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Sport, social bonding and violence

Bullying in physical education: a figural perspective

In England, education policies such as the White Report on Education (2010) explicitly denounce bullying. Yet, despite intolerant attitudes, bullying still exists in schools. Whilst definitions of bullying vary, they mostly refer to imbalances of power within peer-relationships. Psychologists have dominated research on bullying in schools. Research of which tends to personalise, pathologise or infantilise bullying. Alternatively, educational sociologists identify schools as social institutions complicit in the production of bullying. The nature of group processes in bullying requires further exploration (Salmivalli, 2009), whilst Bansen et al., (2009) note that it is time to revisit bullying in schools from a sociological perspective. Rivers (2012) calls for research to consider how bullying exists in different educational contexts within schools. My research focuses on bullying in physical education. Informed by the works of Eric Dunning and Ken Green in particular, I argue that through an examination of figurations, interdependencies and power relations an original understanding of bullying in physical education is achieved.