number of times the code was referred to in the transcripts, rather than the different number of individuals who made reference to it. For specific quotes relating to each code see Appendix 8.

Table 3

Themes representing students' description of violent extremism

Global Theme	Organising Theme	Code	Number of responses	Response present in school		
				North	Central	South
Factors leading up to an act of violent extremism	Individual factors: People who seek to influence	Feeling superior	1		✓	
		Feeling powerful	3	✓	✓	✓
	Individual factors: People who are easily influenced	Strong negative emotion	4	✓	✓	✓
		Mental state	1	✓		
		Weak personality	1			✓
	Belief system	Ideology	10	✓	✓	
		Racism	1		✓	
		Gain attention to views	8	✓	✓	
		Not listening to other views	5	✓	✓	✓
	Group factors	Association with gangs	5		✓	✓
		People become swept along with group processes	3	✓	✓	
		Process of radicalisation	4		✓	✓
	Morality	Unnecessary	1		✓	
		Immoral	1	✓		
		Judgements on morality of VE are subjective	3	✓		✓
Actions associated with violent extremism	Method	Use of weapons	7	✓	✓	✓
		Use of terror	2	✓		
		Extremism is on a continuum	3	✓		
	Group action versus individual	Islamic extremism due to group action, British extremism due to individual psycopathy	1	✓		
Consequences of violent extremism	Negative to the community	Violent impact on individuals	8	✓	✓	✓
		Local impact	1	✓		
		Invasive	1	✓		
	Reinforces negative stereotypes	Increased prejudice against groups based on actions of a minority	2	✓		

	Positive consequences for the extremists	Attention to views	5	✓	✓	✓
Examples of violent extremism	Religious	Most recently: Islamic examples	4	✓	✓	✓
		Historical: Illuminati	1	✓		
	Ethnic cleansing	Rwanda	1	✓		
		Nazis	2	✓	✓	
		KKK	1			✓
	Internal political conflict internationally	Zimbabwe	1	✓		
		Rebels	1	✓		
	'Incorrect' examples	Examples of violence without ideology	9	✓	✓	✓
		Examples of ideology without violence	2		✓	

Table 4
Factors that may contribute to a young person engaging with violent extremism

Global Theme	Organising Theme	Code	Number of responses	Response present in school		
				North	Central	South
Within person	Social factors	Easily influenced	5	✓	✓	
		Weak personality	1			✓
		Being rebellious	5	✓		
		Popularity	2	✓		
		Being alone	2	✓	✓	
		Knowing right from wrong	2			✓
	Positive emotions	Enjoyment	4		✓	✓
		Feeling grown up	1			✓
		Being feared	2	✓		
		Being powerful	6	✓		
	Negative emotions	Mentally unstable	1			✓
		Lack of hope for society	1	✓		
		Anger	3	✓		
		Revenge	3	✓	✓	✓
		Needing attention	1		✓	
		Resentment	3	✓		
		Perceived double standards	3			✓
		Inability to tolerate difference	5	✓	✓	
		Insecure	1		✓	

	Cognitive factors	Perceptions of minority groups	2	✓		
		Interpretation of media stories	4	✓		
		Stereotyping	1	✓		
		'Us' and 'them' thinking patterns	1	✓		
		Inability to cope with societal change	1	✓		
		Unable to express views	2	✓	✓	
	Belief/ideology	Strong-willed	1			✓
		Believes in cause	2	✓	✓	
		Racism	1	✓		
		Religion	1		✓	
		Misinterpretation of Islam	3	✓	✓	
		Fighting against political views	1		✓	
		Political uncertainty	1		✓	
		Limited opportunity to express strong views	1		✓	
	Fixed traits	Someone's personality	2			✓
Peer factors (microsystem)	Peer influence	Peer pressure	4	✓	✓	✓
		Modelling peers	3		✓	✓
		Influenced by peers	1			✓
	Benefits of gang membership	Being protected	4	✓		✓
		Sense of belonging	3	✓		✓
		Sense of family	1		✓	
		Power (specifically gained from gang membership)	1	✓		
		Positive recognition from peers	1			✓
		Immediate benefits outweigh cost	1		✓	
Family factors (microsystem)	Poor parenting	Abuse	1		✓	
		Neglect	1		✓	
		Parental rejection	1	✓		
		Loose parental boundaries	5		✓	✓
	Parental modelling	Prejudice based on historical parental grudge	1			✓

Community factors (exosystem)	Lack of acceptance of societal groups	Inter-group rivalry	4	✓	✓	
		Media increases divisions	5	✓		
		Scapegoats	1	✓		
		Majority not accepting minority culture	1	✓		
		Minority culture not accepting majority culture	4	✓	✓	
		'Us' and 'them' thinking	1	✓		
		Discrimination against young people causing resentment	1		✓	
		Unfavourable comparison of poor compared to rich areas	1			✓
	Barriers to community participation	Lack of activities for young people	3		✓	✓
		Peer pressure to not engage	2		✓	✓
		Some young people ruining activities	1			✓
		Personality barriers	2			✓
	Violent surroundings	Brought up in a violent community	3			✓
	Negative role models	Copying behaviour of role models	1			✓
Culmination of factors	Not just one factor	Needs to be more than one factor	2	✓		

Table 5
Factors contributing to identity development and identity conflict

Global Theme	Organising Theme	Code	Number of responses	Response present in school		
				North	Central	South
Identity	Influences on identity	Develops through others	1	✓		
		Curbed by others	1	✓		
		Natural processes of maturity	1			✓
		Parents	1			✓
		Restrictions	1		✓	
	Identity conflict	Not an issue for Year 9s	5	✓		✓

		Position in the family	1			✓
		Restrictions on identity	1		✓	
		Conflict at home	1			✓

Table 6
Ways to prevent violent extremism in school

Global Theme	Organising Theme	Code	Number of responses	Response present in school		
				North	Central	South
Currently available protective factors	Positive school-based experiences	Multi-cultural experiences locally	1		✓	
		Multi-cultural experiences internationally	2		✓	
		Social and emotional support	4	✓	✓	✓
		Ability to be listened to in school through democratic processes	5	✓	✓	✓
		Learning to listen to others' views	2			✓
	Community-based experiences	Very few community difficulties locally	1			✓
		No discrimination locally	3	✓	✓	✓
		No poverty locally	3		✓	✓
	Increasing education about different beliefs and cultures to promote acceptance	Education about different beliefs enabling students to make considered choices about beliefs	2		✓	
	Increased education about beliefs should be implemented at primary school	Year 9 students have already formed views	3	✓		✓
		Younger students have more flexible thinking styles	4	✓		
		Increased contact between different cultures across predominantly single ethnic group schools	2	✓	✓	

Potential role for schools		Increased contact with different cultures internationally	1		✓	
		Promoting understanding through increased contact	7	✓	✓	
	Facilitating open discussion on current issues	Teaching debating skills	1			✓
		Open discussion may prevent issues building up and exploding	2	✓	✓	
	Social/emotional education	Teaching about violence	1		✓	
		Social skills development	1	✓		
		Emotional education in school	1		✓	
	Home/school relationships	Teachers to visit homes to be aware of difficulties	1		✓	
	Support systems for individuals	Peer mentoring	1		✓	
	Support systems for communities	Signposting parents to support	1		✓	
		Opportunities for parents to share concerns with school	1		✓	
		Being aware of local tensions through discussions with students	1		✓	
		Being aware of local tensions by meeting community members	1		✓	
		Being aware of local tensions through contact with the police	1		✓	
	Schools do not have a role	Beyond the role of education	4	✓		✓
		VE not a local issue	3	✓		✓
		Individual's responsibility to change	2			✓

		Parental role to support	1			✓
		Council to support community difficulties	1			✓
Caveats to school support in preventing violent extremism	Potential negative consequences to open discussion on current issues	Group disruption becoming out of control	5	✓	✓	✓
		Staff members ill equipped to deal with debate	1			✓
		Development of grudges between students	2	✓		✓
	Ways to support group discussion	Ensuring everyone is able to contribute	1			✓
		Having smaller group discussions	2	✓	✓	
		Need to debate topics of interest	2	✓		✓
		Need to make debating topics relevant to students	1			✓
		Need to support students with debate skills	1			✓
	Potential negative impact of post-incident school support	School involvement following difficulties in school can make situation worse	1			✓
	Overkill needs to be avoided	Anti-bullying example of overkill	1	✓		

Table 7
Where students turn for support

Global Theme	Organising Theme	Code	Number of responses	Response present in school		
				North	Central	South
Options for support	Faceless sources	Magazines	1		✓	
		Internet	1		✓	
	Peer support	Friends	10	✓	✓	✓
		Older students	1	✓		
	Adult support	Teachers	2		✓	
		Family	5	✓	✓	✓
	Within person	Dealing with the problem yourself	3	✓	✓	✓

		Listening to music	1		✓	
		Diverting mind with a hobby	1		✓	
Barriers to gaining support	School support	Uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues with staff	3	✓		✓
		Teachers tell other people	1			✓
		Can make the problem worse	2			✓
		Feel they do not know the teachers well enough	1	✓		
		Feeling embarrassed when anonymous sources are used to discuss problems (such as 'worry boxes')	1			✓
	Family	Unable to talk to family about sensitive issues	1			✓
		Feeling judged	1			✓

Interpreting the themes and the implications they have for the LA steering group looking to adapt the toolkit, will be explored in the discussion section of this paper.

Rating Scales

During one activity in the focus group, students from two of the schools (North and Central) were asked to rate on a scale of 0-10 how much of a role they felt schools had in preventing young people engaging with violent extremism. South school did not complete a rating scale due to time limitations on the discussion. 'Not at all' was represented by 0 and 'a very large role' was represented by 10. The rating scale was used to ensure everyone was able to make a contribution to this aspect of the discussion.

The range of scores for the North school fell between 1 and 6 with a mean of 3.8. The range of scores for the Central school fell between 5 and 9 with a mean of 7.13.

4.3 Analysis of participant feedback

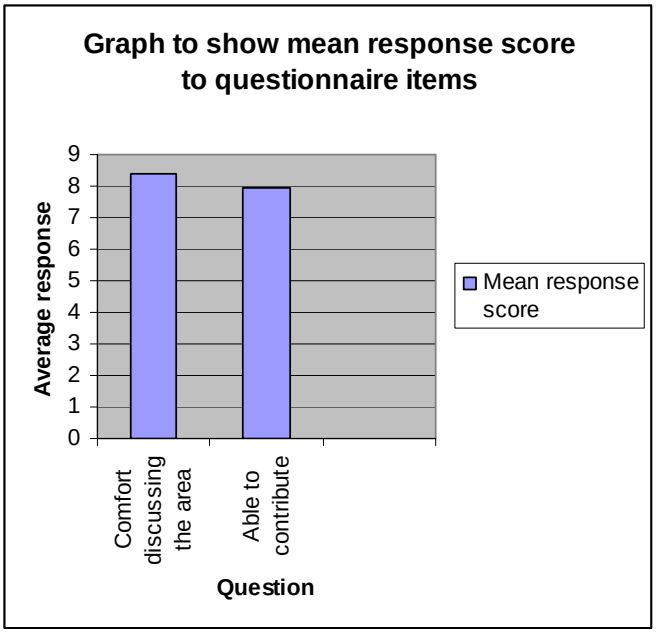
As part of the focus group the facilitators asked participants to complete a short questionnaire to reflect on the experience of participating in a focus group about preventing violent extremism. One of the government strategies is to bring discussion and debates about current issues (including violent extremism) into schools and the questionnaire was designed to provide additional information about:

(i) how comfortable students felt discussing preventing violent extremism;
(ii) whether they felt they had been able to contribute;
(iii) whether anything about the discussion concerned them; and
(iv) whether there was anything to change to improve the process for next time.

For the first two areas students were asked to indicate their response on a 0-10 scale where 0 is ‘not at all’ and 10 is ‘very much’. Students were also given space to reflect on their numerical response qualitatively. Figure 5 shows the mean student response:

Figure 5

Mean student response to questionnaire items



The data suggest that participants did feel comfortable discussing violent extremism within the focus group, with a mean score of 8.4 out of 10. The range of responses fell between 6 and 10, with 9 as the mode and median response. One participant felt this was facilitated by having 'no awkwardness' within the group. Despite the high score suggesting the students felt comfortable, one student responded with a 4, and there were two responses suggesting that the discussion was too sensitive and personal. These data only reflect the comfort levels of participating students and cannot be generalised to assume all secondary school students are likely to feel comfortable discussing this area. The data are likely to be biased towards demonstrating high comfort levels in talking about preventing violent extremism because it is likely that students who might not feel comfortable discussing this area did not apply to participate in the research.

The data also suggest that students felt able to contribute to the group discussion with a mean score of 7.95 out of 10. The range of responses fell between 4 and 10, with 9 as the mode and median response. There was a higher number of lower scores in the response set for this question (with three scoring five or below) suggesting that even in the small group sizes some students did not feel able to contribute to the group discussion. All three participants who gave a score below 5 were in the largest focus group of ten students. This is something that will need to be considered in the discussion with regards to how to facilitate group discussion in education. In contrast two participants in the group of 10 reflected that the comparatively small group size (compared to a class of 30) did help them feel able to share their views.

When the participants were asked if they had any concerns about aspects of the discussion 100% replied no. When asked whether we could make any changes to the focus group process 20% suggested changes for subsequent groups that included:

- having a clearer explanation of what violent extremism is;
- using a different year group;
- using a smaller group ;
- making the discussion less sensitive; and
- making the discussion less personal;

At this point one student also reflected that the discussion had been ‘good and interesting’.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The research was designed within a community psychology framework to explore young people's views in one LA about how education can contribute to the preventing violent extremism agenda. Community psychology emphasises the importance of consulting with stakeholders on the design and implementation of intervention (Bender, 1972) and this research attempted to do this by eliciting students' views to adapt and inform LA preventing violent extremism policy. This reflects a paradigm shift from the 'expert' approach to valuing the contribution students can make to their own education: an approach that is not taken often enough within policy development (Lundy, 2007). In answer to the research questions, students were able to identify a range of ecosystemic influences that might act as local risk factors to encourage a young person to engage with violent extremism. They were also very able at identifying approaches schools could use to reduce risk and to think critically about the approaches identified by the DCSF (2009). Despite education policy in the UK neglecting the views of young people when developing policy (Lundy, 2007), the contributions of the young people in this research had significant implications for the local preventing violent extremism education policy.

Representing students' views through research created challenges with regards to reliability and validity. In addition to the issues addressed in the methodology section, the experience of running the focus group indicated that group processes may also affect the reliability of the results. A member of staff was present throughout the focus group and this may have influenced the students' responses. Other group members may also have influenced the discussion due to social desirability bias. This was particularly noticed during discussion

about where students turn for support. Students were very quick to say that they do not consult with teachers for support; however this could be because it may not have been socially desirable to be open about this. Following one of the focus groups, the member of staff present commented that the students present regularly talked to teachers in pastoral support about difficulties they were facing, despite not acknowledging this in the group. It was hoped that the ground rules promoting confidentiality and respect would have overcome some of the constraining influences of social desirability, although with hindsight it is acknowledged that social desirability may have had an impact on the discussion within the group. With this caveat, the following sections of this discussion focus on exploring and interpreting student responses and potential implications for the adaptation of the toolkit by the LA steering group.

5.1 Students' views on what violent extremism is

The students were asked to discuss their thoughts about what violent extremism is. The facilitators did not donate any concepts or definitions during this part of discussion, although, through questioning did ask students to develop their responses. Some students were able to talk eloquently about violent extremism and described it in terms of:

> 'A crime of passion…people are doing it for something they believe in or something that affects them'
>
> 'They've got strong views and they haven't been able to voice them and they kind of try to resolve things by violent extremism'
>
> 'A form of persuasion…that's the reason they do it, to get people to pay attention'

Students in Central School were also able to differentiate between acts of violent extremism and extremism, explaining that the British National Party are ‘not violent but they are extreme’.

Students in all three schools talked about factors leading up to an act of violent extremism and predominantly associated these with holding exclusivist views that one is not able to, or does not have the opportunity to, discuss in the mainstream forum. The students saw violent extremism as an individual’s ‘last resort’ to gain attention for their views and as a ‘form of persuasion’ to receive positive outcomes in line with these. Students linked the development of extreme views back to ideology. When this was discussed with reference to Islam, students suggested that this was on the basis of ‘a different version of the Koran…that says they have to kill’ and the belief that ‘it’s okay to be violent [because] it pleases their god’. It was thought that this ‘will make kids actually think, okay, it’s being honourable’. This line of discussion was present in North and Central schools.

The students appeared very perceptive about the cognitive inflexibility of violent extremists and were able to talk about extremists ‘not listening to others’ views’ and being ‘narrow minded’. This fits well with research conducted by Lilienfeld et al (2009) who recognised that violent extremists often present with a number of cognitive biases including the confirmation bias, where individuals will not consider or entertain views that are not consistent with their own. Students in all groups did not restrict discussion about extreme views to Islam and also referred to the Amish community, the Illuminati and some animal rights campaigners.

Students also linked the development of violent extremism with strong negative emotions such as ‘hate’, ‘loneliness’ and ‘lack of hope for society’. Some students were able to link

these affective processes with cognition and the way people develop cognitive biases towards out groups, an element that is missing from Lilienfeld et al's (2009) research and which is neglected in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978).

A small number of students in North and South schools were able to reflect that violent extremism is not just about cognitive inflexibility and the desire to gain attention for one's views and discussed it with regards to belief systems and moral subjectivity. One student in South School commented that an act of violent extremism is not wrong for the person who committed the act 'because they were going with what they believe is right, but for everyone else…obviously they would [say that it is wrong]'. Recognising different perspectives and views about the morality of violent extremism represents multiple thinking styles (which Burr and Hofer, 2002, refer to as a core developmental task) in some students which the DCSF (2009) toolkit aims to promote for all.

