PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities
UK

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Executive summary:

This report presents the key findings of *'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities,* one of two UK-based case studies conducted for PROMISE. It focuses on a marginalised subset of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth' and seen to be 'at risk' of offending. Their 'risky' label has, disproportionately, made them the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various forms of resistance.

This case study addresses young people's experiences of stigma and conflict, recognising unintended as well as intended consequences of control measures, and explores young people's varied, and sometimes unexpected, responses to their treatment and their perceived label (including withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance). We analyse young people's structural and individual responses to the conflict they experience and, in so doing, highlight instances that inhibit or enable young people's agency and transformational capacity. We conclude by considering how relationships with key authority actors may be 'recast' to support young people through turning points, moments and processes of change and provide an opportunity for them to seize opportunities and realise potential.

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1. Introduction

This report presents the key findings of *'Risky Youth' and Criminalised Identities,* one of two UK-based case studies conducted for PROMISE. It focuses on a marginalised subset of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth', and are seen to be 'at risk' of offending[1]. Their 'risky' label has, disproportionately, made them the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various forms of resistance.

Drawing on literature from critical penology, social and psycho-social theory, and youth sub-cultural studies, this case study addresses young people's experiences of stigma and conflict, recognising unintended as well as intended consequences of control measures, and explores young people's varied, and sometimes unexpected, responses to their treatment and their perceived label (including withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance). We analyse young people's structural and individual responses to the conflict they experience and, in so doing, highlight instances that inhibit or enable young people's agency and transformational capacity. We conclude by considering how relationships with key authority actors may be 'recast' to support young people through turning points, moments and processes of change and provide an opportunity for them to seize opportunities and realise potential.

1.1 The construction of youth as 'problematic'

Over the last few decades, young people in the UK have increasingly found themselves constructed as a 'risky population' (Goldson and Muncie, 2015; Goldson, 2005), with many presented as troubled or troublesome (Ralphs et al, 2001; McAra and McVie, 2005) and seen, by authorities, to be teetering on the edges of criminality (see for example the portrayal of young people in *'Troubled Families Programme'*, HM Government, 2017). In particular, certain groups of young people are constructed as problematic and labelled (by authorities) as offenders, ex-offenders or 'at risk' of offending due to socio-economic factors, typically deprivation. This construction is driven by frequent reporting in the populist press about "out-of-control" or "antisocial" young people (Goldson and Muncie, 2015) and is often tied to concerns about a small hard-core of 'chaotic', 'dysfunctional' or 'problem' families ' (Crossley, 2015) and 'blaming' discourses of disengagement (Fergusson, 2016). After the English riots of 2011, Ken Clarke, the then Justice secretary wrote in The Guardian about a 'feral underclass' of youth calling for greater punishment and controls on the 'criminal classes' (Ken Clarke, 2011). These ideas were fed into policy responses (for instance the 'Troubled Families programme, 2011) focussed on the idea that there exists a group of families whose anti-social behaviour can be ascribed to 'a culture or genetics of poverty' and whose children will necessarily fail (Gordon cited in Crossley, 2015: 2). This ignores structural factors, such as poverty, racial inequality, and injustice in favour of assuming a twisted moral code or some form of pure criminality. There is no evidence to support this underclass claim, which continues to resurface from time to time (Welshman, 2013). However, this ideology frames the current approach to the management and control of young people in the UK.

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[1] The labels of 'disadvantaged', 'troubled' and 'at risk' can be found in media discourses, policy documents and the theoretical background to practice-based initiatives. The current Conservative-led *'Troubled Families Programme'*, launched in 2012 uses these terms.

The 'authority' response to the 'problem of troubled youth' from statutory agencies (including youth justice, welfare and education agencies) is to increase controls through informal, formal and legal structures (Fionda, 2005). Youth justice policy, swinging between the 'caring ethos of social services and the neo-liberalistic ethos of responsibility and punishment' (Muncie and Hughes 2002: 1), has taken a punitive turn, as young people have become subjected to evermore restrictions as part of preventative or controlling interventions. Interventions can take the form of "zero-tolerance" punishments in schools, harsher treatment within the justice system or increased levels of surveillance of young people on the streets. In many respects, youth justice practice appears wedded to the idea of the 'quick fix solution' largely shaped by the political rhetoric of punitiveness (Downes and Morgan, 2012) and grounded in neo-liberal correctionalism and responsibilisation (Case et al, 2015). The increasing and varied interventions young people are subjected to result in a climate of regulation, criminalisation, stigma and reduced life chances.

As negative labels become embedded and punitive interventions are enacted, it becomes harder for young people to engage positively in society and they are more likely to feel marginalised, to withdraw from mainstream society, or to exhibit anti-social or criminal behaviour (Deakin, 2018). It's well established that young people from deprived communities are treated more harshly by the criminal justice system for relatively minor offences (Bateman, 2012, McAra and McVie 2010), demonstrating how labelling and criminalising groups of young people can result in criminal convictions and ultimately lead to a cycle of criminal behaviour and a poverty of opportunity for young people. A report by Unlock finds that 'a criminal record represents a significant barrier to the ability to move on and can drag people down, even decades later.' (Stacey, 2018). With the lowest age of criminal responsibility in Europe (age 10 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and age 8 in Scotland with prosecutions from the age of 12) this is a case of storing up problems for young people's futures.

At the same time, young people from marginalised sections of society have seen their own experiences of victimisation and marginalisation by authorities or by individuals, dismissed or underplayed. As Brown (1998: 116) points out 'the pre-dominant categorizations of youth do not sit easily within a 'victim' discourse […] in popular and policy discourse such issues are often treated with cynicism, disdain or vehement denial' (see also Francis, 2008; Morris, 1987). Indeed, in recent years increasingly younger people have been deemed to be a risk **to** society (Case, 2006) rather than at risk **from** society. Voices from the academic community have called for a children first, positive approach to youth justice (Case and Haines, 2015) or a child-centred, human rights approach to young people's problems (Goldson and Muncie, 2006)

1.2 Stigma and stigmatisation

Goffman defines stigma as 'the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance' (1990: 9). A vast interdisciplinary literature has built on Goffman's (1963) influential analysis as a starting point from which to understand contemporary constructions of inequality as inevitably tied to power: social, political and economic (Link and Phelan, 2001). Waquant (2010; 2009; 2008) addresses stigma in contemporary neoliberal societies as a feature of daily experience in areas of high unemployment and poor housing. His analysis of stigmatisation, as embedded in public and media discourse provides a counter narrative to the 'criminal classes' approach of recent policy initiatives (Cummins, 2016) and speaks to the key placement of experiences of stigma in the lives of people in 21st Century Britain.