Students also showed a good awareness of what violent extremism is through the examples they gave from the past and present. Students discussed 9/11[2] and 7/7[3], but across all three schools, acts of Islamic extremism were by no means disproportionately represented in this aspect of the discussion. Students talked about examples of ethnic cleansing, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi's, and also referred to internal political disputes in countries such as Rwanda and Zimbabwe as acts of violent extremism. This again demonstrated that some students were able to think broadly about the concept of violent extremism and have not limited their thinking to recent Islamic examples that receive publicity in the media (Thomas, 2009). Violent extremism is a relatively new term and yet students were able to generalise its

[2] The date used to denote the terrorist bombing of the Twin Towers in New York on 9/11/2001
[3] The date used to denote the terrorist bombing of parts of the London Underground on 7/7/2005

usage to historical events, demonstrating higher order cognitive skills (Haring et al, 1978). One student in Central School suggested the war in Iraq might have been an act of violent extremism because it was ‘unnecessary’. The student acknowledged that ‘some people might think the Iraq war is justified and some people might not, it depends on your definition’. The two students who engaged in this discussion not only demonstrated multiplist understanding but were also able to appreciate the subjectivity of an event that was portrayed by the government as legal. This breadth of the examples should allay Kundnani’s (2009) fears that the recent Prevent agenda, and the media attention it has received, encourage the public to perceive violent extremism as synonymous with Islam.

Despite some well-informed discussion about the concept of violent extremism, there seemed to be some confusion with regards to events that can be classified in this way. Some students were able to give examples of ‘extreme violence’ but did not always link this back to extreme views or underpinning ideology. Following a definition from the facilitators about what might define an act of violent extremism, some students in North School still referred to Derek Bird (who recently shot dead members of his family and local community) as a violent extremist because ‘he killed people’. Another student was able to counter this by explaining that he is ‘not really [an] extremist because although he killed them, that makes him more psycho, he wasn’t really doing it for a reason’. Students in Central School gave examples of football hooliganism and assaults during the Winter Olympics as examples of violent extremism and their justification for the responses suggested that they were confusing violence with the concept of violent extremism. The DCSF (2009) does not provide a succinct definition of violent extremism and it may be helpful for schools to develop their own, or for the LA

Steering Group to donate one to frame discussions. It may also be an interesting discussion within schools for students to decide upon their own definition of violent extremism.

5.1.1 Actions associated with violent extremism

The students talked about the concept of violent extremism with regards to associated actions. The students talked about 'bombs' and 'weapons' and the physical methods employed with acts of violent extremism, although did not acknowledge actions associated with the incitement of hatred. When asked by the facilitators about whether the incitement of hatred could be considered as part of the process of violent extremism one student in South School replied 'not really, 'cos it's not, erm, harming anyone'. The student then developed the argument to explain: 'I won't hate a group just because I read something…it like, takes more than that'.

Without being alarmist, it might be helpful for students to be made aware of some of the tactics extremist groups use to recruit members. The students with whom incitement to hatred was discussed did not appear to see this as a contributing factor in the path towards violent extremism. It may be helpful to raise the students' awareness of this, so that if they do come across extremist literature that promotes violence they will be better equipped to recognise it as illegal and potentially part of the radicalisation process.

Some students in North School reflected that acts of violent extremism could lie on a continuum, demonstrated by one student's suggestion that you could have 'petty examples and more extreme versions like protests and things'. Another commented that 'a violent

protest isn't as bad as the Twin Towers being blown up'. It may be helpful to discuss the legal framework of violent extremism with students to promote understanding of acts that are legal, such as peaceful protests, but where the boundaries lie.

5.1.2 Consequences of violent extremism

Students were very able to talk about the impact violent extremism could have on civilians, referring to 'death', 'destruction' and 'hurting people'. The students in North and Central School also talked about the consequences violent extremism could have on civilian members of the ethnic group committing the act, for example, the negative impact acts of Islamic extremism could have on all Muslims:

> 'People are prejudiced towards a whole religion rather than, erm, quite a small minority who are connected with violent extremism'
>
> 'I think only a few Muslims give Muslims a bad name'.

This is supported by Cannetti-Nisim et al (2009) who found that when individuals experienced terrorist acts, this caused psychological distress leading to a perception of threat that generalised to all members of the group the terrorist belonged to. Cannetti-Nisim et al (2009) then found this predicted exclusionary attitudes towards members of that group.

Despite the recognition that discrimination towards whole groups can arise from the actions of a minority, the same group of students in North School talked about how:

> 'They come to our country and all we ever hear about is suicide bombers and that most of them are Asian, obviously you're going to be quite scared

> of them. If they're coming to England you don't know what they're going to do'.
>
> 'We could say 'I don't like them wearing a burka because you can't see their face and I don't know what they're doing''. (Student was referring to double standards in society).

Although this line of discussion only arose in one group it demonstrated that suspicion and discrimination can be facilitated by the emotive element, despite the student's cognitive awareness that suspicion based on the actions of a minority is unfair. The students also recognised that the media play a role in this and felt that they 'know nice Muslims but…you hear about so much of the bad stuff and not much of the good stuff' and 'that it is the way that the media perceives it and shows us'. The interviewees in Kundnani's (2009) research certainly felt that Muslims had been made a suspect community, not just by the media but by government counter-terrorist policy and strategies. This reiterates that debates and cognitive strategies alone will not reduce in-group, out-group entrenched views and that affective processes need careful consideration through community approaches, discussed below with reference to the exosystem and the DCSF's (2009) aim to 'explore and promote shared values between and within communities' (DCSF, 2009, p.22).

5.2 Students' views about risk factors and ways to build resilience through the education system to prevent violent extremism

There was a consistently strong feeling seen particularly in North and South schools that violent extremism is not something that affects young people in the LA. The students felt that because there had never been an act of violent extremism locally, they were never going to be affected by it and were never going to be at risk of joining a group. This may have been one

of the reasons why the numbers of students volunteering to participate in the focus groups were disappointingly low. The purpose of the research was explained to the students; however one student in North School questioned:

> 'Why are you actually, like, in here today, because I don't like recall any violent extremism in X [the LA]'

Other students commented:

> 'I don't think it's a problem round this area.'

> 'This discussion about violent extremism in X is a bit [other student: 'extreme']…it's not relevant because there's nothing we can relate it to, because there's no violent extremism in X'.

This suggests that the preventing violent extremism agenda in the LA needs to be delivered within a framework and context that is relevant to young people who see violent extremism as a distant event that does not affect them. This should include aspects of recruitment strategies used by extreme groups and decision points and actions that can be taken in response to this so that violent extremism can be seen as a process rather than an outcome. The threat of local extremist groups needs to be made clear to young people without being alarmist.

One way of providing a contextual framework for education about violent extremism is through drama. The Play House Educational Theatre Company (Birmingham) have developed a play called 'Tapestry' about far right and Islamic extremism. Following the production, discussion is facilitated about key elements of the play and by students asking questions of the characters who are in turn placed on the 'hot seat'. This production is currently being piloted in colleges in Birmingham and the LA within which this research is situated (initial feedback from conference evaluations is 'very positive' according to a summary report presented in

July 2010) and may provide an effective concrete framework around which initial discussions about the processes of violent extremism can take place. The DCSF (2009) toolkit advocates the use of drama as part of the preventing violent extremism agenda in schools providing:

- the production aligns with the values the school promotes;
- it is clear how the preparation, activity and follow up (including evaluation) will take place to ensure effective learning;
- the company are clear about the school's expectations and have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check where appropriate; and
- follow up support is provided for individuals or groups as needed;

(DCSF, 2009, p.32)

Despite not feeling that violent extremism was an issue that was going to affect them, the students were able to have detailed discussions about risk factors that might encourage young people to engage with violent extremism locally, and ways to build resilience to counter these. Taking a community psychology approach to intervention meant exploring the contextual influence on behaviour (Felner et al, 2000) so there were parts of the focus group that were directed to encourage the students to consider these, as detailed in the methodology section.

When discussing the risk factors for engaging in violent extremism, some students explicitly recognised that there was never one single factor, but a range of 'conditions'. One student in South School commented that 'it has to take a lot' to join an extremist group, as emphasised

by Meah and Mellis (2006) who acknowledge the necessity for a complex interaction of factors.

The students who felt that violent extremism was not an issue that was going to affect them also felt that 'schools can't really do anything' to support young people in this area. It was felt that violent extremism was something that was beyond the role of education and that 'as much as school can do they [young people] just don't change'. Students reflected that it should be the 'role of the families' to build resilience against extremism. In all three schools students also appeared to feel strongly that educating Year 9 students about violent extremism was too late because in Year 9 'you've pretty much got your views…so it's a bit late to talk about it' and that their current views will stay 'for the rest of [their] life'. One student commented that for students in Year 9 'it would take something really big at this age to change their ways'. Students felt that education about extremism would be more effective in primary school 'before they're exposed to [other] views' and because younger children are 'more understanding' and are more flexible in their thinking styles. This, however, is not consistent with the literature that suggests primary school children find multiplist thinking difficult (Burr and Hoffer, 2002). Some of the students felt that educating young people about different beliefs would help them 'make up their own mind' to make informed decisions later on, rather than being 'influenced by people around you'.

The perspective that it is not the role of education to support students to prevent violent extremism came from North and South schools. When asked to complete the rating scales (described in the results section) to show numerically the degree to which education could support students in this area, the Central School gave scores that were highest. When asked

about resilience factors already available in school that might help prevent violent extremism, Central School also appeared to be engaging in projects similar to those advocated by the toolkit. The students in Central School talked about exchange trips to Senegal, their pen friends from another country and how this helped them 'appreciate what [they have] got'. In addition to helping students appreciate the luxuries they have in this country linking with a school in another country, may also promote increased understanding of different cultures and acceptance of difference. Details about current school activities that might help prevent violent extremism were gathered from group discussion. It may be that all three schools are working on similar projects but these did not come out during the North and South School focus groups.

Despite not feeling it is the role of secondary education to prevent violent extremism, students across all schools were able to suggest and discuss strategies that might be effective in school to build resilience against violent extremism. Students in North School were very clear that they felt the education system needs to avoid 'overkill' with initiatives because this is not effective. Students referred to the anti-bullying agenda and the over-use of assemblies to deliver the anti-bullying message:

> Student 1: 'We have been getting bullying assemblies since we were about three.'
>
> Student 2: 'Oh my God I know.'
>
> Student 1: 'If I have to sit through another bullying assembly…there's so many.'

Students in North School reflected that despite hearing the anti-bullying message many times 'nothing changes' and that even though 'we know it all' bullying still occurs with relatively

high levels of frequency. This suggests that with the preventing violent extremism agenda it is important to deliver the message in a variety of ways across the curriculum, using multi-media methods and in a way that is relevant to the students to develop their own thinking, rather than feeling preached at.

5.2.1 Within person risk and resilience

Risk factors

Only a very small portion of the discussion within the focus groups followed the psychodynamic perspective that violent extremism is caused by internal personality traits arising from psychological trauma (Post, 1998). Students in South School briefly mentioned that violent extremism is 'just in them' and that 'you've got your personality trait and…this is how you're going to stay'. No students discussed traumatic mother child relationships as a risk factor for violent extremism or explored dichotomous thinking patterns associated with psychodynamic defence mechanisms such as splitting.

Part of the discussion demonstrated that students in all three schools felt that believing in the cause of the extremist group was important as a risk factor for engaging in violent extremism. Belief systems were discussed by the students in terms of individual factors and were seen as being a risk factor for joining an extremist group. This is not in line with the literature that suggests that believing in the group's cause is not typically a risk factor for joining a group and often comes later in the radicalisation process (Crenshaw, 2000; Stout, 2004; Taylor and Horgan, 2006; Meah and Mellis, 2006 and Soucier et al, 2009). Students did feel that when a

person's belief system was a risk factor, it was linked with Islam and the misinterpretation of scripture. Islam was also on occasions misinterpreted by the students who commented that in Islam 'it's okay to be violent'. There may need to be some work in schools (potentially by religious leaders in the community) about the peaceful messages of religion adhered to by the majority and how violence stemming from Islam is the interpretation of a minority.

5.2.2 Microsystemic risk and resilience

Risk factors

Students recognised the impact that transactions in the microsystems could have on individuals and felt that some personality traits interacted with peer influences. Students referred to how people with 'weak personalities' who 'can't stand up for themselves' and 'just go with the flow' can be influenced by peer and family systems. Students in all three schools felt that 'peer pressure affects you a lot' and that 'you're likely to want to follow them and do what they're doing just because they're your friends'. Students (particularly in North and South schools) also recognised that parents 'have a big influence on your views' and if parents have 'very strong religious views' it would make the 'kids like them'. The DCSF (2009) toolkit promotes teaching skills for critically evaluating evidence to support decision making. This is helpful, but on the basis of this research there needs to be more consideration about the emotional impact of peer group relationships and the dissonance associated with wanting to 'please your friends' even if you 'know it's wrong'. Peer and family influences on behaviour need further consideration in the literature that explores preventing violent extremism. The students in this research felt that peer influences were the biggest influences

in their lives from a conformity perspective. Zollman (2010) demonstrates that conformity can have an influence over belief formation and that when group members conform to the beliefs of a group, an individual is more successful within the group. Conformity research may offer some interesting insights when researching risk factors for engaging with extremism.

A major theme running through the discussion about risk factors in all three groups was that if people do not have fulfilling relationships within their microsystems, and experience rejection and isolation, this could potentially increase their vulnerability to extremist groups. Students did not discuss this in terms of an identity crisis or a conflict within oneself (as is suggested in some of the research, Wikorowitz, (2005) and Elsworthy and Rifkind, (2006)). Students instead talked about how feeling 'alone', wanting 'popularity' and needing to feel a 'sense of belonging' could make an extremist group attractive because they are 'welcoming' and could provide 'a real sense of family', 'people who like you' and protection:

> 'If you're some little geek who no body knows and people are horrible to you in school…a big gang is like: 'Join our gang and everyone will be scared of you and no one will walk over you again.''

Liese (2004) showed that children who are ostracised in school look to join others with similar experiences and that group processes then serve to promote and justify blame towards the out group. The students in the focus group suggested that similar experiences could occur with extremist groups, also specifically that it is not just similarity that attracts people to a group but the desire to have emotional belonging needs met. Students talked about feelings of isolation and rejection arising at the individual level as a result of unsuccessful transactions in the microsystems of the family, in that 'their parents might not want them' and school where 'people are horrible to you' and the exosystem of the community if you 'can't get to your

friends'. There is some support for the link between rejection and isolation and extremism in the literature as Hussain (2007) refers to his feelings of being 'a misfit' (Hussain, 2007, p.7) in school and how this contributed to his growing relationship with an extreme group. The right wing participants in Cockburn's (2007) research also felt bullied and isolated from Asian youngsters at school. Joining with people who share similar experiences can lead to cognitive reconstrual to blame the out group for all negative experiences and suffering (Bandura, 1998).

Students recognised the impact negative emotions such as 'hate', 'anger' and 'revenge' had in contributing to violent extremism and that these often arose from unsuccessful transactions in the microsystem and that violent extremism can occur as 'a way to get your anger out'.

Students in all three schools did not feel that experiencing difficulties with one's identity was a risk factor for engaging with violent extremism and talked about processes of isolation and rejection rather than uncertainty within the self. Students did not report experiencing any identity difficulties themselves and adult theory of mind literature suggests that without experience, it is very difficult to put oneself in the position of another to consider this hypothetically (Keysar et al, 2003). Generally, the students felt that identity developed through the natural processes of maturity (but could be influenced by peers and parents) and that by Year 9, identity was a stable construct that did not change. This is not in line with Erickson (1956) (as cited in Newman and Newman, 2008) or Marcia's (1980) theory of identity development which suggests students in Year 9 are likely to be questioning and experiencing challenges with their identity.

Ways to build resilience

Students' reflections on the link between isolation, rejection and extremism in the microsystem, have implications for the inclusion agenda and preventing violent extremism in education. Inclusion has traditionally been seen as giving children with special educational needs equal access to mainstream education (Education Act, 1996), although should have an equal focus on including all children as active participants in school life. This has been reflected in more recent guidance (Children Act, 2004; HMG Report, 2006). As well as children with identified special educational needs, schools should be ensuring that children who are vulnerable to isolation have friendship groups and experience a sense of belonging in school. The students in all three focus group referred to the possibility of extremist groups meeting young people's belonging and safety needs, two of the key motivational forces on human behaviour that were identified by Maslow (1943). If education can strive to meet these needs in school it may build resilience against extremist groups and reduce moral disengagement with society (Bandura, 1998). The DCSF (2009) toolkit refers to 'creating explicit value statements that are inclusive of all students' and 'focusing support on those at risk of being isolated' (DCSF, 2009, p.22) which is in line with the views of the students in this research.

Discussion in the focus group about preventing violent extremism within microsystems focused on the benefits of supporting young people's social and emotional wellbeing to promote social skills and positive relationships with others. Students recognised that schools were already engaged with work in this area and talked about the benefits of circle time activities exploring diversity, and Personal, Social Development days that encourage students

to learn life skills and interact with other year groups. Some of the students felt that circle time and PSD days should be built upon to increase the focus on moral education around violence and how to resolve conflicts appropriately. This is reflected in the DCSF (2009) toolkit strategy that promotes restorative justice approaches in school to teach children how to manage conflict and difference without building resentment.

Students in Central School felt that schools had a role in supporting children in the family systems by 'getting really connected with homes to make sure everything's okay' for the child. The DCSF (2009) toolkit refers to developing home/school relationships but this is with the intention of developing understanding about community issues rather than to check on individuals at home. Increased links between home and school to 'make sure everything's okay' for individuals may be something for schools to consider if they feel a student is at risk, rather than as a general preventative measure.

5.2.3 Mesosystemic risk and resilience factors

Risk

When discussing risk factors in the mesosytem students recognised that conflicting transactions can contribute to increasing one's own group affiliation although did not independently discuss risk factors at this level.

The students did not explicitly talk about 'us' versus 'them' thinking styles as risk factors that can arise between groups in the mesosystem, although when directed by the facilitators

discussed this in terms of the benefits and resilience debates can build to reduce cognitive biases that can become entrenched and potentially lead to moral reconstrual (Bandura, 1998). The students recognised that debates would stop people 'bottling up' their feelings and views, and prevent the from 'exploding' because they 'don't speak as much [and] have their views heard'.

Building resilience

The literature suggests that the 'us' versus 'them' thinking styles that can occur between groups in the mesosystem can become an entrenched element of the views of extremist group members. The DCSF toolkit aims to promote debates in schools about current issues to develop multiplist thinking styles to reduce 'us' versus 'them' patterns and potentially to reduce moral reconstrual of violence against the 'out-group' by considering different viewpoints (for example debating for and against the Iraq war). The students were asked to consider this and recognised that this approach could, theoretically, be effective. It was felt that current issue debates would help because some people do not get the chance to share their views and 'it's all bottled up inside them and [they are] the people who do something and they just explode'. Although some students felt that their views had already been decided for life, one group recognised that 'young people are easier to influence' with regards to their political viewpoint because this is an area where 'they haven't got their own views yet'. Debating could help develop these opinions by promoting the skills needed to make informed choices. Having open discussion about current affairs also exposes students to different views to help prevent the fixed viewpoints fuelled by the confirmatory bias that is associated with extremism (Lilienfeld et al, 2009), possibly through a shared social identity (Sindic and

Reicher, 2005). Despite recognising the potential benefits that open discussion on current affairs could have for the preventing violent extremism agenda, students were also concerned about the practical implication of this.

Students in all three schools felt that debating current issues in schools could have potentially harmful consequences because, in the words of one student, teachers 'can't control us'. Many of the students felt that debates in schools get 'out of hand' and that students 'scream' during them because 'the more you scream the less work you have to do afterwards' and 'you always get immature people' who make contributing difficult. The students felt that teachers often did not have to skills to manage debates in school and that creating a controlled environment for the debate to take place would be very difficult. This was based on their experience debating 'safe' issues in school such as uniform policy. In addition to feeling teachers do not have the skills to control debates, the students also commented that they do not feel they have the skills to participate in debates because people 'just won't listen to anybody else and then everyone else will just have a go at them and then it will just be an argument'. Some students also do not have the skills or confidence to join in the discussion and if they 'don't want to say anything they won't'.

In addition to feeling staff and students might not have the skills to manage debates in schools, students in North School also felt that despite ground rules, discussions about current affairs might cause offence to some people. It was felt that 'there's the possibility that someone could say something and then even if it's one of those things when you say, 'I won't get offended'…if somebody says something about you you're going to have a grudge against them, that's always going to be there and that might create even more racial tension'. The

students felt that this ‘grudge’ would continue outside the debating session and harm peer relationships and safety in school. This is particularly the case as some ‘immature’ people were felt to be likely to ‘shout out a racist comment’. The students recognised that the people who caused the disruption were likely to be those who needed to explore different viewpoints on current events the most, because they are ‘the people that are going to have problems when they’re older accepting other cultures and races, so everyone needs to be involved’.

Students felt that debate in schools would only be successful if it was something that interested them and something they had ‘strong opinions’ about. Some of the students felt that ‘current issues’ meant politics and that politics had no relevance to them. South School have a debating club but people do not attend ‘because it’s about politics and stuff’. One student did feel it would be interesting to debate ‘current affairs…because you have a better understanding of what’s going on because it’s all over the news and everything and you get to express your views about them’. This again suggests that in order to discuss current affairs and violent extremism the curriculum needs to be delivered in a way that ensures contextual relevance to the students, using a variety of sources.

Reporting students’ concerns about this strategy ensures that the research offers a balanced perspective, rather than only reporting data that fit with the status quo and established vocabularies in the toolkit, a criticism Fielding (2004) has levelled at some, so called, ‘empowering’ research.

Using solution-focused approaches, the facilitators explored ways in which the debating strategy proposed by the DCSF (2009) toolkit could be improved so that students could

benefit from the positive aspects they identified from discussing current affairs in schools, whilst lessoning the impact of the negative. Some students felt that one way to achieve this would be through smaller group sizes and consideration of group composition to reduce potential arguments between students who are known to clash. The focus groups were run with 4-10 students in this research and this felt a comfortable number to the facilitators. In the feedback questionnaires a student also commented that 'it was good having a small group as you got to talk more and have your say'. Even in comparatively small groups (compared to class sizes) of ten, the facilitators found it difficult to reduce the domination of a small number of individuals in the discussion and encourage everyone to contribute (although only two students rated their opportunity to contribute below 5 out of 10). One way the facilitators found effective in encouraging everyone's contribution was through the use of small group activities within the debate so that people could discuss their ideas before presenting them back to the group. Rating scales to explore consensus were also effective so that even if individuals had not contributed to the group discussion they could indicate how much they agreed with the discussion points. During one focus group a 'hands-up' policy was adopted, and whilst it was felt this hampered the group discussion, it did reduce the impact of individual domination.

Some students felt that improving debates in school would involve having 'people who agree with you' because the perception is 'if you're the only one who thinks that then you probably won't say anything and people will just like laugh at you'. This could be facilitated by having the opportunity to discuss the topics in small groups and then presenting shared views as part of a team.

Despite concerns about the practical implications of discussing current affairs in school, no students felt that it would be inappropriate to discuss issues with a religious element critically, as suggested by Resnick (2008).

5.2.4 Exosystemic risk and resilience factors

Risk factors

Students in all three groups felt that they did not experience many community difficulties locally. They felt that poverty, injustice, discrimination and alienation (areas identified by Meah and Mellis, (2006) as risk factors for violent extremism) were not issues that affected them directly but they could recognise that this occurred within their community. The exosystemic difficulty that affected the students in all three schools was feeling unable to participate in community activities. This was partly due not 'having anything for teenagers' to do. South School group felt that there were enough community activities available for teenagers but that these could be inaccessible due to 'the rough people who stand outside and do whatever they can to ruin it' or people feeling too 'shy' to join in. There needs to be further exploration about providing a range of community activities that can provide a safe, unintimidating environment with resources and adults who are able to tap into ways to attract 'shy' people and also to address the intimidation by those who 'ruin' it for everyone else to encourage positive contributions.

Students in North and South schools felt that difficulties in the community were exacerbated by 'political correctness [that] has gone too far'. One student talked about being proud of

being from a dual heritage background so other people who ‘walk on tip toes’ around ethnicity should ‘get over it’. Other students felt that some people used the sensitivity around political correctness to their ‘advantage’; claiming to be a victim of discrimination ‘when it’s not really there’. This suggests that when talking about issues arising from sensitive subjects there needs to be some ground rules about political correctness and what is acceptable and what is not so that people are clear on the boundaries without having to be worried about ‘what they say’.

The student in North School identified divisions between groups in society and felt that these arise from a lack of tolerance. One student commented:

> ‘I think people don’t accept other religions and that’s what it is, it’s all about acceptance’.

Some of the students in North and Central schools felt that divisions in society were caused by the majority not accepting the minority and the minority not accepting the majority:

> Student 1: ‘Muslims need to accept our religion and they come over here and stuff like, ahh, like Christmas lights, Christmas light in some places got banned because it was offensive to Muslims when it’s, this country is a Protestant country’
>
> Student 2 (in response): ‘See the thing is in some cases we’re not tolerant of them either’.

One student felt that lack of tolerance arose in areas where ‘there might be like more of a certain culture in one end [area] and there’s conflict between the two’. One group discussed this in relation to conflict between British and Polish communities living alongside each other

in England and how Polish people can be ‘scapegoats…for how lazy our country is’ because ‘people on the dole…say it’s Polish people who have come over here and taken the jobs’.

Negative feelings associated with lack of tolerance, injustice and frustration are identified in the literature as a risk factor (Moghaddam, 2005). Lack of tolerance and conflict between groups could also increase ‘in group’ preference and hostility towards out groups along with the ‘us’ and ‘them’ thinking style associated with extremism (Bandura 1998). The DCSF (2009) toolkit advocates the role of education in promoting awareness and addressing difficulties in the community through increased links with community members. The students developed their own lines of thinking about how schools can support community cohesion.

Building resilience

Students across the three groups felt that an effective way within the exosystem to help prevent violent extremism would be through increased contact between ethnic groups in the community to promote acceptance and so that ‘you feel more comfortable’ with different cultures. Students recognised that in their LA students in schools are ‘predominantly white’ and that ‘there needs to be more of a mix’. One student suggested that:

> ‘You could get people from different schools like the same age because if you know someone from school and you’ve known them since you were little, you feel more comfortable around them and you know more about them but if you met someone in the street or something you won’t, like, it’s kind of better to know more people, like, then you’ve got different views of sort of different people and different religions and stuff so you know what people are like’.

These views are in line with the contact theory of intergroup relationships (Allport, 1954) (cited in Kassin et al, 2005) that posits that prejudice is fuelled by ignorance and that under appropriate conditions, interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to increase tolerance and improve relationships between majority and minority group members. Contact is hypothesised to facilitate positive relationships when both groups work together on a task that is designed to promote equal status between groups, is collaborative and has a shared aim. This activity must be collaborative so members of each group rely on each other to achieve the goal and must be overseen by an authority both groups acknowledge as legitimate (Kassin et al, 2005). Allport (1954) (cited in Kassin et al, 2005) proposes that relationships are enhanced this way as stereotypes and negative perceptions that occur through generalisations are reconstrued through positive collaboration. Pettigrew and Tropp (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of studies exploring contact theory and found that overall face-to-face contact between members of distinguishable groups reduced prejudice. This fits with more general formulations of familiarity identified by the literature (Zizak and Reber, 2004) and by the students in this research.

Pettigrew and Tropp's (2005) meta-analysis demonstrated larger effect sizes for reduced stereotyping for majority group members than minority group members, which potentially relates back to difficulties obtaining equal status for groups. Despite attempts by the studies involved in the analysis to promote equal status, minority group members may not have felt this. This suggests that the perspectives of all groups must be considered in developing an optimally structured contact situation. Contact theory also does not consider the processes involved in contact and merely stipulates the conditions under which positive contact can be facilitated. It also does not consider that affect might impact relationships, as seen when the

students discussed feeling suspicious of other newly arrived students from an 'Asian' background. There has also been debate in the literature about whether differences between groups should be made salient (Hewstone and Brown, 1986) or minimised to promote similarity (Brewer and Miller, 1984) (as cited in Miller, 2002). This is also not considered by contact theory. Maras and Brown (2000) compared both approaches to discriminatory attitudes of children towards disabled peers and found that reducing group differences was more effective in reducing prejudice, suggesting that where a category is less psychologically salient, it loses the power to organise and bias people's attitudes.

The toolkit recommends that schools should promote 'opportunities for linking with other schools' (DCSF, 2009, p.22), although if the aim is to reduce prejudice and increase tolerance towards different cultures through contact (the aim of the toolkit to do this is not clear as the statement is not elaborated on), the programme 'should be carefully structured to incorporate Allport's four key situational conditions [considering]…the perspectives of both groups' (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2005, p.110).

Students in one of the groups also felt that schools had a role to play in supporting the local communities in difficulties they may experience. The DCSF (2009) toolkit advocates that schools deepen their engagement with their local community by:

- promoting ways for pupils, staff, parents and others to channel concerns to those who can help;
- reviewing how the school and local authority partners are engaged in support for different communities;

- developing links with different faith communities and supplementary schools;
- understanding how students from all communities can access extended schools provision;
- modelling how students can express their views through involvement with local decision making processes; and
- developing school and school partnership understanding of community issues and finding respectful ways to promote school values to local communities

Some of the students felt that schools were already demonstrating good practice in promoting extended schools with regards to sports clubs and providing activities out of traditional school hours, and that this builds resilience against social isolation. Students in Central School developed the idea donated by the facilitators that schools could address difficulties in the community 'so they know what we're going through' by 'pointing them [parents] in the right direction'. Students felt that teachers who lived locally to the school had some knowledge of issues in the community and felt that this knowledge could be improved in a number of ways:

> 'They could have like, a link with the police or something'
>
> 'If, like, the community came in once a month'
>
> 'They could talk to pupils in the school'
>
> 'I think sometimes they could talk to the parents and have set times like maybe once a month where parents would go in and talk to the teachers if they've got any, like troubles, kids as well that can talk to them.'

The practical implications of this type of work would need to be considered by schools and additional training may be required for key staff who may be involved in developing the link

between schools and the community. This should not be a new concept to schools: however, in the light of the current community cohesion agenda within education (Education and Inspections Act, 2006). The idea of schools contributing to the resolution of community tensions was donated to the students by the facilitators and was not a strategy they developed independently. Students can provide answers to questions delivered by adults in accordance with the answer they feel is expected or desired (as is typical of the nature of adult/student relationships in school) and this may have had an influence over the discussion of this donated strategy. Students in the other two groups were less positive about the role of schools in addressing community difficulties and felt that:

> 'That's really down to the council because if someone's got a problem then they can't go to their nearest school because it's nothing to do with the school, that's down to the council of your area really.'

Students in South School also felt that if schools were going to become involved in addressing local community difficulties they would need to consider 'every single angle, because, like, if you look at one angle and not that angle, then it's like unbalanced' and unfair. Some students also felt that having schools involved in community issues could just 'make things worse' and that having the school involved in difficulties might make people involved think 'I'm so cool' for being in trouble, inadvertently escalating the situation.

5.3 Sources of support identified by students

Students were asked to identify some of the sources of support they access when they experience difficulties. The DCSF (2009) toolkit recommends that schools 'use normal school pupil support approaches' (DCSF, 2009, p.33) as a first point for supporting the well being of

young people and then more targeted approaches for children with whom specific concerns are raised. It was felt by the researcher that it was important to gain young people's views on typical school approaches to support so that the steering group could consider these when adapting the toolkit for use in LA schools. It is important to evaluate such approaches with the young people to ensure current approaches are accessible, and if not, identify what can be done to improve them.

Students reported a range of sources of support they turn to when they experience difficulties. The most common response involved peer support and students often felt that 'the only person you could ever tell is your friends'. Students felt that peer support was preferable because there was a sense of embarrassment associated with talking to teachers about sensitive issues. Students in all three groups felt that 'we wouldn't go to teachers' and that people do not 'actually go to welfare for support'. Barriers to confiding in teachers also included the perception that 'you've got to be really careful because if you tell a teacher they'll probably just go and tell someone else' and that could make the situation worse. Some students also felt that 'you don't know them [teachers] that well' and therefore would not feel comfortable sharing concerns or personal problems with them.

Students also reported dealing with the difficulty internally 'because if it's a problem with yourself…you're the only one who can actually do [anything about] it'. Students dealt with problems themselves by listening to 'music, because the lyrics, like, try and help', using the internet and 'sometimes you can divert your mind with a hobby'. Some of the students felt that although they had positive relationships with their family members, families were not an

effective source of support because ‘it’s embarrassing; you don’t want to talk to them’ and ‘you think they’ll judge you’.

The discussion students engaged in about sources of support suggests that a combination of peer mentoring and methods that can support young people anonymously and allow them to try to resolve their difficulty individually, could be most popular. Faceless methods could involve e-mail and web-based systems. Peer and faceless methods would need to act as a first point of support and would need to be closely supervised, monitored and boundaried so that any issues that could not be managed at this level could then lead on to adult support as part of the schools’ safeguarding procedures. Students would need to be aware of this. Identifying potential sources of support is only a first step because Ciarrochi et al, (2002) found that students with low emotional competence were less likely to seek support for personal difficulties than students with high emotional competencies. If the steering group wanted to look at sources of support in school they would also have to consider whether these methods would support students who may be reluctant to seek out help for themselves, as peer support and faceless methods are more likely to rely upon this. There would need to continue to be an emphasis on teacher/external profession based support alongside additional methods.

5.4 Utility of the risk and resilience framework to structure preventing violent extremism initiatives

Throughout the research, risk and resilience factors across ecosystems have been used to guide the literature review, design the focus group and frame the results of the data within this discussion. Research exploring risk and resilience has been criticised by Luther and Zelazo

(2003) for producing lists of generic factors, which they consider to be unhelpful. Violent extremism research has identified specific risk factors that may contribute to engagement with extremist groups, including:

- the experience of an identity crisis (Wiktorowitz 2005, Hogg et al, 2007);
- cognitive distortions (Loza, 2007, Lilienfeld et al, 2009);
- moral disengagement with society (Bandura, 1998);
- community frustrations and a sense of isolation (Lindner, 2002, Moghaddam, 2005, Cockburn, 2007); and
- access to extremist material (Meah and Mellis, 2006).

These risk factors have been conceptualised in the Supply and Demand Model (Meah and Mellis, 2006, see Figure 2). Elements from the Supply and Demand Model and were used to design aspects of the focus group discussion, centring on risk factors. The model was developed to explore Islamic extremism: however, the research used to inform the literature review for this paper explores risk factors for extremism in a range of contexts and fits well within the Meah and Mellis (2006) framework. The model does account for some of the data generated from the focus groups, as demonstrated below:

Supply (access to extremist ideology)

Students were not encouraged to talk about access to extremist ideology although some recognised that a young person would need contact with an extremist group to be at risk from radicalisation. Students did talk about their ‘supply’ of support and where they turn for help.

Demand (opportunities for extremist narratives to penetrate due to questions about one's identity)

Students did not talk about crises in identity. This may have been because they have not experienced identity crises themselves and cannot use their theory of mind to imagine the concept for others (Keysar, 2002 demonstrated that theory of mind is not a fully established concept in adulthood). Instead students recognised that demand might arise from problematic transactions in the microsystem and feelings of rejection.

Breeding ground (frustration, humiliation, alienation and injustice in the community)

Students talked extensively about how societal isolation and the need for a sense of belonging may encourage a young person to engage with an extremist group. Students also recognised that individuals can experience prejudice on the basis of group membership, although demonstrated some of these prejudices themselves.

Cognitive opening (crisis that leaves a cognitive opening where extremist narratives can penetrate. This contributes to the development of cognitive distortions and moral disengagement with society)

Students acknowledged the impact of cognitive distortions when this was raised as an issue by the facilitaters.

In addition to factors identified by the Supply and Demand model (Meah and Mellis, 2006) the participants recognised that affective elements might not always revolve around community frustrations but may arise from a need for attention and feelings of power and superiority. Students also developed the discussion about cognitive distortions to explain that by Year 9 it is very difficult to alter entrenched views. Students also recognised the impact that influence from others (peer group and parents/family) might have on engagement with extremism and this is not included in the Meah and Mellis (2006) model, but evidenced elsewhere (Taylor and Horgan, 2006). The students also generated ideas and approaches to support the development of resilience against extremist groups (that were in line with literature in the area), yet the Supply and Demand model (Meah and Mellis, 2006) does not fully account for this. The model identifies that resilience can disrupt the radicalisation cycle, though it provides no information about what 'resilience' is or how it can be developed.

Despite not accounting for all elements of the violent extremism risk and resilience research base, or accounting for all the data generated from this research project, the Supply and Demand model (Meah and Mellis, 2006) can be used effectively to scaffold conversations with students about violent extremism. It can act as a structure around which local risk factors and ways of building resilience can be explored. It is likely that if the research were completed in a different LA different factors would emerge.

5.5 Limitations

The research findings will be used to inform the LA steering group who will then adapt the DCSF (2009) toolkit where necessary to reflect the views of young people within the LA

schools. There are limitations with the research that are important to acknowledge when using the results to make decisions.