The importance of addressing the stigmatisation of young people is captured in Tyler's assertion that 'stigma is widely accepted to be a main factor in determining life chances' (Tyler, 2013).

Tyler's analysis of *social abjection* as a discourse that is used to justify punishing the poor through neoliberal mechanisms such as the dissolution of welfare structures, is of particular relevance to young people. As described above, services for young people are being replaced by control measures, and this replacement is explained through government and public discourses of young people that set them up as the abject: out of control young people from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds who require punishment and control. Further examples of social abjection can be seen in the demonization of specific groups of young people, for example the teenage mother (Kidger, 2005) or the young person in care (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). The Coalition Government, and now the Conservative Government, have overseen the deepest and most swingeing cuts to social provision since the development of the welfare state, and these cuts are 'fuelled by the crafting of stigma, violence and hatred from above' (Tyler, 2017).

Aligning closely with PROMISE themes, this case study focuses on the experiences, actions and responses of a stigmatised group of young people (aged 13-30) who are (or have been) perceived, and treated, as 'risky' (Becker, 1963). They experience conflict with authority (for example the police, social services, teachers) and with older generations due to perceptions that they are engaging in criminal, anti-social or transgressive behaviour. The sites of conflict and stigmatisation are often public spaces due to the highly visible presence of young people 'hanging out' on the streets and in parks. However, sites of stigma may also be 'virtual' through media representation, social media and other information–sharing processes.

Within these sites, the main agents of conflict and stigmatisation are institutions, such as the agencies and individuals of the youth and criminal justice systems (especially police, PCSO's and youth justice workers), but also include social services, teachers, older generations and the media depicting negative images of troubled youth. We attempt to unpack the complex relationships between young people and authority that include supportive and enabling elements as well as oppressive, stigmatising and harmful elements. In discussing the stigma faced by young people we build on Goffman's (1963) analysis of stigma drawing on Tyler's (2013) theoretical construction of social abjection.

We also include reference to the psycho-social literature on narrative scripts and hooks for change. Drawing on key sections of the desistance literature, (McAdams, 1994; Maruna, 1999; Giordano et al, 2002; and Rumgay, 2004) we reference the role of identity 'scripts' (Rumgay, 2004) within the formation of a young person's identity and as part of the process of change. While the desistance literature refers to the process of personal adaptation to a non-criminal lifestyle after a period of offending, some key messages about identity, representation and change are transferable to an understanding of the stigmatised identities of young people of this case study. We apply the theoretical underpinnings of elements of the desistance literature to consider the stigmatised identities of criminalised young people and position traumatic events in a young person's life within the framework of a disruption to the young person's narrative script. This has a particular relevance, here, in relation to the stigmatised identities of young people experiencing deprivation and inequality or facing traumatic events in their lives. It speaks both to the stigma they experience, and to their responses to stigma as part of their mechanisms to manage conflict and create a brighter future.

1.3 Responses to stigma: resistance, refusal and apathy

Our final results section considers young people's responses to the stigma and conflict they experience in relation to their involvement in society. We draw on Lister's definition of agency as encompassing the legal, socio-political elements of action, participatory practice and rights as "the object of struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695), whilst recognising that young people's actions may sometimes be overlooked or constrained (Marsh et al, 2007). Lister's notion of "struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695), has a particular relevance in relation to stigmatised young people.

We employ the PROMISE definition of 'innovative potential'[2] in our analysis of the sites and forms of social innovation, social involvement and wider forms of engagement. However, we develop this definition to include activities and ideas that may not be viewed, by authorities and in public discourse, as positive or pro-social but that demonstrate alternative forms of agency. Our analysis picks out notions of power and independence within an understanding of young people's agency and agentic potential.

Part of our analysis centres on young people's non-participation, refusal and apathy. Our conceptualisation of agency (and innovative potential within the PROMISE project) actively includes these less pro-social responses (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Amnå and Ekman, 2015). These responses reflect young people's voices and are, in themselves, expressions of the wider dynamics of agency. In circumstances dominated by conflict or trauma in young people's lives these expressions have a particular relevance (Munford and Sanders, 2015). For young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, explanations of non-participation have centred around three dominant discourses: transition, social exclusion and disengagement (Fergusson, 2016). These discourses, reproduced in the media and public discussions, steer the policy response and inform practice, as discussed above. Moving beyond these discourses we explore the forms that non-participation can take to encapsulate both 'positive' and 'negative' forms of social engagement and involvement (Amnå and Ekman, 2015).

A thread running through the findings is the role of relationships in young people's lives, in particular, the ways positive relationships can enable social involvement and engagement. Here, again, we draw on the desistance literature in relation to 'hooks for change' (Giordano et al, 2002). In the final section we consider the 'recasting' of authority: from restriction to reassurance; from barrier to opportunity; and from preventing to enabling. In order to enact agency, and harness opportunities towards a positive future, young people need the assistance of significant others as well as facilitative policies and practices (Munford and Sanders, 2015). This ideal of the pro-social enabling relationship stands in contrast to the relationships described in the 'Stigma and Conflict' section of this report which raise questions about the deeply compromised relationships between young people and some of those responsible for their care and protection.

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[2] Innovative potential is considered, here, to be any activity or idea that could lead towards individual or social change (e.g., desistance from crime; positive engagement with society e.g. through employment, education, training; development of social and cultural capital e.g. through non-formal learning, creativity, knowledge acquisition, social responsibility, entrepreneurship, active citizenship, physical, emotional and mental health).

1.4 Research questions

This case study explores the following questions:

1. How do young people view themselves and how do they describe others' perceptions of them? In particular how do they understand their image through the lens of older people and authority figures? And what is their understanding of how that image is formed?

2. How do young people experience conflict in their lives? What do they identify as the modes, sites and agents of stigma and conflict? What do they identify to be the impact of this stigmatisation and conflict?

3. What are young people's responses to the conflict they experience? What meaning do they attach to their responses? How do their experiences, and responses, inhibit or enable social involvement? Is there something innovative about these responses? How and in what ways are they transferred or shared?

2. Methods

The data was collected for this case study using a two-stage process drawing on elements of the ethnographic method combined with Arts-Based Research methods (ABR) (Barone and Eisner, 2011). The first stage involved accessing, and spending time in, the space occupied by young people attending youth clubs and courses (this was limited to 'organised' clubs, services and events), and participating in activities in order to begin to understand their interests, behaviour and motivations for attending. Whilst this could not be considered 'immersive' ethnographic research it allowed is to capture the context of young people's experience and begin to become familiar to some of the young people who were later to become interview respondents. The second stage, overlapping with the first, involved semi-structured and unstructured interviews, creative activities such as art and multi-media projects, and photo-elicitation. Fieldwork was conducted between December 2016 and April 2018, and included participant observation at youth clubs and courses for young people, participation in creative workshops, one-to-one interviews, conversations with youth organisation leaders and other young people, group photo-elicitation sessions and youth-led exhibitions.

Between April 2017 and April 2018 a total of 21 semi-structured biographical interviews were conducted and recorded with young people aged 13-30. Contact with the young respondents was made primarily through links with 4 youth clubs and support groups run by third sector organisations already known to the researchers. An additional group, run by a third sector organisation providing creative activities as part of the statutory youth justice provision was also accessed. The combination of voluntary and mandatory settings, offering creative, supportive and developmental outlets for young people, provided access to young people of different ages with a range of life situations and aspirations, all with a shared experience of stigma. A brief description of the research sites is provided below:

1. **Youth club 1:** is a voluntary sector youth club for young women, organised by a local voluntary youth organisation and running one evening per week. It is held in a large community-led space with break-out rooms and a dance studio. Between 5 and 10 young women attend. Activities range from art, multi-media and physical activities to talks about personal, financial social and health matters. Music and dance are particularly popular activities.

2. **Youth club 2:** is run by the same voluntary organisation that runs Organisation 1 and provides a similar service for boys and young men in the same area for one evening per week. It is held in a large community-led space with a separate basketball court. Between

10 and 20 boys and young men attend. The main activities are basketball and computer games.

3. **Youth club 3:** is a partner organisation to youth club 1 and 2 providing a service for young men and young women in a different area one evening per week. It is attended by 5 to 15 young people. The club is held in a very small room that limits the types of activities it can support. There are no organised activities (other than using the art materials provided). The young people talk and play on their phones.

Nine young people interviewed for this case study were engaging with youth club activities and accessed through youth clubs 1, 2 and 3. Young people interviewed at youth clubs are identified in the findings section as YOrg.

4. **Support group:** is a voluntary sector support group set up for young people, aged 16 and over, who have left the statutory care system for 'looked-after children'. This group runs one evening per week and is attended by between 15 and 20 young people. Activities range from talks about personal, financial social and health matters to art projects and physical activities. The young people are provided with a meal cooked on site by the voluntary sector staff.

Six of the young people interviewed were accessing this support programme for young care leavers and interviewed on the premises. These young people are identified in the findings as YCL.

5. **Mandatory art course:** was commissioned by the statutory Youth Justice agency (YOT) and provided by a local art-based outreach group with experience in delivering creative courses to the penal sector. The course ran every day for 3 weeks over the summer of 2017 and the young people were mandated to attend all sessions as part of their court order. Activities involved drama, drawing, multi-media, photography and music workshops delivered by a team of 5 arts-based practitioners.

Six interview respondents were taking part in this mandatory course for young people serving community orders supervised by the Youth justice agency. They are identified in the findings as YOT.

There was significant cross-over between the features of these groups, for example: 5 of the 6 care leavers had served community-based orders; 3 of the 6 young people attending the YOT were looked-after children (in care); a minority of the young people attending youth clubs had been subjected to criminal justice proceedings. However, the things linking all participants in the research were their experiences of conflict with the police, being labelled as 'risky' youth and experiences of being targeted to receive punitive sanctions and criminal justice interventions.

2.1 Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted at 34 events between December 2016 and January 2018. This involved taking part in activities, attending drop-in sessions and speaking informally to young people and staff at events organised by the third sector organisations running the 5 groups detailed above. The research team were invited to attended events led by youth organisations, community groups and the police including: 3 exhibitions/productions of film, art and drama created by young people; 4 workshops focussing on key issues including social media, sexual harassment, sexual health and addictions; 3 police/community-led advice sessions on knife crime and criminal exploitation; 15 drop-in youth club sessions; 5 meetings with youth workers; and 3 days of arts-based workshops for young people serving community sentences involving varied topic-based discussion sessions, a photo workshop and creating two videos about identity. The

observation's that took place in the months prior to the interviews enabled the research team to identify potential research participants, identify the range and modes of stigma, conflict and innovation to inform the development of interview questions, identify a 'subject' for the photo elicitation task, and begin to gain trust from the participating youth groups. One of the early participatory sessions (prior to the photo-elicitation task) encouraged young people to think about what makes them happy. They were asked to write the first things that came into their head on post-it notes which they attached to a large sheet providing a talking point with the researchers.