The sample size for this research was small, with twenty-two participants. Using a focus group methodology increased the time taken to collect the data (therefore reducing the sample size) but increased the richness and quality of the data and the data collected from the sample does meet its purpose (Sandelowski, 2007). The sample size also reflected the social economic regions of the LA (Audit Commission, 2009). Only a very small number of some ethnic minority students participated in the group. Schools in the LA are heavily dominated by White British students (please see OFSTED descriptions in Table 1) and some ethnic minority students were under-represented in the research, reducing the validity of the findings. The research was also conducted with Year 9 (13/14 year old) students only, though the preventing violent extremism agenda will be supporting students across all secondary school ages. The research may have had different findings with different year groups.

There are difficulties associated with representing the views of others, and attempts were made to overcome these and represent the views of the participating young people as accurately as possible. Views that did not agree or conform with strategies of the toolkit have been reported in the research, but it is the decision of the steering group how much these are considered in the adaptation of the toolkit. Many of the students who participated in the research felt that schools did not have a role in preventing violent extremism and it is likely that this will not be considered by the steering group and the preventing violent extremism in education agenda abandoned. There needs to be a balance between consulting with young people and recognising the role experts can play in assessing what is potentially best for

young people. This may be seen as having a negative impact on how empowering the research is, but liaising with experts and not solely relying on the voice of young people was brought up by one participant:

> 'Obviously you can get our say but you can't put it all down to us because at the end of the day the government is paid thousands, or whatever, because that's their job.'

Implementing effective primary prevention not only involves consulting with and eliciting the views of those participating in the intervention, but also stakeholders involved in delivery (Greenberg et al, 2003; Fagan et al, 2008). Teachers who will be delivering the preventing violent extremism agenda were not consulted in this research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The research has demonstrated that young people are able to identify local risk factors that could encourage a young person to engage with extremist group and approaches that could be used in schools to reduce risk. Despite often being neglected in UK education policy (Lundy, 2007) the views elicited from the young people have significant implications for local preventing violent extremism education policy. The purpose of the research was to engage with young people as stakeholders in education policy to ensure that the preventing violent extremism initiative in education is adapted to meet the needs of young people locally, aligning with principles of community psychology and primary prevention principles, such as:

a trans-ecological approach be taken to explore risk and resilience, viewing the person in context;
(Felner et al, 2000)

The discussion was guided so that the students considered risk and resilience factors in the micro, meso and exosystem and their transactions with the individual. The DCSF (2009) toolkit explores interventions at each of these levels and the students were able critically to discuss and develop these.

In addition to the above features, resources and support for practitioners delivering the intervention will also need to be considered as these are key elements of effective primary prevention interventions (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2002, Fagan et al, 2008).

taking a consultation approach;

(Mackay, 2006)

The research elicited the views of young people to ensure the intervention is relevant to young people in the LA schools and meets their needs (see recommendations below).

ensuring there are appropriate levels of community readiness; and

(Wandersman and Florin, 2003)

Wandersman and Florin (2003) propose that for primary prevention to be effective the receiving community group need to be ready for intervention. Students who participated in this research were able to discuss the concept of violent extremism; examples of violent extremism; and discuss risk and resilience factors in the ecosystems surrounding young people that may influence engagement with extremist groups. This suggests that students are aware of violent extremism, have opinions on the subject area and are ready to discuss and participate in intervention in this area. There must be caution in generalising the participation of these students to all young people in the LA because the participants were volunteers. The very nature of volunteers might mean they are comfortable discussing the topic area which may not be the case for all students. Violent extremism may be a sensitive topic for Muslim students who may feel targeted by the discussion (Thomas, 2009). To increase community readiness, the results of this research suggest that work will need to be undertaken to make the DCSF (2009) approaches relevant to the students.

primary prevention.

(Bender, 1972)

The DCSF (2009) toolkit targets students universally, in line with the key principle of community psychology and primary prevention that aims to reduce incidence of particular problems by strengthening resilience and reducing risk factors within ecosystems for the disorder-free community, recognising that students have a valuable contribution to make in the design and implementation of interventions (Bender, 1972). This promotes a social justice approach where all students have equal access to intervention, support and resources (Hage et al, 2007) and prevents the resentment that can emerge when specific groups are targeted (Thomas, 2009).

6.1 Summary of Recommendations

The students' views align well with Davies' (2009) XvX model of preventing violent extremism in education. Some of the students recognised the importance of increasing their value base through moral education about violence and ways to promote restorative justice; their operational base through open discussion and debate in school (providing this is managed effectively; students were sceptical about whether this would be possible); and their scaffolding base, which emphasises similarities between people of different cultures. Students did not talk about increasing their knowledge base and felt that politics and world events were not of interest to them.

The following recommendations are a summary of those which will be made to the LA steering group to consider when adapting the DCSF (2009) toolkit for schools based on the views of the participants:

1) A definition about what violent extremism is should be provided alongside the toolkit to differentiate between 'violent extremism' and 'extreme violence'. At some points during the discussion students confused the two concepts and an accessible definition could support this. One student commented in the evaluation questionnaire that there needs to be a definition of violent extremism that makes it 'easier to understand'. The definition should consider the legal framework surrounding acts of violent extremism to include protests, inciting hatred and war as these examples were all discussed by the students in the focus groups.

2) Schools should be encouraged to take a broad view towards teaching students about violent extremism. The DCSF (2009) names Islamic extremism, far right extremism, and animal rights extremism, although the students in all three schools were able to explore a much wider range of examples. This means that education about violent extremism can penetrate many subject areas and need not be restricted to religious education and pastoral sessions.

3) Many students did not feel that violent extremism was going to affect their lives, particularly those in North and South school. The preventing violent extremism agenda should therefore be delivered within a curriculum that makes the topic area relevant to young people, raising awareness of the local threat without being alarmist.

Young people would benefit from productions such as ‘Tapestry’ by The Play House that could act as a concrete, contextual source of information to frame discussions. Such drama productions have been evaluated by the Department for Education (2011) as effective in making the topic area relevant to young people and encouraging active participation.

4) Drama productions could also be an effective way to explore a range of exit strategies with students when they are in situations where they are asked to participate in an activity their peers are engaging with that they are not comfortable with (identified as a key area of difficulty by the young people in all three schools). Wright (2003) suggests that taught exit strategies are only likely to be effective when modelled around specific scenario’s, which could be portrayed through the drama productions.

5) The preventing violent extremism agenda should be addressed within a cross-curricular multi-media curriculum that avoids the domination of assemblies and lecturing approaches that young people in South school reported as ineffective in delivering other messages, such as the anti-bullying agenda. Approaches should be used where students are encouraged to develop and consider their own views rather than be told a message (Davies, 2008, DfE, 2011).

6) Some young people were unaware of the dangers of inciting hatred and so it could be helpful to consider raising the awareness of the radicalisation process and tactics extremists use to recruit young people, including the purpose and legality surrounding incitement of hatred. Students should be made aware of decision points and support processes if they experience contact with groups employing such tactics.

7) Schools should be encouraged to explore their environment and how they can foster a sense of belonging and positive identification for *all* their students to promote resilience against extremist groups (Davies, 2008). The young people in the research, particularly those in North and South school, suggested that specific emphasis should be placed on supporting children who are at risk from isolation. Schools need to consider whether their environments and cultural artefacts in the school represent students from all ethnic groups (Davies, 2008).

8) The participants find that although there are community activities available outside school hours, these can be ruined by those students who can act in a way that is intimidating. The students in all three schools suggested that there needs to be further exploration of a range of community activities that can provide a safe, unintimidating environment with resources and adults who are able to tap into ways to attract 'shy' people and also attract and manage the people who have the potential to 'ruin' it for everyone else. It was suggested that those who are 'shy' and who 'ruin' it for everyone else should be targeted for community activities because these students are likely to gain most benefit.

9) The young people recognised that open discussion in schools is needed to enable students to talk about current issues to prevent the build up of concerns. The young people consulted suggested that there needs to be very careful consideration about how teachers are going to contain the discussions to avoid conflict and disruption. Schools need to consider the skills of the staff running the discussions and the

a. small group sizes;
b. consideration of group composition to reduce conflict;
c. ensuring the discussion is relevant and interesting to the young people; and
d. ground rules about political correctness and what is acceptable and what is not so that people are clear on the boundaries without having to 'be careful what they say'.

There also needs to be consideration of how the processes will be managed in the discussion to allow everyone to participate to avoid the domination on a minority, which was raised as a concern by students in South school. This can be facilitated through activities within the discussion and allowing students to form their arguments by joining with other class members prior to the discussion.

10) Students from all three schools suggested that there should be increased community contact between schools with different ethnic majorities to celebrate difference whilst promoting similarities. Principles from Allport's (1953) contact theory (detailed below) need to be considered when implementing this approach. Vezzali et al (2010) successfully utilised principles of contact theory to facilitate exchange based activities with majority and minority groups in different schools and demonstrated a reduction in negative 'out-group' stereotyping and prejudice following the programme.

11) There could be an opportunity for local community religious leaders to come into school and promote understanding about the peaceful messages in religion to reduce the negative associations some students demonstrated towards Islam, particularly in Central and North school.

12) Students in Central school suggested that schools could have greater involvement in understanding tensions and issues within the community. Students in Central school suggested that this could be facilitated through:

    a. contact with the local police;
    b. regular meetings with parents; and
    c. opportunities for community members to come into school.

    There should be a focus on gaining all sides of the story when difficulties in the community are discussed in school. Consideration about how school staff are trained and supported to deliver this type of support will need careful consideration.

- There could be a range of support mechanisms in schools that utilise peer mentoring and anonymous approaches, which were identified as potentially being effective by students in all three schools. Cowie et al (2002) found peer support approaches to be effective in supporting students in schools, particularly when teachers in charge were flexible and creative in ways of targeting pupils in need.

- Schools should be made aware of the barriers students in all three schools perceived with school support, such as teachers sharing information, embarrassment talking about sensitive issues and anxiety that school involvement will make the situation worse.

- There should be opportunities for schools to share effective practice they are already engaging in with this area (such as exchange trips and twinning schools) (DCSF, 2009).

- Teachers should be consulted in a second phase of research. Successful intervention requires the participation of all stakeholders (Rappaport, 1987).

- There needs to be support and supervision in place for teachers delivering the intervention in schools. This can include cross-school mentoring to facilitate opportunities for shared practice (Greenbaum, 1998).

6.2 Next steps

The research and concluding recommendations have been presented to the LA steering group who will adapt the DCSF (2009) toolkit as appropriate to ensure it aligns with the needs of young people in the LA. Appendix 1b details the changes that have been negotiated with the steering group on the basis of the research.

A summary of the research has also been presented to the young people who participated in the research, alongside changes that are being made to the implementation of the toolkit on the basis of their participation. Feeding back to participants was essential so that the young people knew their participation was not tokenistic and will make a significant contribution to educational policy within the LA (Gray and Wilson, 2004).

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Appendix 1

Public Domain Briefing: Summary Report for the Local Authority Partnership Preventing Violent Extremism Steering Group

Public Domain Briefing: Summary Report for the Local Authority Partnership Preventing Violent Extremism Steering Group

Amy Clinch (Educational Psychology Service)

Background

It is argued by Lynn Davies that 'formal education currently does little to prevent people joining extremist groups, or to enable young people to critically analyse fundamentalism' (Davies, 2009, p.184). To develop education's role in preventing violent extremism, the previous government produced the 'Learning Together to be Safe' guidelines (DCSF, 2009) for schools and colleges detailing approaches to reduce young people's engagement with extremism.

The LA Partnership Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Steering group are adapting and developing the guidelines so that they are relevant to secondary school students in the LA. This research has been commissioned by a grant obtained from the Challenge and Innovation Fund to collaborate with young people to gain their views on issues that affect them and effective ways to adapt and implement the guidelines. This is in line with a community psychology approach that emphasizes the importance of working with people participating in interventions so they can be tailored to meet local needs.

Engaging with young people to inform the development of the DCSF (2009) guidelines supports the Challenge and Innovation Fund priorities of:

- Capacity building in key organizations
- Mainstreaming Prevent and embedding delivery with core mainstream services

- Developing evidence and research
- Developing a ‘whole community’ approach

Research Question

The research is designed to explore 13-14 year old student’s perspectives on:

- What are young people’s views about violent extremism?
- What do young people feel are risk factors that may encourage young people to engage with violent extremism?
- What are resilience factors that already support young people against violent extremism?
- What current/potential roles do schools have in promoting resiliency for all young people against extremism?

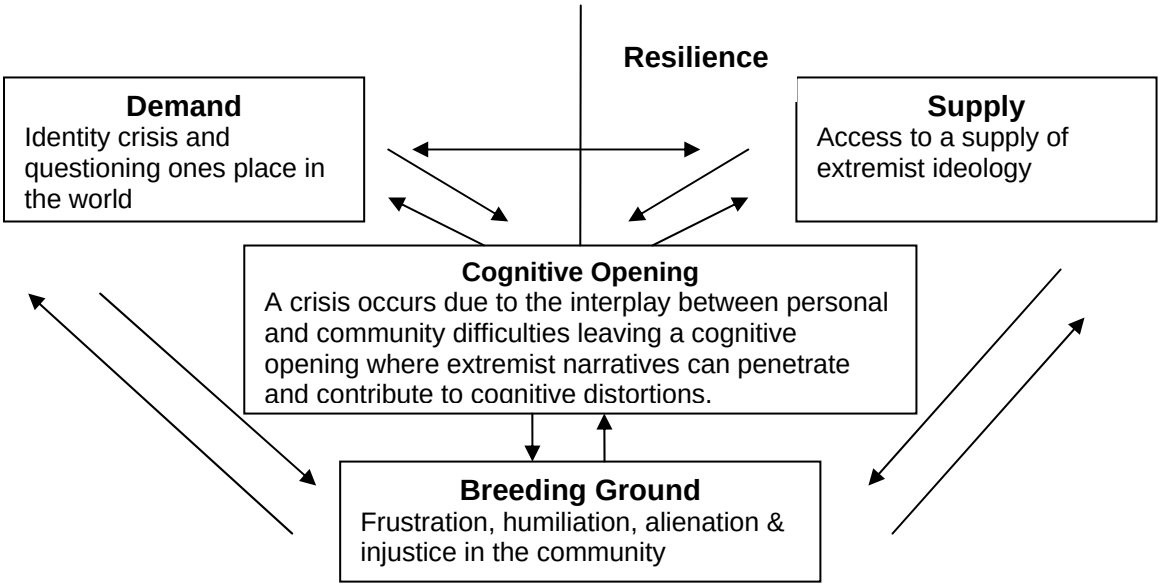
Year 9 students were asked to participate in the research because they are the mid-range of the secondary school population and are less constrained by exam timetables.

Methodology

Three focus groups were carried out with students in three secondary schools across the LA. Schools participated from the north, central and south localities of the LA to gain a sample that is as representative as possible across the borough (Audit Commission, 2009). The focus groups ran for two hours and a member of staff was present in the room to co-ordinate any necessary follow up support.

The focus groups were designed to broadly explore young people's views on the research questions in a non-directive fashion. Emphasis then shifted to focus discussion on risk factors that have been identified in the research as potentially contributing to young people engaging with extremism. The Supply and Demand Model (Meah and Mellis, 2006) illustrates some of the identified risk factors:

Figure 2:
A diagrammatic representation of the Supply and Demand Model



Students were also asked to discuss some of the resilience strategies described by the 'Learning Together to be Safe' toolkit (DCSF, 2009).

Key Findings

The young people who participated in the research were able to articulate their views about violent extremism. Questionnaires completed after the focus groups suggest that the

participants felt comfortable discussing this area with the researchers. Key findings from each aspect of the research question are described below:

What are young people's views about violent extremism?

- Some students were able to eloquently discuss violent extremism, describing it as:

  'A crime of passion…people are doing it for something they believe in or something that affects them'

  'They've got strong views and they haven't been able to voice them and they kind of try to resolve things by violent extremism'

- When asked to give examples of violent extremism students demonstrated a broad knowledge base linking acts of violence back to extreme views. Students discussed examples such as 9/11, Nazi Germany, the Ku Klux Klan and political extremism in Rowanda and Zimbabwe. Violent extremism is a relatively new term and yet students are able to generalise it's usage to historical events. Some students confused the concept of 'violent extremism' with 'extreme violence' and described Derek Bird (who recently shot dead members of his family and local community) and aggression at the winter Olympics as acts of violent extremism.

- A small number of students were able to reflect on the subjectivity of violent extremism and commented that an act of violent extremism is not wrong for the

person who committed the act ‘because they were going with what they believe is right, but for everyone else…obviously they would [say that it is wrong]’.

- Students did not seem aware of the dangers of incitement of hatred and when asked if this contributed to violent extremism one student replied ‘not really, cos it’s not, erm, harming anyone’. The student then developed the argument to explain ‘I won’t hate a group just because I read something’.

- Students were able to recognise that acts of violent extremism by a minority of a group could lead to prejudice against the whole group (a finding substantiated by Cannetti-Nissim et al 2009). Despite this the same group of students talked about how:

> ‘They come to our country and all we ever hear about is suicide bombers and that most of them are Asian, obviously you’re going to be quite scared of them. If they’re coming to England you don’t know what they’re going to do’.

This possibly demonstrates how affective reactions can overpower cognitive reason.

<u>Risk factors that may encourage a young person to engage with violent extremism</u>

- There was a strong feeling in the groups that violent extremism is not something that is ever going to affect them. Despite this the participants were able to discuss

potential risk and resilience factors that may contribute to a young person engaging with extremist groups.

- Students felt that belief systems could act as a risk factor. Some students had a misinformed view of Islam and felt Muslim's believe 'it's ok to be violent…[because] it pleases their God or something'.

- Students felt that people with 'weak personalities' may be easily influenced by others. Students felt that 'peer pressure affects you a lot' and that 'you're likely to want to follow them and do what they're doing just because they're your friends'. Students also recognised that parents 'have a big influence on your views'.

- It was felt that experiences of rejection and isolation could potentially increase vulnerability to extremist groups. Students talked about how feeling 'alone', wanting 'popularity' and needing to feel a 'sense of belonging' could make an extremist group attractive because they are 'welcoming' and could provide 'a real sense of family,' 'people who like you' and protection:

> 'If you're some little geek who nobody knows and people are horrible to you in school…a big gang is like join our gang and everyone will be scared of you and no one will walk over you again'.