Plate 1: 'What makes you happy?' Post-it notes from a preliminary session of the photo elicitation method
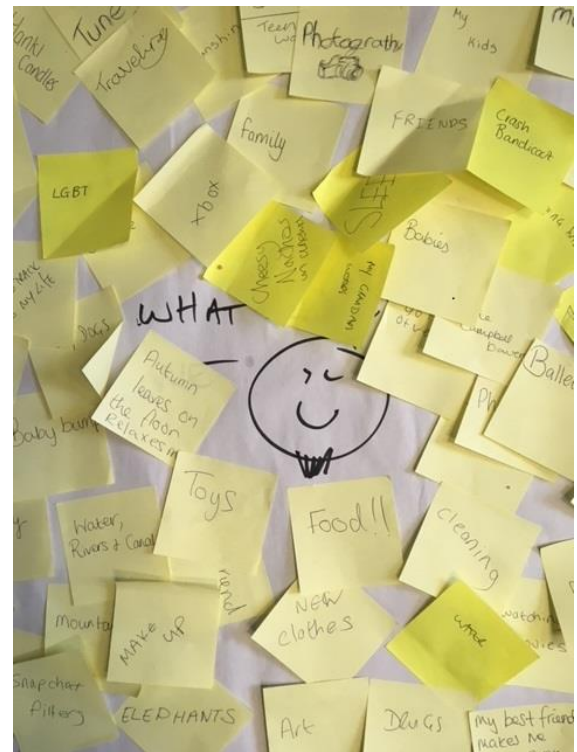
At the YOT arts college, the young people took photos and discussed their choices, in a photo-elicitation session. In addition they produced artwork, including drawings and 2 videos, in several workshops. The care-leavers support group also took part in 2 photo-elicitation workshops and produced photos that they discussed in group sessions. The photo workshops were designed to allow the young people to explore their own sense of identity within their surroundings as well as outside the group, and to explore ideas of resilience and pride as well as challenges and controls. Participants have agreed to share these photos. Any that could reveal the identity of our respondents have been anonymised.

A documentary artist captured several creative-art sessions held as part of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) statutory course attended by young people sentenced to a community sanction (see Plate 2).

Plate 2: Documentary artist sketch depicting an
art-session at YOT summer arts course

2.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 21 young people and focus groups were held with three groups of 6-8 young people. The interview schedule was based on the 'skeleton interview scenario' developed for PROMISE and used by all partners and was adapted for each of the three types of site (youth club, support group, mandatory course). Recordings were made of all interviews and of two small focus group photo-discussions. Recordings varied in length from one that was over 2 hours to two that were just under half an hour. The total length of interview recordings was approximately 26 hours with an average (mean and mode) interview lasting 42 minutes. The majority of interviews were conducted with young people who were keen to talk and share their experiences but 2 interviews, both conducted with young men in the YOT arts college, were notably short and the young men were not forthcoming with their thoughts or experiences. Both of these respondents were dismissive of activities on the arts course, resisted engaging in discussion or tasks and sat separately from the group as much as possible. Their lack of engagement, which in itself presents an interesting response, is discussed in the 'Key Findings' in relation to apathy, lack of engagement, response to authority, and resistance to accepted social norms. Additionally, one respondent taking part in the YOT arts college refused to take part in the interview saying it would be 'boring'. The drawing in Plate 3 depicts elements of refusal, boredom and apathy captured by the documentary artist.

Plate 3: Young people at YOT: refusal, boredom and apathy 'He's not drawing me… I mean it!'

2.3 Ethics

The research team followed PROMISE ethical guidelines, as set out in the *Data Collection, Storage and Analysis Handbook*, in all aspects of the fieldwork including accessing respondents, informed consent, conduct of interviews, recording of interviews, and anonymisation, storage and use of data. In general (with the exception of the two young men attending the YOT course mentioned above) the young people said they enjoyed the interview discussions. On several occasions the young people said they wanted to remain in contact with researchers. Two young women from the care-leavers group arranged to visit one of the researchers in the University for a tour of the campus, and many of the young people from youth clubs 1 and 2 are still in contact with one of the researchers via youth club events and local policing strategy initiatives. Plans to engage the young people in dissemination activities are on-going.

An important observation related to the engagement of young people in the research is the role of us, as researchers, in the field and the challenges and opportunities this presented and continues to present. Issues of positionality were pertinent throughout the research process from access to dissemination. Access was negotiated through authority figures (youth workers running youth clubs, support groups and creative sessions), and we were often introduced to the young people by the youth workers leading the group. From the outset, therefore, researchers were viewed as semi-authority figures alongside youth workers (less formal and authoritarian than teachers and social workers, but retaining the mentoring, supportive role of an older person). In general, the relationships between the young people and the youth workers were extremely positive, so, despite our connections with 'authority' we were, typically, viewed without suspicion. The research team attended events with the young respondents and participated in activities but remained in the 'caring adult role'.

2.4 Analysis

All the data was imported into NVivo 11 for coding, data analysis and concept building, and analysis was conducted thematically. The data imported was extensive and varied, and included: textual, visual and audio-visual material. Textual material was comprised of transcripts of individual recorded interviews and group workshops, field diaries of notes from the participant observation, notes of informal discussions and respondent memos. The non-textual material included all the creative work and audio-visual material produced by the young people during creative sessions and photo elicitation sessions, and the documentary artist drawings of sessions.

Our inductive, thematic coding linked the various forms of data (e.g. interview data with field-diary notes and respondent memos) to allow for observational and interpretative material to be included alongside the voices of respondents. Dominant themes centre on experiences of trauma and stigma as key factors in the construction and reconstruction of identity, and the varied responses of young people to their experiences, to stigma and to the barriers and opportunities to social engagement they are presented with. In line with a 'multi-grounded theory' approach (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010) the theoretical literature provided the framework for our interpretation of the data. After coding, we interpreted the data against existing theoretical frameworks.

3. Key Findings

The following section presents the key findings of this study. Divided into 3 thematic subsections, it maps onto the key themes of PROMISE exploring questions of youth identity/representation, experiences of stigma and conflict, and young people's varied and sometimes unexpected responses to their perceived label. The many conflicts experienced by young people, and their responses to these conflicts are closely linked to young people's position as 'risky youth'

3.1. Identity and Identification

The young people taking part in this study discussed their identities during the interviews and as part of the photo elicitation sessions, and were keen to demonstrate who they are through their past experiences, their opinions and the various activities they engage in. These include individual and group identities and are deeply rooted in their biographical narrative. For some this is specifically linked to traumatic life experiences, while for others their identities are tied up with positive messages from their family and others who are close. For all of the young people their sense of self is strongly influenced by how they are perceived, and, importantly, how they think they are perceived, by those around them. Significantly, they all showed an awareness of some form of 'deviant identity' or label of troublemaker that had been constructed for them (Becker, 1963) based on various socio-demographic characteristics.

An overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents can be found in appendix 1. This section fleshes out some of those characteristics that stood out, from the discussions, as identity-shaping, and draws on the experiences that young people see to be fundamental to who they are. These characteristics and experiences provide young people with a set of expectations and a blueprint for their feelings, actions and behaviours – a 'script for survival' (Rumgay, 2004), for example, being a young black male, a mother, or a gay black woman. They also form the intersection of multiple and complex inequalities.

3.1.1 Intersectional identity

Our burgeoning understanding of gender and intersectionality has 'much broader applications for wider social theory' (Walby et al, 2012: 224) and is helpful in considering the intersectional identities of the young people taking part in this study. Intersectional identity has a deep relevance for young people experiencing multiple inequalities in the ways they understand and portray themselves, the ways they understand their portrayal by others and the ways they respond to society. Of the 21 young people interviewed, 8 are black or shared heritage. Discussions around racial identity were linked closely with experiences as a 'young black man', a 'young, black woman' or intersecting with sexuality and family expectations. Most of the young people interviewed are growing up in an area where people sharing their ethnic origin are in the majority. They felt proud of their ethnicity but were aware of the inequality it brought, particularly in relation to targeting by the police. Experiences of perceived racist treatment by the police are discussed in the section entitled 'Stigma and conflict'.

There were a number of discussions about what it means to be growing up as a young black male, and the specific criminal identity that as attached to these characteristics. Brian discussed the difficulties he faced on the streets of his home town: on the one hand he wanted to cultivate a reputation as a man to be respected which would ensure he was not pressured by those around him. A reputation as a respected man of the street would protect him from others attempting to draw him into criminal or gang activity. On the other hand he felt that respect could only be earned through engagement with criminal activity which he argued was the best way of proving he was not to be messed with. This is a problem he felt is experienced by young, black males more than any other group.

Gaining respect was a key feature of the 'young male' experience(for black, shared heritage and white respondents) and became the subject of the rap song and video made at the YOT arts course. For most of the young people interviewed as part of the YOT course, respect was equated with being seen to be tough, engaging in criminal activity and being a member of a gang (Deakin et al, 2007). Being someone who could garner the respect of others (by being sufficiently tough) could be demonstrated through verbal and visible cues: speaking the right way (using particular words and phrases), wearing expensive clothes and trainers, and bragging about engaging in criminal activity. The video made by the young people (8 males, 1 female), using cut-outs, still and moving images and rap lyrics set to music, depicts tough images of young men in an urban environment, gang symbols and implied violence. The title of the video '8 caps, one barrel' refers to a gun and bullets, and the words '*I want respect, give me respect*' are repeated as a chorus throughout the song. These images of tough, street-based gang culture (with its associated wealth and glamour) may be far removed from the experiences of the young people we spoke to, but they represent an illicit aspiration that some of the young men in the group were impressed by and wanted to emulate (Deakin et al, 2007), and reflected a stigmatising image common in public discourse. The images, signs and representation of gang culture presented in the video, and the discussions of being tough and gaining respect on the streets were almost exclusively the preserve of the young men (of all ethnicities). With the exception of a brief reference made by one interviewee, the young women we spoke to did not express any interest in gang culture, street-based violence or gaining respect in this way.

Plate 4: Title screen of the video produced by young people at the YOT arts course

https://youtu.be/CY1BvwmQo04

Both male and female respondents projected a strong embodiment of their gender within their experiences. A number of observations about gender and sexual identity were picked up from the interviews and field note observations. These included gendered identity (as a strong, respected male or feminist female), sexuality and sexual identity, gendered roles (as a mother or partner) and gendered abuse. As discussed above, gender was not raised as a discrete factor in their identity, but rather viewed with an intersectional lens (Walby et al, 2012), as one of a number of important socio-demographic factors eg age, ethnicity or sexuality; and amidst a range of significant contextual factors eg living in care, poverty and disrupted schooling. Becki demonstrates a conflict around intersectional identity that arose for her from a 'clash of cultures':

> I am gay, but coming out was a big thing. Both my parents are from Jamaica; homosexuality is just not allowed in that country. Luckily enough, my mum has adapted and got used to like the more modern times. Whereas my dad's still in this cultural wave. (Becki, YOrg)

Two other female respondents, identifying as lesbian, discussed their pride in their sexuality and wanted to share their experiences of coming out, relationships with previous partners, and the importance of their sexuality to their identity. Jaq chose Miley Cyrus (an openly pansexual woman who is comfortable with publicly exploring her sexuality) as the subject for her first art task: 'drawing an artist you identify with and admire'.

For some of the young women, becoming a mother, and experiences of motherhood, were the key factors that they felt shaped their current identity. All of those who were mothers returned to discussions about their children and parenting experiences time and again throughout the interviews, and the role of mother provided a narrative script (Rumgay, 2004). The circumstances of becoming young mothers (all of whom had been in care) was, of course, different for each individual, however many respondents (in interviews and in the group photo sessions) discussed becoming a mother as one of the most significant aspects of their identity and their independence (overtaking any previous ambitions to attend college or get a job). When asked if she had an idea about training or employment she might want to pursue in the future, Sophie tentatively said, 'I

don't know, no. At the minute, I don't know like. It sounds dead bad but I'd like... I don't know, just I like it just being a mum, like. I feel like that's my life, do you know what I mean, like?' (Sophie, YCL)

The fulfilment of their responsibilities as mothers is felt to be a significant accomplishment for those who cared for their own children. As teenage mothers on benefits, they are positioned in a role that is socially frowned upon and, often, they are seen as problematic citizens (Kidger, 2005). Their success as mothers, seemingly against the odds, is a great source of pride that the young women in the YCL group talked frequently about. In the interviews and in the group session they discussed the struggle to stretch money throughout the week and their sense of achievement in the evening when their children are bathed and ready for bed.

However, motherhood did not always produce positive experiences or a narrative script. For those young women whose children had been placed in care (either shortly after birth or during infancy), experiences were traumatic and a cause of great shame and sadness (this is discussed below in the section on *Deprivation, trauma and the disrupted narrative*).