- Research suggests that community frustrations can act as risk factors for engaging with violent extremism (Moghaddam, 2005). Students generally felt that they did not experience many community difficulties locally although did feel at times that they

- Two groups of students felt that difficulties in the community were facilitated by 'political correctness [that] has gone too far'. One student talked about being proud of being from a dual heritage background so other people who 'walk on tip toes' around ethnicity should 'get over it'. Other students felt that some people used the sensitivity around political correctness to their 'advantage' and claim to be a victim of discrimination 'when it's not really there'.

- The students identified divisions between groups in society and felt that this arises from a lack of tolerance. One student commented:

  'I think people don't accept other religions and that's what it is, it's all about acceptance'

  Bandura (1998) hypothesizes that lack of tolerance and conflict between groups could increase in group preference and hostility towards out groups along with the 'us' and 'them' thinking style associated with extremism.

<u>Student's views about preventing violent extremism in education</u>

- Two of the focus groups presented the view that 'schools can't really do anything' to support young people in this area. It was felt that violent extremism was something

that was beyond the role of education and that ‘as much as school can do they [young people] just don’t change’.

- One group felt that schools could have a role to play in supporting students in this area. Students from this school already appeared to be engaging in work advocated by the toolkit so students were used to similar approaches. Information about work the schools are already engaging in was gathered through the focus group discussion, so it may be that the other two schools are also engaged in work in this area but that the students did not discuss it.

- Despite not feeling it is the role of secondary education to prevent violent extremism, students across all schools were able to suggest and discuss strategies in school that might be effective in building resilience against violent extremism. One group of students were very clear that they felt the education system needs to avoid overkill with initiatives because this is not effective. Students referred to the anti-bullying agenda and the over use of assemblies to deliver messages.

- Students also appeared to feel strongly that educating Year 9 students about violent extremism was too late because in Year 9 ‘you’ve pretty much got your views’ and that their current views will stay ‘for the rest of [their] life’. Students felt that education about extremism would be more effective in primary school ‘before they’re exposed to [other] views’ and because younger children are ‘more understanding’ and are more flexible in their thinking styles.

- Some of the students felt that educating young people about different beliefs would help them ‘make up their own mind’ to make informed decisions later on rather than being ‘influenced by people around you’.

- Students felt that to promote resilience against violent extremism, open discussion about current issues (as advocated in the toolkit) would, in theory, be effective. It was felt that this would help because some people do not get the chance to share their views and ‘it’s all bottled up inside them and…they just explode’.

  Students felt that debating current issues in schools could have potentially harmful consequences because, in the words of one student, teachers ‘can’t control us’. Many of the students felt that debates in schools get ‘out of hand’ because ‘the more you scream the less work you have to do afterwards’. ‘You always get immature people’.

  The students felt that teachers often did not have the skills to manage debates in school and that creating a controlled environment for the debate to take place would be very difficult. Students also commented that they do not feel they have the skills to participate in debates because people ‘just won’t listen to anybody else and then everyone else will just have a go at them and then it will just be an argument’.

  Students felt that despite ground rules discussions about current affairs might cause offence to some people. It was felt that ‘there’s the possibility that someone could say something and then even if it’s one of those things when you say I won’t get offended…if somebody says something about you, you’re going to have a grudge against them’ that will continue outside the classroom.

The students recognised that the people who caused the disruption are likely to be those who need to explore different viewpoints on current events the most because they are ‘the people that are going to have problems when they’re older accepting other cultures and races so everyone needs to be involved’.

Students felt that for debates in schools to be successful the topics need to be of interest and something they had ‘strong opinions’ about. Some students felt that ‘current issues’ meant politics and that politics had no relevance to them.

Some students felt that a successful discussion/debating group would have to be small and consider group composition to reduce potential arguments between students who are known to clash. The focus groups for this research were run with 4-10 students and this felt a comfortable number to the researchers. In the feedback questionnaires one student commented that ‘it was good having a small group as you got to talk more and have your say’. In the focus group with ten students the facilitators found it difficult to reduce the domination of a small number of individuals in the discussion and encourage everyone to contribute.

One way the facilitators found effective in encouraging everyone’s contribution was through the use of small group activities so that people could discuss their ideas before presenting them back to the group. Rating scales to explore consensus were also effective so that even if individuals had not contributed to the group discussion they could indicate how much they agreed with the discussion points.

- Students discussed the benefits of supporting young people's social and emotional well-being to promote positive relationships with others. Students recognised that schools were already engaged with work in this area and talked about the benefits of circle time activities exploring diversity, and Personal, Social Development (PSD) days that encourage students to learn life skills and interact with other year groups. Some of the students felt that circle time and PSD days should be built upon to increase the focus on the moral education of violence and how to resolve conflicts appropriately. This is reflected in the DCSF (2009) toolkit strategy that promotes restorative justice approaches in school.

- Students across the three groups felt that an effective way to help prevent violent extremism would be through increased contact between ethnic groups in the community to promote acceptance and so that 'you feel more comfortable' with different cultures. Students recognised that in LA schools students are 'predominantly white' and that 'there needs to be more of a mix'. One student suggested exchange activities with schools with different ethnic majorities because 'if you know someone from school and you've known them since you were little, you feel more comfortable around them…then you know what people are like'.

These views are in line with the contact theory of intergroup relationships (Allport, 1954 as cited in Kassin et al, 2005) that posits that prejudice is fuelled by ignorance. Under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to increase tolerance and improve relationships between majority and minority group members. Appropriate conditions invlove both groups working together on a task that is designed to promote equal status between groups, is collaborative and has a shared

aim. Members of each group rely on each other to achieve the goal and must be overseen by an authority both groups acknowledge as legitimate (Kassin et al, 2005).

- Some of the students felt that schools were already demonstrating good practice with Extended Schools (as advocated by the toolkit) with regards to sports clubs and providing activities out of traditional school hours, and that this builds resilience against social isolation.

- Students in one of the groups developed the idea that schools could support difficulties in the community 'so they know what we're going through' by 'pointing them [parents] in the right direction'. Students felt that schools could:

  'Have like, a link with the police or something'

  'If, like, the community came in once a month'

  'They could talk to pupils in the school'

  'I think sometimes they could talk to the parents and have set times like maybe once a month where parents would go in and talk to the teachers'

Some students did feel that having schools involved in community issues could just 'make things worse' and that having the school involved in difficulties might make people involved think 'I'm so cool', inadvertently escalating the situation.

Sources of support identified by students

- Students reported a range of sources of support they turn to when they experience difficulties. The most common response involved peer support and students often felt that 'the only person you could ever tell is your friend'. Students felt that peer support was most preferable because there was a sense of embarrassment associated with talking to teachers about sensitive issues. Barriers to talking to teachers also included the perception that 'you've got to be really careful because if you tell a teacher they'll probably just go and tell someone else' and that could make the situation worse.

- Students also reported dealing with the difficulty internally 'because if it's a problem with yourself…you're the only one who can actually do [anything about] it'. Students dealt with problems themselves by listening to 'music, because the lyrics, like, try and help', using the internet and 'sometimes you can divert your mind with a hobby'.

Recommendations

On the basis of the discussions in the focus group, it is recommended by the researchers that the LA Partnership PVE Steering group consider the following points when adapting the 'Learning Together to be Safe' (DCSF, 2009) toolkit:

- A definition about what violent extremism is should be provided alongside the toolkit to differentiate between 'violent extremism' and 'extreme violence'. At some points during the discussion students confused the two concepts and an accessible definition could support this. One student commented in the evaluation questionnaire that there

needs to be a definition of violent extremism that makes it ‘easier to understand’. The definition should consider the legal framework surrounding acts of violent extremism to include protests, inciting hatred and war as these examples were all discussed by the students in the focus group.

- Schools should be encouraged to take a broad view towards teaching students about violent extremism. The DCSF (2009) name Islamic extremism, far right extremism, and animal rights extremism although the students in all three schools were able to explore a much wider range of examples. This means that education about violent extremism can penetrate many subject areas and is not restricted to religious education and pastoral sessions.

- Many students did not feel that violent extremism was going to affect their lives, particularly those in North and South school. The preventing violent extremism agenda should therefore be delivered within a curriculum that makes the topic area relevant to young people, raising awareness of the local threat without being alarmist. Young people would benefit from productions such as ‘Tapestry’ by The Play House that could act as a concrete, contextual source of information to frame discussions. Such drama productions have been evaluated by the Department for Education (2011) as effective in making the topic area relevant to young people and encouraging active participation.

- Drama productions could also be an effective way to explore a range of exit strategies with students when in situations where they are asked to participate in an activity their peers are engaging with that they are not comfortable with (identified as a key area of difficulty by the young people). Wright (2003) suggests that taught / discussed exit

strategies are only likely to be effective when modeled around specific scenario's, which could be portrayed through productions.

- The preventing violent extremism agenda should be delivered within a cross-curricular multi-media curriculum that avoids the domination of assemblies and lecturing approaches that young people in South school reported as ineffective in delivering other messages, such as the anti-bullying agenda. Approaches should be used where students are encouraged to develop and consider their own views rather than be told a message (Davies, 2008).

- Some young people were unaware of the dangers of inciting hatred and so it could be helpful to consider raising the awareness of the radicalisation process and tactics extremists use to recruit young people, including the purpose and legality surrounding incitement of hatred. Students should be made aware of decision points and support processes if they experience contact with groups employing such tactics.

- Schools should be encouraged to explore their environment and how they can foster a sense of belonging and positive identification for *all* their students to promote resilience against extremist groups (Davies, 2008). The young people in the research, particularly those in North and South school, suggested that specific emphasis should be placed on supporting children who are at risk from isolation. Schools need to consider whether their environments and cultural artifacts in the school represent students from all ethnic groups (Davies, 2008).

- The participants find that although there are community activities available outside school hours, these can be ruined by those students who can act in a way that is intimidating. The students in all three schools suggested that there needs to be further exploration of a range of community activities that can provide a safe, unintimidating environment with resources and adults who are able to tap into ways to attract 'shy' people and also attract and manage the people who have the potential to 'ruin' it for everyone else. It was suggested that those who are 'shy' and who 'ruin' it for everyone else should be targeted for community activities because these students are likely to gain most benefit.

- The young people recognised that open discussion in schools is needed to talk about current issues to prevent the build up of concerns. The young people consulted suggested that there needs to be very careful consideration about how teachers are going to contain the discussions to avoid conflict and disruption. Schools need to consider the skills of the staff running the discussions and the developmental skill level of the young people participating in them. The steering group will need to consider how schools are supported with this. The students in this research recommend:

    - Small group sizes
    - Consideration of group composition to reduce conflict
    - Ensuring the discussion is relevant and interesting to the young people
    - Ground rules about political correctness and what is acceptable and what is not so that people are clear on the boundaries without having to 'be careful what they say'

There also needs to be consideration of how the processes will be managed in the discussion to allow everyone to participate to avoid the domination on a minority, which was raised as a concern by students in South school. This can be facilitated through activities within the discussion and allowing students to form their arguments by joining with other class members prior to the discussion.

- Students from all three schools suggested that there should be increased community contact between schools with different ethnic majorities to celebrate difference whilst promoting similarities. Principles from Allport's (1953) contact theory (detailed below) need to be considered when implementing this approach. Vezzali et al (2010) successfully utilised principles of contact theory to facilitate exchange based activities with majority and minority groups in different schools and demonstrated a reduction in negative 'out-group' stereotyping and prejudice following the programme.

Summary of Allport's (1953) Contact Theory

Allport (1954) (as cited in Kassin et al, 2005) posits that prejudice is fuelled by ignorance and that under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to increase tolerance and improve relationships between majority and minority group members. Contact is hypothesised to facilitate positive relationships when both groups work together on a task that is designed to promote equal status between groups, is collaborative and has a shared aim. This activity must be collaborative so members of each group rely on each other to achieve the goal and must be overseen by an authority both groups acknowledge as legitimate (Kassin et al, 2005). Allport (1954) proposes that relationships are enhanced this way as stereotypes and negative perceptions that occur through generalisations are reconstrued through positive collaboration (as cited in Kassin et al, 2005). Pettigrew (2005) conducted a meta analysis of studies exploring contact theory and found that overall face to face contact between members of distinguishable groups reduced prejudice.

- There could be an opportunity for local community religious leaders to come into school and promote understanding about the peaceful messages in religion to reduce the negative associations some students demonstrated towards Islam, particularly in Central and North school.

- Students in Central school suggested that schools could have greater involvement in understanding tensions and issues within the community. Students in Central school suggested that this could be facilitated through:

- Contact with the local police
- Regular meetings with parents
- Opportunities for community members to come into school

There should be a focus on gaining all sides of the story when difficulties in the community are discussed in school. Consideration about how school staff are trained and supported to deliver this type of support will need careful consideration.

- There could be a range of support mechanisms in school that utilise peer mentoring and faceless approaches, which were identified as potentially being effective by students in all three schools. Cowie et al (2002) found peer support approaches to be effective in supporting students in schools, particularly when teachers in charge were flexible and creative in ways of targeting pupils in need.

- Schools should be made aware of the barriers students in all three schools perceived with school support, such as teachers sharing information, embarrassment talking about sensitive issues and anxiety that school involvement will make the situation worse.

- There should be opportunities for schools to share effective practice they are already engaging in with this area (such as exchange trips and twinning schools) (DCSF, 2009).

- Teachers should be consulted in a second phase of research. Successful intervention requires the participation of all stakeholders (Rappaport, 1987).

- There needs to be support and supervision in place for teachers delivering the intervention in schools. This can include cross-school mentoring to facilitate opportunities for shared practice (Greenbaum, 1998).

Recognising the limitations of this research

There are limitations with the research that are important to acknowledge when using the results to make decisions.

The sample size for this research was small (n=22). It was felt that using a focus group methodology would increase the time taken to collect the data (therefore reducing the sample size) but increase the richness and quality of the data. The groups were dominated by White British young people and only a very small number of ethnic minority students participated in the research reducing the validity. The research was also conducted with Year 9 (13/14 year old) students only yet the preventing violent extremism agenda will be supporting students across all secondary school ages. The research may have had different findings with different year groups.

There are always issues in qualitative research regarding the interpretation of views. The data gathered is analysed and reported by researchers who may interpret participant's views incorrectly.

Implementing effective primary prevention not only involves consulting with the participants of the intervention, but also stakeholders involved in delivery (Greenberg et

al, 2003, Fagan et al, 2008). Teachers who will be delivering the preventing violent extremism agenda were not consulted in this research. To implement effective primary prevention there will need to be some further research exploring teacher's views on the initiative including:

- Strengths and processes already available in schools that the preventing violent extremism agenda can build upon
- Areas for development at the systemic and individual level
- Potential barriers for the initiative and ways to overcome these

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Appendix 1b

Recommendations taken forward by the LA Partnership Preventing Violent Extremism Steering Group

Recommendations taken forward by the LA Partnership Preventing Violent Extremism Steering Group

On the basis of the discussions in the focus group, it is recommended by the researchers that the LA Partnership PVE Steering group consider the following points when adapting the 'Learning Together to be Safe' (DCSF, 2009) toolkit:

- A definition about what violent extremism is should be provided alongside the toolkit to differentiate between 'violent extremism' and 'extreme violence'. The definition should consider the legal framework surrounding acts of violent extremism to include protests, inciting hatred and war.

  [1]*Action: The police officer on the steering group is going to take this back to her team (Counter Terrorism Unit) to develop a definition of violent extremism.*

- Schools should be encouraged to take a broad view towards teaching students about violent extremism. The DCSF (2009) names Islamic extremism, far right extremism and animal rights extremism, although the students were able to explore a much wider range of examples. This means that education about violent extremism can penetrate many subject areas and is not restricted to religious education and pastoral sessions.

  Action: The LA school advisor for the national Department for Education Religious Studies Group is going to take this to the next meeting to encourage a shift away from Religious Studies lessons taking sole ownership of the Prevent agenda.

[1] Red text denotes actions taken forward by the steering group in relation to recommendations made

- Preventing violent extremism should be delivered within a curriculum that makes the topic area relevant to young people, raising awareness of the local threat without being alarmist. Young people would benefit from productions such as 'Tapestry' by The Play House that could act as a concrete, contextual source of information to frame discussions.

  Action: Funding has been allocated by the council to offer the Tapestry production to all secondary schools. Funding has been provided for one session per school, catering for up to 35 Year 9 students.

- The preventing violent extremism agenda should be delivered within a cross curricular multi-media curriculum that avoids the domination of assemblies.

  Action: Please see action above.

- There should be a focus on raising awareness of the radicalisation process and tactics extremists use to recruit young people, including the purpose and legality of inciting hatred. Students should be aware of support processes if they experience contact with groups employing such tactics.

  Action: School staff are to receive training from a police officer on the Prevent agenda: 'Raising Awareness about Prevent'.

- Students should be given advice about how to maintain friendships without feeling they have to participate in peer activities in which they are uncomfortable. This could

be based around developing assertiveness skills. Awareness should also be raised about who to talk to if one has concerns about activities peers are engaging in.

Action: School advisor is to take this issue to the Personal, Social and Development leads in the Local Authority to explore what support can be offered to schools on this issue.

- Schools should be encouraged to explore their environment and how they can foster a sense of belonging for *all* their students to promote resilience against extremist groups. Specific emphasis should be placed on supporting children who are at risk from isolation. Schools need to consider whether their environments and cultural artefacts in the school represent students from all ethnic groups.

Action: A bid has been placed for Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant money to secure funding for a project to explore ways to make schools more welcoming and reflective of multi-cultural society.

- There needs to be further exploration of community activities that can provide a safe, un-intimidating environment with resources and adults who are able to tap into ways to attract 'shy' people and also the people who have the potential to 'ruin' it for everyone else.

- Open discussion in schools is needed to discuss current issues to prevent the build up of issues. Their needs to be very careful consideration about how teachers are going to contain the discussions to avoid conflict and disruption. Schools need to consider the

skills of the staff running the discussions and how schools are supported with managing discussions. The students in this research recommend:

- Small group sizes
- Consideration of group composition to reduce conflict
- Ensuring the discussion is relevant and interesting to the young people
- Ground rules about political correctness and what is acceptable and what is not, so that people are clear on the boundaries without having to 'be careful about what they say'

There also needs to be consideration of how the discussion will be managed to enable participation from all.

- There should be increased community contact between schools with different ethnic majorities to celebrate difference whilst promoting similarities. Principles from Allport's (1953) contact theory need to be considered when implementing this approach.