3.1.2 Deprivation, trauma and a disrupted narrative

Throughout the interviews young people discussed the various difficulties, deprivations and traumas they had experienced, and continue to face. Whilst not directly linked to PROMISE themes, these life situations and experiences are a critical part of these young people's lives: providing essential biographical and contextual information that directly links to their self-concept, personal identity and their ability to demonstrate agency and navigate barriers to social involvement. Trauma was discussed by almost all of the respondents, including: descriptions of traumatic experiences growing up in care, mentioned by most of those with a care background: the death of a parent, partner or close family member discussed by six of the young people; severe physical and sexual abuse or neglect mentioned by six respondents; and removal, by social services, of their own child, mentioned by four respondents. Many discussed how these traumas impact upon who they are, their choices, their life chances and their internal identity narrative. Many pinpointed the deep rooted influence of significant traumas in their lives and the long-lasting effects of trauma. For some, such as those who were taken into care, suffered abuse or experienced the death of a parent or partner, the trauma marks a biographical disruption, in other words, an interruption of the 'story of a life' (McIntyre, 1981), requiring a rethinking of identity via a new 'script for survival' (Rumgay, 2004)

Danielle, Samantha and Becki all left school or training because of a traumatic life experience such as personal ill-health or the death of a family member. They felt unable to manage school or college while coping with a range of significant and challenging life circumstance.

> I did half a year and then I just had to leave, it was just getting too much... 'Cause I found out my dad was dying and my sister was causing trouble for me. So I just couldn't, and there's no point in doing a course, what I couldn't just put my head down and do it. 'Cause I thought, I thought to myself, I would fail it anyway if I wasn't putting all my effort into it, so I thought there's no point in staying just to fail it. (Danielle, YCL)

> I left school 'cos .... my boyfriend got murdered, so I just, I just thought, 'Nah, I'm not gonna go back to school anymore.' So I just left. (Samantha, YCL)

Becki fell behind after suffering from a life-threatening illness. She was unable to attend school for some time and missed large amounts of teaching resulting in her falling behind and achieving poorly on tests. She responded to her poor grades by avoiding attending school as she felt unable to cope. This was compounded by a teacher telling her she would fail. These widespread experiences of expecting (and being expected) to fail are discussed further in the Structural Responses section below. In all of these cases, traumatic experiences disrupted the education and the life-path of these young people. These events disrupted the internalised narrative that they, and others around them, had constructed in order to make sense of, and integrate their past and their perceived future (McAdams, 1994; Maruna, 1999). However, these examples also convey some form of demonstration of agency in the young women's decisions to leave school or training (this is dicussed in detail, later, in the *Responses* section.

Of the 21 respondents, 9 had spent some time in care during their childhood and, at the time of interview, 3 respondents were living in care. Young people gave both positive and negative descriptions of these experiences of care, more commonly the latter however. Some found solace and support in the relationships formed with foster carers; others experiences conflict: this is addressed more fully in the section below. However, they all discussed some form of traumatic experience resulting from their time in care. Amelia's traumatic experiences in childhood (in care and prior to care) are mentioned in this respondent memo: 'She has been hugely affected by her childhood, most notably: abusive and neglectful parent; her self-referral into care; and experiences of rape whilst in care.' (Researcher notes: Amelia's Respondent memo, YCL).

An on-going feature of being in care, that was mentioned frequently as particularly traumatic, is the transitory nature of the care provided. Young people discussed moving between care homes, and moving between foster homes:

> I lived probably in about seven different foster homes, like being... 'Cause I lived with my sister at first and my brother, but then I got moved from there to live with my other sister and... Yeah, we all got split up. It's been quite sad, actually. It's quite a sad story. (Princess, YCL)

Sophie notes the effect that moving around so much in care had on her relationships with carers:

> Obviously like me growing up in care, I didn't really have... 'cause I was moved around and that, I didn't have like a set person that I could go to and know like trust in and stuff like, and listen to. (Sophie, YCL)

Sophie talked about the effect of two traumatic events: having her new-born baby taken into care the death of her boyfriend shortly afterwards. She described 'hitting rock bottom' and being knocked off track. These events presented a narrative disruption, in particular, disrupting the roles of mother and girlfriend and the script (for living) that these roles had provided for her (Rumgay, 2004): 'I think it was obviously when I lost my boyfriend and that, and everything happened like my baby got adopted and that. I think that was it like I literally just hit rock bottom.' (Sophie, YCL). She went on to describe a lengthy period of being 'a mess' and how meeting her current partner got her 'back on track' as she realised 'I need to sort myself out'. Meeting her new partner provided a hook for change (Giordano et al, 2002) and the circumstances for her to make decisions and move forward in her life.

For some young people, traumatic events could lead (eventually) to demonstrations of agency (as demonstrated earlier when Amelia self-referred into care after abuse at home). Danielle decided to cut ties with her mother after long periods of abuse and neglect.

> Social services took us into care … And then I went back home at the age of thirteen and they said, "It's not safe here." So I went back into care and I just thought, 'What's the point of running back 'cause she [mother] doesn't care, so I might as well just do whatever and keep away from her,' so that's what I did. (Danielle, YCL)

While typically traumatic events are associated with a disruption of agency, or some sort of block on agentic potential (Ataria, 2015), Danielle's story suggests that young people may not always experience the effects of trauma in this way. Her decision not to return to her mother represents a moment in Danielle's life that she presents as her 'own choice' based on an assessment of outcomes. She presents the situations as 'knifing off' (Maruna and Roy, 2007) a negative and traumatic part of her life (her relationship with her mother). Despite being in line with the wishes of the state via a court order, Danielle reframed her compliance as a decision-making moment.

3.2. Stigma and Conflict

Young people's own perceptions and understanding of their identity relate very closely to how they are perceived by others (as well as how they 'think' they are perceived by others), and the various conflicts that they experience. This section explores young people's *perceptions* of the way they are represented and misrepresented by authority figures and older people (including via the media), and the stigmatising nature of assumptions that are made, by exploring the forms, sites and agents of the conflict that young people face. It should be noted that some of these examples of conflict were experienced by the young respondents themselves while others reflect what they have heard from other young people or observed in public settings.

Experiences of stigma and conflict were frequent occurrences discussed widely by respondents. These took multiple forms and occurred at multiple sites (public spaces eg streets and parks, in school, in care homes, or in the family) and with multiple agents (police, social services, teachers, parents, other authority figures). All the young people described elements of negative relationships with people in authority. While these relationships are often complex, containing elements of support and care as well as conflict, this section focuses primarily on the conflictual elements (see the section on 'Young People's Responses' for a discussion of the complexity of relationships).

3.2.1 Older generations

The majority of young people felt they were labelled as troublemakers simply for being a young person in their local area, indicating the stigma and moral judgement that surrounds young people from impoverished neighbourhoods (Tyler, 2013). This stigma was generally felt to be instigated and perpetuated by older generations (including those from their own neighbourhoods), fuelled by the media, and centred on ideas that young people cause trouble, are disruptive or rude, and lack respect for others.

> Well, to be honest, there is a lot of negative stuff going around about young people nowadays, 'cause people say that it's all the young people causing all the trouble, but it's not always the young people. (Aiden, YOrg)

This stereotype of causing trouble or being up to no good extends to groups of girls as well as boys.

> If it's a gang of guys all stood outside, then somebody might instantly think, 'Oh, they're up to no good.' But even with a group of girls stood outside, it can be even like, 'They're up to no good.' Because it's in numbers I think. (Keira, YOrg)

Representations of 'young people as trouble makers' (Goldson and Muncie, 2015) was a particularly interesting area of discussion in many of the interviews. A few of the young people reflected on the fact that typical teenage behaviour could be seen as 'causing trouble' by older people. However, most felt that adults were too quick to call-out anti-social behaviour and that this prevented younger people from being themselves and having fun. This concept was represented in a series of photos from the photo session that took place with the YOT group in which the young people were asked to take a self-portrait that represented something about their character. Some of these photos (shown below in Plate 5) depicted young people having 'fun' in an anti-authority way, eg riding in a discarded shopping trolley or standing on a desk, and were intended to demonstrate the nature of the young people taking part. All of this behaviour was harmless fun in the eyes of the young people but could easily tip into anti-social behaviour for a nearby adult.

Plate 5: 'Having fun or causing trouble?'

Young people tend to be the most visible groups in our communities (Goldson and Muncie, 2015). With the reduction in youth club opening hours (one of the organisations had been reduced from 5 to 2 days per week due to funding cuts), young people have little option than to get together in

public spaces: on the streets or in parks. They are more visible to older people, some of whom find a group of young people intimidating. Many of the young people we spoke to felt they were seen as suspicious, by older generations, for being part of a group of young people, for being in public places or for the clothes they wear 'they always assume that young people, they're gang bangers [members of a gang]….but some of them just dress like gang bangers (Jo, YOrg). The majority of respondents discussed this (mis)representation of young people and how this can lead to unfair stereotypes that are applied to all young people. Keira linked this directly to the media reporting of youth crime:

> if people listen to the media and like the television, then they get their information from that, then they assume that, because one person's done one bad thing and has got into media because of it, that everybody else is going to do that. 'Cause it's like that stigma again behind teenagers, and that one representative versus everybody else. (Keira, YOrg)

On many occasions in interviews and though their creative work (such as the video) young people expressed how incensed they were to be regarded in this way. The theme of respect was significant for many of the young people and the importance of reciprocal respect (between generations) was highlighted.

Another, related, criticism raised in the interviews was the perception that older generations don't think young people are worth listening to. Many felt that despite significant life journeys, including narratives of trauma and survival, their experiences and knowledge are not recognised by older generations.

> They just see young people and think, 'They know nothing,' or 'They're too young to know anything.' A lot of us know a lot more than most people. We've been, lived through a lot more than most people and I hate that we get judged because of our age range. (Becki, YOrg)

A further example of this was the perception that older generations are scathing of young mothers, deeming them untrustworthy and irresponsible parents, and creating the next generation of problems.

> Before the baby's born, they say, 'Well, how can you cope when, when they're born, when they're five?' They're not even born. They're not even four years old yet. "Oh they have tantrums and stuff." Like, give me a chance to be a mum. I'm not gonna do like my mum did. (Samantha, YCL)

### 3.2.2 The police and the justice system

Given the representation of young people as troublemakers it is unsurprising that conflict with the police and the Criminal/Youth Justice System is experienced frequently (Goldson and Muncie, 2015) (and mentioned in almost all of the interviews, the group discussions and much of the photography and creative work). Much of the conflict centred on interactions between the police and young people in public places.

Young people in groups on the street are visible to the police, as mentioned in relation to older generations above, and they are therefore more likely to be targeted by the police for just hanging

out (McAra and McVie, 2005). This sense of a policed, controlled or even constrained use of space was raised by young people, both male and female, throughout the interviews as a key concern.
Of particular significance (discussed by the majority of respondents and with frequent references in interviews and discussions) was being seen as 'criminal' (Ralphs at al, 2009). There is a clear sense from the interviews that the label of criminal was associated with past behaviours (but could just as easily be associated with being a young person out in a public space, day or night). They felt they had been firmly, and indefinitely, labelled as troublemakers in the eyes of the police in particular. This label related closely to age, as many felt that, as a young person with (or without) a criminal conviction, they were perceived as 'suspect', not listened to, and not believed by the police: they were prevented from explaining their actions and felt they were judged as 'guilty' before any facts had been heard. Young people expressed an overwhelming sense of injustice when discussing their interactions with the police (Smith, 2012).

There were many examples of situations in which young people had felt targeted by the police in a public space. These ranged from officers asking groups of young people what they were doing, and moving them on, to accusing them of things they had not done. The young people felt they could not argue back without causing further trouble. These concerns seem to be almost universally shared by male and female respondents and were expressed in one of the videos produced at the YOT arts course.