Action: As of 2009 OFSTED require schools to pair up with other local schools with different ethnic majorities. A school advisor is to report back to the LAs Equality and Diversity board monitoring how well schools are doing in this area.

- There could be an opportunity for local community religious leaders to come into school and promote understanding about the peaceful messages in religion.

Action: This can be arranged through the School's Advisory Committee for Religious Education.

- Schools could have greater involvement in understanding tensions and issues within the community. Students suggested that this could be facilitated through:

    - Contact with the local police
    - Regular meetings with parents
    - Opportunities for community members to come into school

Action: Local police conduct tension monitoring in the communities. It may be possible for schools to link with police officers to discuss local community tensions. No action for the steering group but schools to consider.

- There should be a range of support mechanisms in school that utilise peer mentoring and faceless approaches. There should be careful monitoring and supervision of such approaches so that adult support can be available for follow up support if necessary.

- Schools should be made aware of the barriers students perceive with school support, such as teachers sharing information, embarrassment with talking about sensitive issues and anxiety that school involvement will make the situation worse.

- There should be opportunities for schools to share effective practice they are already engaging with in this area (for example community cohesion activities such as exchange trips and twinned schools).

- Teachers should be consulted in a second phase of the research to gain their views on ways to implement the intervention and potential barriers. Successful intervention require the participation of all stakeholders (Rappaport, 1987)

  Action: Funding restraints mean that this is not possible.

- There needs to be support and supervision in place for teachers delivering the intervention in schools. This can include cross-school mentoring to facilitate opportunities for shared practice.

Appendix 2

Public Domain Briefing: Presentation to summarise the research findings and policy changes to participants

Appendix 3

Focus group plan

Focus Group Plan

Discussion Area	Activity	Timing
Part 1 Introduction		
Ice breaker	Round robin ice breaker activity (we will not be asking for names)	2 mins
Background information	Begin by highlighting the rarity of violent extremism, we're only talking about a small minority of people. However, as a local authority we have a responsibility to ensure young people's safety. Reiterate why we are conducting the research and discuss data protection.	5 mins
Establishing ground rules	Setting up ground rules around confidentiality and respecting other's views.	15 mins
Questions	Opportunity to ask questions	8 mins
Break	Refreshments and opportunity to opt out or sign consent form	10 mins
Part 2: Focus Group		
What is violent extremism	Introductory brainstorming activity: What do you think about when you hear the word violence? What does it mean? Now what about violent extremism? What does this mean? What is the difference? Following discussion share the definition with the group: Someone who has views that are extreme and that do not allow for difference. Someone who uses violence or encourages others to use violence to further their views. Can you think of some examples of violent extremism? (If students focus on religious examples prompt discussion about whether animal rights activists, abortionists, someone doing graffiti to encourage young people to hate another group, protests against the number of mosques being built in an area can be considered examples of violent extremism,	20 mins

	read scenarios if necessary) Prompt that VE is illegal What sort of issues might make a person your age begin to think about violent extremism? What might someone wish to join a violent extremist group? (Student led discussion about risk factor before narrowing down into identified risk areas) What do you think schools could do to support young people to help prevent them from exploring these ideas? (Student led discussion about risk factor before narrowing down into identified risk areas)	
Community factors	Introduction: We're going to explore VE in a bit more detail now. We're going to start with a focus on the community and then later on look at some individual factors. Brainstorming activity. What things in the community might upset a young person and make them begin to explore or develop extremist viewpoints? What positive things in the local community might help young people get on with others and develop balanced views and respect others? Research suggests that people may be vulnerable to VE if they feel there are frustrations in the community, such as unfairness, discrimination, feeling left out, poverty. Card activity: Put 'issues' cards in the middle of the group and ask students to talk in pairs for one minute about which issues are most relevant in their community: Ranking exercise to facilitate discussion. Is there anything teachers or schools could do to support people in the local community with issues such as these? The government has recommended that schools should be aware of difficulties in the	20 mins

	local community. Are school staff already doing this? How could schools go about gaining this information? Do you think this would be supportive?	
Identity	Introduction: We're going to look at issues a young person might have within themselves that might encourage them to develop or explore extremism or even violent extremism. Use outline of a body on flipchart. What sort of personal problems/issues might a person have that could contribute to them thinking positively about violent extremism? (The theory suggests that a person might have to undergo a 'crisis' to be susceptible to VE. What sort of crisis might happen? What things might cause this?). It is quite ordinary for young people to question who they are as they become closer to adulthood. The research says that one of the issues that make young people vulnerable to VE is having difficulties with their identity and feeling as though they don't belong. Give a definition of 'identity', how we are going to explain identity. Labels we have to describe ourselves, give a couple of examples. Activity: Labels on the body what type of identities might someone have? What labels could you use to describe someone? Could there ever be a problem for people because of their identity? Do you think there could be a problem for people who hold different identities?	20 mins
Cognitive Opening	Introduction What skills do you think people have or can learn that can help them to question the information they are given? The government suggests that providing young people with the opportunity to learn	20 mins

	about current local and global issues and discuss and debate these in school will help young people question the information they are given and support the development of balanced views. What do you think about this as a strategy? In what lessons do you discuss current issues in school? What do you talk about? What skills do you learn in these lessons? What makes you feel safe enough to share your views in these lessons? What do teachers do to make you feel safe? Would you feel safe sharing your opinion about current issues such as extremism or Afghanistan? What would make you feel safer? Is there anything else schools might be able to do to support young people in this area? Use scenarios if time permits.	
Ending	Recap what we have talked about. Thanks, process questionnaire and reminder that X is a follow up person if you would like to discuss these issues further. We will be back in school in July to feedback the findings of the research.	5 mins

Scenarios that can be used to guide discussion

Throughout the focus group it might be helpful to refer to scenarios to gain student's views on what schools could do to help young people in vulnerable situations:

You notice three unemployed teenagers in your community have started leaving graffiti which encourages violence against white people.

You find out a friend's sister has been reading information about extremists on her laptop. (Discussion around whether it matters what type of extremism it is, and what should be the next step).

You hear someone in your class telling your teacher that she agrees with physical violence against people who have abortions.

You watch a documentary in school about people who were killed in Jewish concentration camps. The next day a girl in your class tells you she would be proud to be a Nazi.

Appendix 4

Consent letters

X
DIRECTOR FOR PEOPLE

PO Box 20 Council House
X West Midlands B91 9QU
Tel:
Minicom:
www.x.gov.uk

Date: 25/02/2010

Dear Student

Our names are Amy Clinch (trainee Educational Psychologist) and X (Senior Educational Psychologist) and we work as part of X Council's Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists work with parents and schools to try to improve situations for young people. One of the issues we focus on is trying to ensure that young people are safe. The government is currently looking at ways in which we can work together to keep young people safe, and this includes preventing violent extremism.

Violent extremism receives a large amount of media attention. A lot of this media attention has been directed at specific religious groups, however violent extremist activities can, and have been perpetrated by different groups including non religious groups.

The government has written guidelines about how schools and colleges can work together with the community to keep young people safe and to try to prevent violent extremism. We would like to research your views in this area as we feel you are in a good position to help look at ways in which schools and colleges can work to try to prevent violent extremism. Your views will be used to inform council education policy and the way schools and colleges in X work to prevent violent extremism.

If you would like to share your views in this area we would like to invite you to join a focus group. We will not be talking about specific instances or examples from your personal experience, but would like to gain your general views on:

- What violent extremism is
- Issues young people face which may make them vulnerable to violent extremism
- Where young people gain information from to inform their opinions and who they turn to for support
- The strategies that the government are suggesting for schools
- Ways in which you feel we could work in schools to try to prevent violent extremism

The focus group will be led by Amy Clinch and X. X from your school will also be present. The focus group will run as follows:

- Introduction and ground rules (30 minutes)

    - *This will include detailed information about what we will be talking about.*
    - *The setting up of ground rules that everyone will agree to before the focus group begins.*

    After the introduction you will be asked if you would like to participate in the focus group.

- Break with refreshments (15 minutes)

- Focus group (75 minutes)

When we report your views back to the council we will not say that they have come from you or your school. We will be audio recording the focus group, but the recording will be kept in a locked cabinet and the only people who will be allowed to listen to it are Amy Clinch, X, and X (Principal Educational Psychologist). We will not be storing your names with the recording, so no one will be able to identify your voice or your views. We will be asking that views expressed within the focus group remain confidential amongst the people who attend. This means that we will be asking you not to discuss anything you hear from other students at a time that is outside the focus group. If you hear anything that concerns you within the group you can talk to X. The only time we cannot keep your views confidential is if you say something that suggests you or someone else is in danger. If this is the case we would have to talk to the child protection officer in your school and information may have to be shared with other agencies.

Places in the focus group are limited so it may not be possible for everyone to participate. If you decide that you would like to participate in the focus group, but then change your mind, you can leave the focus group at any point and we will not ask you why. It will not be possible to remove your views from the research after the focus group however, as we will not be able to identify your contribution.

Before you participate in the focus group we will need a parent or guardian to sign a consent form to say that they are happy for you to participate.

As part of this research we will also be collecting views from students in other schools and colleges. The research will finish in July and we would like to come back to your school and invite you to a presentation so we can tell you what we found out. We can also tell you what changes will be made to how schools in X will be working to keep young people safe and to try to prevent violent extremism.

If you would like to participate in this focus group, please give your name to X by **/**/****.

Yours Sincerely

Amy Clinch

My name is …….

I would like to participate in the focus group that is to be held on **/**/**** to discuss my views on preventing violent extremism. I have read the information sheet about the focus group and understand that:

	Yes/No
If I decide to, I can leave the focus group at any point.	
My views will be kept confidential unless I say anything that suggests I or another are at risk from harm.	
I will not be able to withdraw my views after the focus group as it will not be possible to identify my contribution.	
My views will be recorded and kept locked in a filing cabinet that only the researcher and supervisors have access to.	
My views will be used to inform education policy in the LA and how schools and colleges work with the community to prevent violent extremism.	

Signed……..

X
DIRECTOR FOR PEOPLE

PO Box 20 Council House
X West Midlands B91 9QU
Tel:
Minicom:
www.x.gov.uk

Date: 05/05/2010

Dear Parents,

Our names are Amy Clinch (trainee Educational Psychologist) and X (Senior Practitioner Educational Psychologist) and we work as part of X Council's Educational Psychology Service. Educational Psychologists work with parents and schools to try to improve outcomes for young people.

The government has written guidelines about how schools and colleges can work together with the community to keep young people safe. One of the focuses is on preventing violent extremism. We would like to research young people's views in this area as we feel they are in a good position to help look at ways schools and colleges can work with the community to try to prevent violent extremism. Student's views will then be used to inform education policy in X and the way schools and colleges work to try to prevent violent extremism.

Your child has expressed an interest in participating in a focus group to share their views. In this research we are not referring to specific groups, but to views that may be extreme in a number of areas. We will not be talking about specific instances or examples from personal experience, but would like to gain your child's general views on:

- What violent extremism is
- Issues young people face which may make them vulnerable to violent extremism
- Where young people gain information from to inform their opinions and who they turn to for support
- The strategies that the government are suggesting for schools
- Ways in which you feel we could work in schools to try to prevent violent extremism

The focus group will be led by Amy Clinch and X. A member of school staff will also be present.

When we report student's views back to the council, it will be in very general terms and it will not be possible to identify individual students, schools or colleges from the data. We will be audio recording the focus group, but the recording will be kept in a locked cabinet and the only people who will be allowed to listen to it are Amy Clinch, X, and X (Principal Educational Psychologist). We will not be storing any names with the recording, so no one will be able to identify your child's voice or views. We will be asking students to agree that views expressed within the focus group remain confidential amongst the people who attend. The only time we cannot keep your child's views confidential is if they say something that suggests they, or someone else is in danger. If this is the case we would have to talk to the child protection officer in your school and information may have to be passed on to outside agencies.

Your consent is required for your child to participate in the focus group. If your child changes their mind about participating, they can leave the focus group at any point and we will not ask

why. It will not be possible to remove your child's views from the research after the focus group however, as we will not be able to identify their contribution.

If you would like any further information on the research, please contact Amy Clinch or X at X Educational Psychology Service 0121 ******. Please complete and return the attached consent slip to ********* by *********.

Yours Sincerely

Amy Clinch

I **give** consent for my child…….to participate in the focus group to discuss their views on preventing violent extremism.

Signed…….

(Parent/Guardian)

Relationship to child……..

Date……..

Appendix 5

A selection of transcripts from each focus group

Excerpt of text taken from transcript 1 (exploring what violent extremism means)

F1 = Facilitator 1
F2 = Facilitator 2
S = Student

S: …. … …Bombs

F1: Bombs

S: Destruction

S: Racism

F1: Racism

S: Pain

S: Knives

F2: Knives, did you say knives, yeah?

S: Loneliness

F2: What makes you say loneliness?

S: Like, cos, if you've lost like everything (F2: Yeah) and everything you've got, you've got nothing left (F2: Ok)

S: Religion

S: Brainwashed

F1: Umm Hmm

S: Influenced

S: Pressure

S: Err, prejudice with religion, I think, basically

F1: Prejudice alongside religion or do you just want that as well as religion

S: I think it's, it's kind of connected with religion, so people are prejudice towards a whole religion rather than erm, quite a small minority , who are connected with violent extremism

S: … … …Guns

S: Gangs

F1: Ok, thank you gangs

S: Protests

F2: What sort of protests are you thinking of?

S: Err, like, when you see people walking round the streets just like, hurting people, like who a protesting for a reason

F2: Ok

F1: So it's not like any sort of protests presumably, are you talking about people hurting people

S: Yeah, like breaking things and smashing things

S: I think attention again, attention to get views heard… … …

S: Attacks

F1: Attacks

S: Ego

F1: Ego, can you explain a bit more about that?

S: Erm, sometimes the ego comes in the way and they turn to violent extremism

F1: And what would you mean, could you say a bit more about what you mean?

S: I, they think that they, sometimes they can be full of themselves, they think they are inferior to other people

F1: Full of themselves, ok…and they're think they're more, maybe important, is that,

S: Yeah

S: Erm, 9/11 was a form of violent extremism

S: The London bombings

F1: Okey doke, well actually, do you know what, shall we? I'm just wondering if we should go onto the next one for specific, erm, examples of violent extremism. Does anyone else want to add to that? Because we are going to ask about particular examples now, that maybe you're sort of aware of, 9/11 is one of those, but we could always come back to that bit as well, so, yeah, can you maybe think about, er, some example of extremism, erm, violence, or violent extremism that you're aware of. The man here said 9/11

Excerpt of text taken from transcript 2

F = Facilitator
T = Teacher
B = Student response

F1: Yeah, yeah, ok, well we've sort of started to move on now about why people might be attracted to violent extremism, you said that people might become attracted to violent extremism because it helps them get what they want, and because we've talked about what violent extremism is I can tell you about what our definition of violent extremism was and that someone who has views that are extreme, which is what you said, and that they don't allow for difference, so they don't listen to other people's views, so that's exactly what you said wasn't it, and someone who uses violence, or encourages others to use violence to get their views heard or to have their way. So that's pretty much exactly what you've been talking about isn't it. So that's what we mean when we say violent extremism. Erm, and also to note that when we say violent extremism it is illegal and it's important that we say that, erm

F2: Anything about the use of violence is erm, just because there's an idea behind it doesn't make it any less wrong than because it is about the use of violence, so we've got to say that because that's, yeah

F1: So you've already started thinking about what might make a young person engage with violent extremism or want to join an extremist group, so what things do you think might make somebody your age attracted to an extremist group?

B47: The thrill of it.

F1: The thrill of it.

B48: It might be like they have nothing better to do, like maybe there's a group that are actually welcoming.

F1: Ok

B49: Yeah that's quite a good point

F2: So did you say feel welcomed at the end of there?

B48: Yeah just being with people who are welcoming

F2: You're beginning to mention a few emotions there as well actually, feeling welcomed.

F1: So do you feel that there's not any things for young people to do?

B49: It is but not everyone would want to do it. It's like, I can manage to entertain myself but then you get the few people that just don't want to do that and want to find another way to do something.

B50: It depends what type of person you are, like, someone like, I don't know,

B51: Maybe if you're like really quiet and shy, maybe there's not really then you wouldn't want to do lots of activities because they're all about bringing loads of people together. (Another student said 'yeah' in agreement) So then they don't really like it, then they find that they're welcome there (referring to extremist group).

B52: Maybe it's to do with the family, maybe it's like, I don't know,

B53: They were born into it

B52: Maybe they were just brought up in a violent area or something.

F1: Ok, so there was 2 things there wasn't there, the first thing you said was family, how do you think a family might have influence over whether somebody joins an extremist group?

B53: Maybe they, maybe there parents just don't have like, they don't just open their door and go out whenever you want and come in whenever you want and they don't just have really like basic ground rules.

B54: I suppose sometimes you hear like if someone's like been a victim of a stabbing or something fro a crime, normally their family embers would either go out by themselves or join up with someone else to go and get their own back on that person to get revenge basically.

F1: Does anyone else think the family might have an influence?

B55: If they're not being led by their family and they don't like it and then they find someone who does care about them, they could think ahh this is great I want to be hear

F1: Yeah

B56: It could be about pleasing their family as well because if their dad's like proper hard or something they want to show that (few words misisng from tape)

F1: Yeah, yeah, so we've got 2 things there

B57: It could be pleasing your friends as well, not only your family.

F1: So if other people want you to join the group who've joined the group, do you think that would have an influence about whether young people would join?

B58: Yeah, peer pressure affects you a lot

F1: Peer pressure

B59: If people had more discipline like, I don't know, from like their family.

F1: How would that have an impact?

B60: Just cos like, when you do something, like sneaky, you don't, you don't even know if it's right or wrong, then there needs to be someone who tells you that it's wrong, so maybe it's like being told what's right and wrong, sometimes you just have to use your common sense… …

F1: Any other reasons why young people might want to join an extremist group?

B61: To feel big? (few words missing from tape) They think being violent means being old. Myabe like, yeah, being caught by police is something big

F1: Yeah so that might link back to what you said about the thrill of it

B62: Cos some people strangely like being chased by the police. Like when they see a police car go past they make themselves look suspicious and then start running and they find that really fun.

F1: Any other reasons why a young person might be attracted to or want to join an extremist group?

B63: They agree with them

F1: Yeah, it could be that they agree with them couldn't it, it could be that they agree with what the group stands for.

B64; It could be that they hate like a certain group and then (couple of words missing) and then think yeah that group's done something to me, and sometimes they join the group and they don't have the will to be violent but then, when they're in the group (few words missing) they might not necessarily agree with it but then…maybe they just join the group and they don't have the will to be violent but then days go past and they find themselves like realising that they're violent.

F1: Yeah so like you don't start wanting to be violent but something happens along the way

B67: And maybe like someone enjoys it and you find you enjoy violence because some people enjoy being violent

F1: Any other reasons why people might join an extremist group?

B68: Because they know it's wrong

F1: Because they know it's wrong. Why do you think they would join because they know it's wrong?

B69: Because they think it's funny.

B70: It means they don't like rules and they like to break rules (few words missing)

F1: So it's cool and it's a way of breaking rules. Why might people want to break rules?

Excerpt from transcript 3 (exploring risk factors for violent extremism)

F = Facilitator
C = Student response

F1: Ok so thinking a little bit more locally, thinking about X, what might make a young person in X want to join an extremist group

C67: What you've been brought up to do

F1: What do you mean what they've been brought up to do?

C68: Their background

C69: I think it's the influence your parents have on you and the people you grow up with.

C70: Maybe your background and what you've got to look up to. Your idol.

C71: You could go into it because you don't, like, have hope for society

F1; You don't have hope for society, what do you mean by that?

C71: So like, if you feel like, erm, say these are the things that are happening, that society is becoming civilised or something then you're likely to want to take action

C72: You know when you refer to violent extremism and you say young people in X why are you actually, like, in here today, because I don't like recall any violent extremism in X.

F1: No. It's because the government has written strategies for schools nationally, so this is going across the whole country so it's not just X, these strategies are going to Coventry, Manchester, Newcastle and everywhere in the country. The reason we're talking to you is because in X we're going to change those recommendations because we don't think it's a good idea to just put national strategies into X, we want to make it relevant for you and what you think local issues are. Further on in the group we're actually going to talk about specific strategies that the government have recommended and we want your views on it because it would be quite easy to say to schools 'this is what the government recommends' and everyone in the country is going to do it, but we don't think that's the most effective way of doing it. I don't know what you think about that but we want to get your ideas so basically we know how to pitch these strategies so they are most effective for X. And you're right, there aren't any examples of violent extremism in X, but we want to keep it that way and it's just about working with everybody so that

C73: I don't mean to be like racist or anything, but the only, way it seems to us, this is like between me and you, but the majority of them are Asian youths who are going into these cults if you like, and are being brainwashed to go over and fight against the British army and to fight for the Taliban. The only time you hear like a bad, like Caucasian person like, er, like violent extremism, is if they're a loner, pretty much or a psycho.

C74: (few words missing) but over here now we're a lot more multi-cultural so because we're not used to it things are changing and that's how people are deciding how to make changes whether it's right or not.

C75: But it comes down to religion, just like the Muslims and, just mainly Muslims feeling they're superior to other religions, like obviously the Catholics do but it's yeah, not just Muslims but all religions believe they're superior to other people's views and they don't accept that they have another child and

C76: I don't think that's true. In religion they say that everyone's the same and that we're all equal so you can't say that they think they're better than

C77: But in religion it often contradicts itself because even though in the bible it says religion should not target other religions, and like, you think I'm atheist and you think that's strange and you talk to me about it like it's wrong

C78: I think people don't accept other religions and that's what it is, it's all about acceptance and Muslims need to accept our religion and they come over here and stuff like, ahh, like Christmas lights, Christmas light in some places got banned because it was offensive to Muslims when it's, this country is a protestant country. We can accept their views but at the end of the day this is our country and they should accept that this is our

C79: See the thing is in some cases we're not tolerant of them either and we're mainly a protestant country and it's in our favour to not be tolerant to the, but, if we were over there and then it would just be the same.

C80: There's kind of double standards though because if a Muslim person says Christmas lights are offensive to me, I want them taken down in town then they'll get taken down straight away, but if we say 'I don't like them wearing a Burka' because you can't see their face and I don't know what they're doing.

C81: See in some cases I can understand why because we don't want to upset them

F1: But are we talking about all Muslims?

C82: No we're talking about cults and groups

C83; I feel that the main reason we feel we have to be tolerant of them is because they're the minority. If they were the majority we'd probably say they'd have to be more tolerant of us. We're the majority and therefore no one wants to be seen as picking on the minority.

F1: So how does that link back to violent extremism?

C84: Because they come to our country and all we ever hear about is suicide bombers and that and most of them are Asian, obviously you're going to be quite scared of them. If they're coming to England you don't know what they're going to do.

F1: Do you think that's the case?

C85: But I think only a few Muslims give Muslims a bad name. That's why there's a lot of conflict and disagreement and people not being accepted because the minority give the majority a bad name like, it's you assume that, I know nice Muslims but because you hear about so much of the bad stuff and not much of the good stuff then it's really.

C86: I think part of this being linked back to violent extremism is that way that the media perceives it and shows us

F1: And it's interesting, moving away a bit from Islam, that when we looked at the example of violent extremism, we've so far said a lot of violent extremism comes from Islam but if we go back to our list of violent extremist examples, most of the examples haven't come from Islam but have come from a range of groups, like the KKK which is a white group. We talked about the Nazi's which

C87; But the Mulsim ones are more recent and it's what we learn more about

C88: The KKK wasn't on such a big scale as Islam. They haven't killed thousands of people they single out people or a few people

C89: They're not around now.

C90: It's not so much that the KKK kill lots of numbers but in the 60's there were lots of, they did lots of people, because of your colour or your background because it's down to what you believe in again because then it's not really relevant to us because they're mainly based in America so it's not as relevant to us.

C91: I mean that's another example of, it's not, erm, discrimination against your ethnicity, your e Nazi's were white but the Jews were also white and they were killing Jews so it's not racial, and now it's more racial it's just, I don't know

C92: But the Nazis would like, stop people, because they had the dream of a perfect race and they'd not necessarily kill them but make them infertile if the had glasses or had problem, so ethinic cleansing

C93: Yeah, blonde hair and blue eyes.

C94: Everything Hitler wasn't.

F1: You mentioned what's more relevant to us recently so what about the BNP then?

C95: But they're not particularly violent

C96: I think they would if they could but

C97: Yeah I think they would if they could.

Appendix 6

A selection of text to demonstrate the coding process

Appendix 7

Examples of quotes to inform codes

A selection of quotes used to generate codes

Students' description of violent extremism

Code	Transcript Quote
Feeling superior	'Sometimes they can be full of themselves and feel inferior (meaning superior) to other people'
Feeling powerful	'Look at Derek Bird again, I'm sure he felt very hard when he was shooting people who had been horrible to him'.
Strong negative emotion	'Hate' 'Anger' 'Revenge'
Mental state	'Mentally unstable' 'That can include mental states'
Weak personality	'No body will walk all over you ever again' 'somebody with a weak personality…someone who can't stand up for themselves'
Ideology	'Like if they're really extreme in religion'
Racism	'Racism'
Gain attention to views	'Attention to get views heard' 'To get people to pay attention'
Not listening to other views	'They don't listen to people's views so they just like their views and stick up for it even if they know it's wrong' 'They don't let other people have their opinions if your opinions go against what they say'
Association with gangs	'Maybe it's gangs'
People become swept along with group processes	'They don't realise that violence is violence kind of thing'
Process of radicalisation	'Asian youths who are going into these cults if you like, and are being brainwashed'
Unnecessary	'Not moral and unnecessary'
Immoral	'Not moral and unnecessary'
Judgements on morality of VE are subjective	'It depends on the way you look at it cos like obviously from the person doing it, it wasn't (VE) because again they were going with what they believe is right, but from everyone else…obviously they would…so you can't really say' ''It might be justified to someone else but it's not to you'
Use of weapons	'Terrorists bomb things' 'You can use weapons to overpower to overpower kind of thing'
Use of terror	'Terrorism' 'Fear'
Extremism is on a continuum	'You can have more petty examples of it and more extreme versions'
Islamic extremism due to group action, British extremism due to individual psycopathy	'Asian youths who are going into these cults…the only time you hear like a bad, like Caucasian person, like, er, like violent extremism, is if they're a loner pretty uch, or a psycho'.
Violent impact on individuals	'Death'
Local impact	'It effects us in home, rather than like, in foreign countries and stuff'
Invasive	'It's (VE) intrusive'
Increased prejudice to	But I think only a few Muslims give Muslims a bad name.

groups based on actions of a minority	That's why there's a lot of conflict and disagreement and people not being accepted because the minority give the majority a bad name like, it's you assume that, I know nice Muslims but because you hear about so much of the bad stuff and not much of the good stuff then it's really.
Most recently: Islamic examples	'But the Mulsim ones are more recent and it's what we learn more about'
Historical: Illuminati	'Could you have the illuminati? Could that be considered violent extremism? Because they don't let other people have their opinions if your opinions go against what they say'.
Rwanda	'The Rowandan massacre'
Nazi's	'Nazi's' 'The Nazis would like, stop people, because they had the dream of a perfect race…so it's ethnic cleansing'
KKK	'The KKK'
Zimbabwe	Erm could you say in Zimbabwe where Robert Mugabe won't let anyone in
Rebels	Rebels, like in Cuba and places like that
Examples of violence without ideology	'Derek Bird (because) he killed 12 people' 'But that's not really extremist because although he killed them, that makes him more psycho, he wasn't really doing it for a reason'
Examples of ideology without violence	'The people who were, erm, who were protesting in the place where they bring the soldiers back from Afghanistan'

Factors that may contribute to a young person engaging with violent extremism

Code	Transcript Quote
Within group influence	'They're involved in it as part of their gang' 'it's like mob mentality'
Weak personality	'Someone with a weak personality' 'Someone who can't stand up for themselves'
Being rebellious	'They know it's wrong', 'they like to break rules'
Popularity	'Someone who needs to be popular'
Being alone	'He had just lost all his family and then he met the KKK and that's how he started', 'they're going to be alone all their lives'
Knowing right from wrong	'Everyone knows right from wrong', 'You can't say that everyone knows right from wrong because it always depends on their background'
Enjoyment	'The thrill of it'
Feeling grown up	'To feel big'
Being feared	'a big gang is like join our gang and everyone will be scared of you and nobody will walk all over you ever again', 'Make themselves feared basically'
Being powerful	'I'm sure he felt very hard when he was shooting people who had been horrible to him', 'feeling like you have power over other people'
Mentally unstable	'Their psychological background if they're like mentally unstable'

Lack of hope for society	'Lack of hope for society'
Anger	'Anger'
Revenge	'To get revenge basically'
Needing attention	'Nothing's being done and…they're not getting enough attention…maybe they feel like they can be heard'
Perceived double standards	'There's kind of double standards though because if a Muslim person says Christmas lights are offensive to me, I want them taken down in town then they'll get taken down straight away, but if we say 'I don't like them wearing a Burka' because you can't see their face and I don't know what they're doing'.
Inability to tolerate difference	'I think people don't accept other religions and that's what it is, it's all about acceptance'
Insecure	'Someone who's insecure'
Perceptions of minority groups	'Because they come to our country and all we ever hear about is suicide bombers and that and most of them are Asian, obviously you're going to be quite scared of them. If they're coming to England you don't know what they're going to do'
Interpretation of media stories	'I think part of this being linked back to violent extremism is that way that the media perceives it and shows us'
Stereotyping	'Because they come to our country and all we ever hear about is suicide bombers and that and most of them are Asian, obviously you're going to be quite scared of them'.
Inability to cope with societal change	'Over here now we're a lot more multi-cultural so because we're not used to it things are changing and that's how people are deciding how to make changes whether it's right or not'
Unable to express views	'No one's listening to them'
Strong willed	'Strong minded'
Believes in cause	'They believe what they're doing is right when it's actually not'
Racism	'Racism'
Religion	'But it comes down to religion, just like the Muslims and, just mainly Muslims feeling they're superior to other religions, like obviously the Catholics do but it's yeah, not just Muslims but all religions believe they're superior to other people's views'
Misinterpretation of Islam	'They give them a different version of the Koran as well don't they that says they have to kill'
Fighting against political views	'Fighting against political views'
Political uncertainty	'Can you be influenced by politics? One of them will be on whichever side you want to be on and fight against the other side'
Limited opportunity to express strong views	'Nothing's being done…no one's taking any like, they're not getting enough attention'
Someone's personality	'It's just in them'
Peer pressure	'Peer pressure affects you a lot', 'You can be influence by your friends, say if one of your friends, like, is very religious

	and say they, you want to go out, and hang around the streets at night, you're likely to want to follow the and do what they're doing just because they're your friends'
Being protected	'And sometimes like when you join an extremist group you might feel protected, you feel like you belong somewhere'
Sense of belonging	'a real sense of family and people who like you' 'you feel like you belong somewhere'
Sense of family	'a real sense of family and people who like you'
Positive recognition from peers	'You're likely to want to do what they're doing, just because they're your friends'
Immediate benefits of gang membership outweigh cost	' (people think) If I don't hang around with them I'm going to get picked on so I might as well go and hang with them anyway but I suppose like, if they don't see like, what could happen to them in the future, they think about there and then and what's going to happen to them then rather than in the long run'
Abuse	'Being part of being abused…err it would make you more conscious about what's going on in the world'
Parental rejection	'It might be that their parents might not want them and they're kind of well, think that no one's going to want them or that people are just not going to want to have anything to do with them'
Loose parental boundaries	'Maybe their parents just don't have…really like basic ground rules…if they're not being led by their family and they don't like it then they find someone who does care about them, they could think 'ahh this is great, I want to be here''
Prejudice based on historical parental grudge	'You could be influenced, like, by the past, because in the war and stuff it was wrong to be friends with a Jew …if you had family members back then who actually believe that it could be like passed down and you could be thinking…you can kind of single people out because of their beliefs or what they look like and that might lead to extremism'
Between group rivalry	'they could get caught up in a gang, but the leaders are like, a lot of violence, that has kind of rival gangs has kind of violent kind of gangs, and fights, and they're involved in it as part of their gang'
Media increases divisions between groups in society	'There's a lot of conflict and disagreement…I think part of this being linked back to violent extremism is the way the media perceives it and shows us…the media put things down so that they can dictate what people think'
Scapegoats	'The Polish people are scapegoats for how bad our country really is, people are sat on the dole wasting all the benefits…they say it's the Polish people who have come over and taken the jobs, it's an excuse'
Majority not accepting minority culture	'See the thing is in some cases we're not tolerant of them (minority groups) either and we're mainly a protestant country and it's in our favour to not be tolerant to them'
Minority culture not accepting majority culture	'I think people don't accept other religions and that's what it is, it's all about acceptance and Muslims need to accept our

	religion and they come over here and stuff like' 'If a Muslim person says Christmas lights are offensive to me, I want them taken down in town then they'll get taken down straight away'
'Us' and 'them' thinking	'At the end of the day this is our country and they should accept that this is ours' See two boxes above
Discrimination against young people causing resentment	'Because like, if they, if some people see like a big gang of like, people our age or a little bit older misbehaving or destroying stuff and that, and then they go down to ours and see another group then they automatically think that all are like that… It kind of makes us like, want to prove them wrong but a few of us kind of think, well no, if that's the way they're going to think about me, maybe that's the way I should behave'
Unfavourable comparison of poor compared to rich areas	'They think like, they may think that some people have more than them so they get jealous of that person' 'There's not much in ******* (one area in X) but in surrounding areas there's very rough areas, I mean you can't say they're poor but they're just not as well developed as all the other places that are surrounding them so normally that would cause them to do something out of the ordinary'
Peer pressure to not engage in community activities	'But sometimes people feel like wherever you go you have to watch who's there cos you're having to watch what you're doing, you can't just (couple of words missing) you have to watch what you're doing in case anyone takes the mick or anything'
Some young people ruining activities	'Where we always go and quite a few people from outside our school go as well but you always get like the, the, the rough people who chose to stand outside and do whatever they can to ruin it and they'll just drink and everything and then the police have to come but it's just like a case of trying to do something without other people trying to ruin it for all the others'
Personality barriers	'Maybe if you're like really quiet and shy, maybe there's not really then you wouldn't want to do lots of activities because they're all about bringing loads of people together'
Brought up in a violent community	'Some parts of X have violent areas…if they're brought up in that area they might think that's what they've got to be like.
Copying behaviour of role models	'It could be the crimes rates around like theft and stuff for people aged 30-50. Crime rates that could make younger kids, erm, look up to those people'
Needs to more than one factor	' I think in the bigger picture it has to take a lot'

Factors contributing to identity development and identity conflict

Code	Transcript Quote
Curbed by others	'It's curbed by other people and their influences… Like when schools try to set and all the rules and for some people it's just not in their personality to follow'
Natural processes of maturity	
Parents	'A lot of the time you copy your parents or you're influenced by them'
Restrictions	'Like when schools try to set and all the rules and for some people it's just not in their personality to follow'
Not an issue for Year 9's	'I don't think there's much wrong with our age group, it tends to be people that are younger than us (identity difficulties)'
Position in the family	'Maybe if you're the eldest child and it's the first time your mum and dad have had to let go and they don't let you do anything' 'Or maybe when you're the youngest child and you have to try and live up to the older siblings that you have and with identity and families when you become a teenager you have to find your own identity'
Conflict at home	'If you're from a home where there's lots of like arguing and violence'

Ways to prevent violent extremism

Code	Transcript Quote
Multi-cultural experiences locally	'Erm you could get people from different schools, like the same age, because if you know someone from school and you've known them since you were little, you feel more comfortable around them and you know more about them, but if you met someone in the street or something you won't, like, it's kind of better to know more people, like, then you've got different views of sort of different people and different religions'
Multi-cultural experiences internationally	'You could like do pen pals and stuff for people in, like, Germany' 'If you kind of had a pen pal there it gives you an insight into what life is like where they are, and how they have different views. It kind of, people kind of know how lucky we are, compared to what they are, so people won't take things for granted as much so they won't have anything to prove. Like they'll still have stuff to prove but they won't have to take it to such an extent'
Ability to be listened to in	We have a school council…they do give us feedback but it's

school through democratic processes	like, really bare'
Learning to listen to other's views	'Some people are just like strong minded and think that their answer is right and won't listen to anyone else so you've got to be open to different views really'
No discrimination locally	'X is a predominantly white area anyway so that would take out a lot of discrimination and feeling left out'
No poverty locally	'Not poverty in X' (not an issue)
Education about different beliefs enabling students to make considered choices about beliefs	'Then you have background information so then maybe you know that they're not like that or maybe a few people are like that for a reason and that religion is not the whole religion and just one or two people that are like that for a certain reason'
Year 9 students have already formed views	'It would take something really big at this age to change their ways' 'I really do think you have to be younger, we're set in our ways now' 'I think when you're at school and you're our age you've pretty much got your views sort of thing so it's a bit late to talk about it'
Younger students have more flexible thinking styles	'I like what she said because you've got your personality trait and you've decided what you're going to be like and this is how you're going to stay, this is your personality for the rest of your life, whereas when you're younger you're more naïve and open to what people have to say'
Increased contact between different cultures across predominantly single ethnic group schools	'That's why I don't think, like our school is predominantly white people, I think X school (predominantly Asian), if there's too many of one race other people might get singled out and there needs to be more of a mix'
Promoting understanding through increased contact	'Erm you could get people from different schools, like the same age, because if you know someone from school and you've known them since you were little, you feel more comfortable around them and you know more about them, but if you met someone in the street or something you won't, like, it's kind of better to know more people, like, then you've got different views of sort of different people and different religions'
Open discussion may prevent issues building up and exploding	'The people you want to be worried about are the people who maybe don't speak much and it's bottled up inside them and that's the people who do something ad and they just explode'
Teaching about violence	'I think, like, when you do get taught, like, emphasise that violence is bad, and sort of, emphasise that violence is bad at an early age'
Social skills development	'Activities after school where you can meet new people'
Teachers to visit homes to be	'Erm I think schools could like, get really connected to homes

aware of difficulties	to make sure everything's ok'
Peer mentoring	'You could get, like, some students from Year 10 just go round asking people, like whether they're in a situation like that and then they can help and pass information on to teachers because pupil's would feel more comfortable talking to older pupils thank pupils their own age'
Signposting parents to support	'I still think they could help parents out, so like, point them in the right direction if they need like, help or something'
Opportunities for parents to share concerns with school	'I think sometimes they could talk to the parents, and have set times like maybe once a month where parents would go in and talk to the teachers if they've got any, like troubles'
Being aware of local tensions through discussions with students	'So they know what we're going through'
Being aware of local tensions by meeting community members	'Maybe if like the community came in once a month'
Being aware of local tensions through contact with the police	'They could, like, have a link with the police' 'Yeah so they know what's going on'
Beyond the role of education	'I don't know that they really can (work to prevent violent extremism)'
VE not a local issue	'I don't think it's a problem round this area, erm schools really can't do anything'
Individual's responsibility to change	'Yeah because some people, as much as the school can do and like as much as the school does do they just don't change, it's just in them'
Parental role to support children	'I think it's like, you need to get families and parents to do it'
Council to support community difficulties	'That's really down to the council because if someone's got a problem then they can't go to their nearest school because it's nothing to do with the school, that's down to the council of your area really'
Group disruption becoming out of control	'I think everything would have to be very controlled and I think in school you can't get that, people are very immature' 'People in my class yeah, you try and do a debate in an R.E lesson and there's no point doing it because people will scream and no one will do work and the more you scream the less work you have to do afterwards'
Staff members ill equipped to deal with debate	'They don't control us'
Development of grudges between students	'There's the possibility that someone could say something and then even if it's one of those things when you say I won't get offended it's all out in the open, if somebody says something about you you're going to have a grudge against them, that's always going to be there and that might create even more racial tension'

Ensuring everyone is able to contribute	'the people, like, immature people and the racist people who will just shout out a racist comment, those are the people that are going to have problems when they're older accepting other cultures and races so everyone needs to be involved to get their views across even if they're going to be immature'
Having smaller group discussions	'Have smaller groups that are picked carefully like by their culture and what type of people they are'
Need to debate topics of interest	I think they should let us chose the topics we want to debate about and then maybe we'll have more interest in it instead of picking a random topic
Need to make debating topics relevant to students	'It would have to be arguments you had strong opinions about'
Need to support students with debate skills	'I think it's like erm, having it balanced, like having the views of someone who disagrees with the argument and the views of someone who does agree and just making it no right or wrong in the debate' 'I think you've got to have people who agree with you as well because if you're the only one who thinks that then you probably won't say anything and people will just like laugh at you or something'
School involvement following difficulties in school can make situation worse	'An sometimes they're like just go to pastoral and I'm like I didn't want to speak to them otherwise I would have gone to them and that wasn't helpful and in the end it just makes things worse'
Anti-bullying example of overkill	'But I think too much of it like bullying, if I have to sit t through another bullying assembly…oh my god I know' 'There's so many and you kind of twig it and remember it, you know…we get it'

Where students turn for support

Code	**Transcript Quote**
Magazines	'When you can, like write to a magazine'
Internet	'The internet, you can try and find websites out there that can try and help you and stuff, also there's chat rooms and stuff and people on there you don't know so you find it easier to talk to because you can't, like, talk to them face to face'
Music	Some people turn to music, because the lyrics like try and help
Diverting mind with a hobby	'Sometimes you can divert your mind by doing an extra hobby or something so that you don't actually think about the problem'
Friends	'Friends are the only people you can talk to'
Teachers	'Erm, people you can trust, so teachers'
Family	'I think most people have the same view and it's family you

	talk to' 'I'd feel comfortable talking to family because they'd tell you what to do if, because they know you better than anyone else so they know what would help and what would be best so they'd be best'
Dealing with the problem yourself	'You just keep it inside'
Uncomfortable discussing problems with staff	'We wouldn't go to teachers' 'If people say I'm an Albanian prostitute I'm not going to go and say to your form tutor and say they call me that'
Teachers tell other people	'You've got to be really careful as well because if you tell a teacher they'll probably just go and tell someone else'
Feel they do not know the teachers well enough	'I wouldn't feel comfortable sharing things with teachers because you don't know them that well. They've been in your life for like a year teaching you'
Unable to talk to family about sensitive issues	You think they'll judge you, you can't exactly tell your parents if you think your pregnant
Feeling embarrassed when own anonymous problem read out	'I wouldn't feel comfortable writing it down because if it got read out and you might hear people talking about it you might not like what people have to say about it you could be laughing at it so pure embarrassment might cause another problem for you'

Appendix 8

Codes relating to each text excerpt

Codes related to each text excerpt

Table 1
What is extremism/violent extremism?

Crossing a boundary	A1	B9 B11 B12	
Violence linked to ideology			C47-C50
Strong negative emotion	A2 A11		C8, C9, C11
Unnecessary			C2
Strong negative emotion and consequence	A13		
Final attempt	A3		
Being ignored			C7, C9
Method	A3		
Method to deliver views	A6	B36 B42 B43 B44 B45 B46	C7
Method protest (using violence)	A22	B10	
Use of terror	A8		
Negative consequence to people	A4	B14	
Neagtive consequence	A10	B46	
Consequence: Increased prejudice towards a religious group	A19		
Views	A5 A6		
Only listening to own views		B17 B18 B19 B22	C23
Persuasion			C6
Racism	A11		
Religion	A5 A15		C3
Gaining attention	A7		C6
Gaining attention to get views heard	A23		C7, C10
Weapon	A9 A13 A20	B24 B26 B27	C5
Aggressive action	A24		
Perpetrator being influenced (process of radicalization)	A16 A17 A18	B18	
Gangs	A21	B10 B29	
Individuals		B31	
Feeling superior	A25		
Not understanding own actions/cause		B15 B34 B35	
Mental state		B16	
Groups		B23	
Us vs them		B23	
Subjective		B38	
Belief system/doing the right thing		B25 B31	C4
Dying for a cause/belief			C13

Personal feelings			C4
Over powering/threatening		B26 B28	
Extreme violence			C1
Immoral			C2
Local impact			C10
Invasive			C11
Terrorism			C12
Extremism is a continuum			C16 C18
Alternatives to extremism			C19 C41, C42

Table 2
Examples of violent extremism

Islamic extremism	A26 A27		C24 C28
Religion		B25	
Ethnic cleansing (historical)	A30		C19, C20, C21
Rebels			C44
Zimbabwe			C45
Knife crime			C108
Animal rights protests	A33		
People against abortions	A35		
Terrorists		B23	
IRA			C22
Illuminati			C23
BNP (could differentiate extreme but not violent – good understanding)			C95-C102
War	A29 A32		C28 C29 C30
Example of violence (difficulties separating violence and ideology)	A28 A36	B32	C35 C36-C40
Example of violence linked to group membership (no ideology)	A34		
Example of views but not violence	A31	B37	
Young people easily influenced	A42		
Developing own views	A42		
Protests		B33	C16 C17 C18
Graffiti (donated discussion)		B40 B42	
Free choice		B40	
Frequency/Normality			C31 C34
Islam is most relevant/recent			C87 C88 C89 C90

Table 3
What are risk factors for young people engaging with violent extremism?

Within group influence (easily influenced)	A37		C57, C63, C10
Need lots of people with the same view – group dynamics			C139
Gang culture			C108
Peer pressure			C51, C64
Interaction between factors			C64
Culmulation of factors			C115
Excitement		B47 B62	
Lack of hope for society			C71
Sympathize with cause		B63	
Solving a problem in society			C98
Racism			C100
Belief			C60
Subjectivity			C60 C62
Enjoyment		B67 B69	
Rebellion		B68 B70 B71	
Feel grown up		B61	
Strong emotions leading to violence	A48		C59 C65
Misplaced targets of aggression, gap between anger and target			C65 C66
Fear			C52 C104
Boredom		B48 B49 B71	
Being welcomed by VE group		B48 B49 B51 B55	
Sense of belonging		B74	C54 C55
Nothing to lose			C54
Sense of family			C54
Protected		B74	C56
Between group rivalry	A37	B64	
Parental abuse	A38		
Revenge	A38	B54	C59
Family		B52	C52 C67 C68 C69
Religion within the family	A39		
Religion			C75
Not religion			C76
Islam			C75 C82
Discrimination and fearing a group due to			C84 C85

actions of a minority			
Discrimination due to media coverage			C86 C104 C110 C111
Scapegoats			C112 C114
Long standing difficulty just new media coverage			C109
Acceptance			C78
Copying parental views	A39 A43		
Copying parental behavior	A39	B56	
Loose parental boundaries		B53 B55 B59 B60	
Knowing right/wrong		B60	
Copying local community violence	A44		
Idols			C70
Copying friend's behavior	A46	B57 B58	
Being influenced by friends	A46		
Minority (Islamic) ideology honoring violence	A39		C53
Defenses against the cycle of rejection (adoption)	A40		
Early experiences of rejection impacting later relationships	A40		
Lack of trust within relationships (adoption)	A40		
Being alone	A40		C54
Fighting against different political views	A41		
Deciding political allegiance	A41		
Historical prejudice	A45		
Limited opportunity to express strong views	A47		
Limited response to views	A47		
Attention to views	A47	B71	
Violent surroundings		B52	
Unconscious normalizing of violence		B64	
Wanting to be feared		B72, B73	C56
Power			C56 C59 C107
Popularity			C56
Us vs them			C60

Differentiating between 'Asian; and 'Caucasian' extremists			C73
Resisting multiculturalism			C74
Lack of tolerance			C78 C79 C80 C83 C105
Sense of resentment			C80 C104 C105

Table 4
Ways to build resilience against extremism

Extremism not a local issue		B102	C121
Schools can't help			C141
Moral education about violence	A49		
Early education	A49 A50		
Education about different beliefs/religion	A50		
Informed choice	A50		
Evaluating stereotypes	A50		
Understanding impact of life events on behaviour	A50		
Increased home/school safeguarding relationship	A51		
Peer support as a link to teacher support	A52		
Learning about different people through increased contact locally	A53		
Mixing students in school (regards to race)			C140
Feeling more comfortable with others through contact locally	A53		
Learning about different people through increased contact internationally	A54 A55		
Appreciation of how lucky we are	A55 A56		
Beyond the role of education		B103 B104	
Not the role of education		B127	
Looking at differed aspects of a difficulty		B128	
Role of parents		B103	
Within person factors		B103	
Influences on knowing		B120 B121	

right from wrong			
Negative impact of school strategies		B105 B109 B111	C153
Children given too much say		B114 B115	
Family barriers		B107 B108	
Difficult to change thinking		B113	C142
Contextual influences on behaviour		B106	
Within person responsibility		B112	
Unfairness of targeted intervention		B116	
Group support		B117	
Schools already teach consideration of other's views		B118 B119	
Differentiating whether students actually mean what they say or are just saying it		B117	
Learning to be respectful		B122	
Already PSD days		B125 B126	
Reputation		B131 B132	
Understanding others		B83 B89	
Positive role models			C151 C176
Open discussion			C152
Needs to be at primary school age, flexible thinking in younger children			C142 C143 C146
Primary school teaching diversity			C144 C145
Informal teaching of diversity			C148
Primary school children less constrained by perception of others			C146
Controlling belief through the schools system			C150
Schools already teach multiculturism/acceptance			C132 133
Anti-bullying work, too much and not effective			C134-138

Schools role in education ratings. Average: 7.13 Range: 5-9

Table 5
Risk factors in the community for engaging with violent extremism

Poverty, comparison with others who have more	A57		
Need a culmination of factors to be vulnerable to VE			C125
No community difficulties			C119
Feeling part of the community		B129	
Poverty not a local issue	A68	B90	C116
Negative influence of poverty		B87 B88	
Different problems in different areas			C120
Irrelevant discussion about VE in X			C121
Discrimination not a local issue		B75 B81	C119
Oversensitivity around discrimination		B77 B79 B82	C173 C174 C175
Using discrimination to one's advantage		B78	
Feeling left out is a local issue		B84 B85 B86 B91	
Feeling left out not a local issue			C117
Individual factors on being left out		B95 B96 B97 B98	
Unfairness		B99 B100	
Peer pressure influencing participation in local activities		B101	
Racism not a lot local issue	A68		
Jealous	A67		
Gangs	A58		
Positive recognition from peers	A58		
Group membership for protection	A69		
Immediate safety benefits of group membership more important that future lifestyle consequences of group membership	A69		
Capacity to improve self	A69		

Power over others (gangs)	A59		
Lack of social activities for young people	A60		
Hatred between groups	A61		
Conflict between cultures/religion	A62		
Negative adult role models (crime)	A63		
Copying local community violence	A66		
Specific example of injustice	A64		
Being the victim of discrimination	A65 A68		
Actions in response to discrimination positive	A65		
Actions in response to discrimination negative	A65		
Engaging with the disaffected		B49	
Within person barriers		B50 B51	
Resilience in the community:			
Positive community role models	A70		
Increased social activities	A71 A74 A76 (in school)		
Meeting new people with different cultural heritages	A71		
Getting kids off the streets	A72 A73 A74		
Helping activities	A72		
Being a helpful individual	A75		
School's role in promoting community resilience:			
Signposting parents to support	A77		
Council role to support community		B127	
Regular opportunities for parents to share troubles with teachers	A83		
Not helping 'adults'	A77		
Local teachers understand needs of community	A78		
Helpful for schools to understand local	A79		

difficulties			
Schools to link with police to understand local difficulties	A80		
Schools meeting with community members	A81		
Discuss community issues with pupils	A82		

Table 6
Risk factors within the self

Accepting oneself		B130 B131 B138	
School's role in promoting self esteem		B133	
Identity develops through other people			C222
Identity is curbed by others			C225 C226 C227 C228 C235
Religion			C231 C233
Position in the family			C234 C235
Parental influence			C232
Negative impact of feeling unconfident/unhappy with self		B130 B131	
Culmulation of factors			C198
Mentally unstable			C190 C191
Neglect			C192
Abuse			C193
Unable to express views			C195
Restrictions			C196
Strong minded			C197
Feeling alone		B135 B168	
Feeling disliked			C187
Need to be popular			C179
Rebellion			C180
Left out		B153 B169	
Looking for older peer support		B135	
Conflict at home		B136	
Parental difficulties			C187
No money			C187 C188
Physical appearance		B137 B159	
Feeling odd		B159	
Having a similar peer group		B149	
Easily frustrated		B154	
Year 9's outgrown teasing		B155 B156	
Younger students tease		B157 B158	

Maturity		B160	
Worries about attainment		B163 B164	
Teasing a bigger issue for boys		B165 B166	
Boys are content		B167	
Weak personality			C177 C178 C181-184
Insecure			C186
Nothing to lose			C185
School's role in developing resilience for identity difficulties:			
Developmental/within person role		B160 B162	
Focusing on other things rather than teasing		B161 B162	

Table 7
Cognitive risk factors

	For 'A' responses cross reference to table 4 and ways to build resilience against extremism		
Learning social skills		B171	
Needs to be with younger children – greater flexibility of thought			C164 C165
Idea of fixed personality			C164 C165 C166
Interacting with different people and exploring commonalities		B171 B172	
School already encourage interaction with other year groups		B172 B173	
Within person factors		B174 B178	C162 C163 C171
Role of primary school in circle time		B179	
Confidence		B178 B181	
Little interest in debate		B182 B183	
Not having skills to debate		B187 B198	
Needing strong		B187 B190	

opinions to debate			
Needing interesting topics to debate		B188 B189	
Examples of interesting topics		B191 B192 B193	
Little interest in politics		B183 B185	
Already debate club in school		B182 B183 B184	
Positive skills from debates		B186	
Disruptions in debates		B198 B200 B201	
Disruption as work avoidance		B206 B207	
Worrying about what others think		B195 B196 B208	
Safety mechanisms in debates		B199 B202 B203 B204	C156
Controlled groups			C161 C169 C172
Competent teachers			C170
Needing to understand topics		B209 B191	
Use of the school council		B210 B211	
School council feedback		B212 B213	
Democratic processes in school		B214 B215 B216 B217	
Debates may prevent build up/explosion			C153
Negative impact of debates in school:			
Build resentment			C153
Cause offense			C155
Accessibility for all			C153 C158 C162 C163
Immaturity			C157 C159 C160

Table 8
Support mechanisms students' access when experiencing difficulties

Magazine	A84		
Talking to someone with similar experiences	A85		
Faceless source	A86	B226 B231	
Not wanting people to know		B231 B236 B244	

Difficulties with faceless methods		B228 B229 B230	
People you can trust, teachers	A87		
Select teachers			C244 C245 C246
Music, listening to lyrics	A88		
Diverting mind through hobbies	A89		
Friends		B225 B227 B228 B234	C249
Not family			C250 C251 C252
Family		B227 B228 B243	
Yourself		B232	C243 C249
Barriers to talking to teachers		B235 B236 B238 B239 B240 B241 B242	C241 C242 C247
Someone who knows you		B245 B247 B239	