Plate 6: 'He's a male in a police station': Still image from video and lyrics written by young people at YOT,
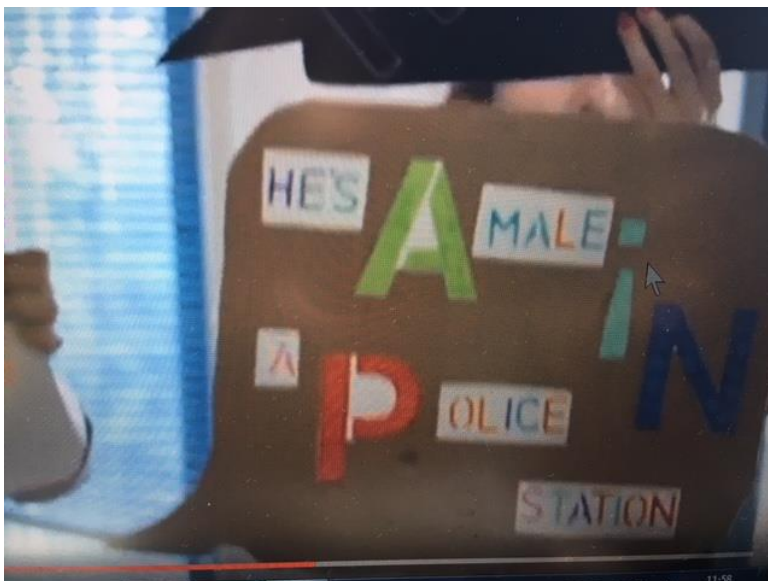
Verse 2
Person B
No name
He's a male in a police station
Locked up
By police
There was never any hesitation
Even though
Person B
Is in a tricky situation
He's stuck – in a rut
Just like the state of our nation

https://youtu.be/3mOUJmG9ClQ

Troy describes an experience of feeling targeted by the police as part of a group of young people out on the street which raises questions about young people's rights in relation to the ways that police officers engage with them.

> They [police officers] saw us on our bikes, yeah…. And they kept on like videoing us and that. And we were like, 'Why you videoing us? What we done wrong?' And they was like…. 'It don't matter what you done wrong. I can do whatever   I want.' One of my mates said, 'Would you like it if I videoed you?' And they …. drove off, saying, 'Watch it.' (Troy, YOrg)

Other examples of conflict extended to being wrongfully arrested, typically because of the young person's (or their family's) criminal past. Helen was known to the police as a 'troublemaker', frequently having to be returned to her care home after being caught causing criminal damage. Her previous run-ins with the police meant she was the prime suspect in any low-level criminal incident and her protestations of innocence were ignored:

> I'll never forget me and Catherine being done for a load of cars, smashing a load of cars that we didn't smash. We did not smash them cars. We was nowhere near the Estate when them cars got smashed. And we got nicked walking back to the Estate and got accused of smashing them cars, and we didn't even smash the cars. Which made us even more angry…. they don't believe you. Because with the record that we had, they just don't even bother even trying. (Helen, YCL)

There was an association made by several of the young people who had been in care between their status as care-leavers and police expectations that they will be 'troublemakers' who commit criminal behaviour. Young people felt the 'care-leaver' and the 'in-care' label was stigmatising, linking closely with the label of 'risky' or 'suspicious' (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Many of the care leavers, even those without a history of criminal behaviour, had experienced this stigma. Those that did have a criminal record explained that it was very difficult to move on from criminal behaviour when no-one believes you can. Further stigmatising experiences in relation to care are discussed in the section 'The care system' below.

Some young people described incidents in which the police had used excessive physical force.

> I think it was when we'd kicked… off in the children's home, and we'd caused damage to the children's home. And the police literally pinned us to the floor like we were full-grown adults. (Helen, YCL)

Recalling several incidents of conflict with the police, Jo, a young black woman living in a deprived area of the city where tensions between the police and young people are high, discussed various incidents of excessive force, a lack of respect and heightening tensions. 'The police, they make everything ten times worse than it is….' (Jo, YOrg). Her examples highlight the difficult relationship between police officers and young people.

> They can tell you to shut the F up, if they want to. Like with no cares in the world. But if you was to tell them to shut the F up, that's one charge on your name. Or I don't think they should manhandle you like they do as well, especially girls. Because I've seen a police officer manhandle... a girl, like push her down on the floor like a man. I'm like, 'That's gonna hurt her boobs. You've got to be careful.' Like he pushed her down on the floor and held her there. She wasn't even, she wasn't even struggling. He was just panicking. I think he was panicking. He didn't know what he was doing. (Jo, YOrg)

The conflict with the police described by young people has, largely, led to a mistrust of police motives and their ability to protect this group of young people. There were two positive mentions of the police as supporters and protectors of young people, 'They're okay. I like some of them… most of them are nice, if they help you out.' (Troy, YOrg). However, the vast majority of discussions referred to conflict with the police characterised by mistrust, and a stigmatising agenda:

The police, I could never... if I, say for example, if I was arguing with Scott [boyfriend] and there was a big domestic or whatever like, I would not ring the police, like no matter how frightened I was. Because I feel like they are definitely against me, definitely like. I've had bad like, things with the police, definitely, had bad times. (Amelia, YCL)

A lot of bad people like come onto our estate, with like axes and that and chase us. But we don't tell the police. We just go home and tell our mums. (Troy, YOrg)

3.2.3 The care and welfare systems

Young people's engagement with the care and welfare system ranges from none at all, to short-term intervention, to a consistent presence of social workers throughout their childhoods and indeed for some, a continuation of this now they are parents themselves. Predominantly, this consistent presence is experienced by young people who are in care or have left care. Care homes and foster care settings were described as a site of conflict by most of the young people who were or had been 'looked after'. Stigma was felt strongly by those young people who had been or are presently in care (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Some respondents discussed experiencing bullying at school on account of being in care, whilst others felt embarrassed for their previous or ongoing contact with social services, especially in the case of respondents having a child removed from their own care. Relationships with social workers were a major source of conflict for these young people. Most felt they were not listened to, judged hastily, or that social workers gave false promises. Care homes or foster care settings were presented as sites of conflict: care workers, foster carers and other young people were presented as the agents of conflict in these settings. Experiences in care included examples of conflict with care workers or foster carers as well as conflict with other children (in care homes, or in school, as in Samantha's case):

People were just taking the mick out of me, 'cause you don't have a mum, you don't have a dad who look after you. And so got really angry. And I will hit the teachers, and the police will come and talk to me and stuff…. 'Cause people just taking the mick out of me for being in care, so thought, 'Fuck it.' I just left" (Samantha, YCL)

Danielle, like many others, expressed feelings of not being wanted, of being in the way, or of being a nuisance, as well as highlighting other disruptive behaviours that she felt linked to living in care.

I didn't feel like no foster carer wanted me and I felt like they were just doing it for the money. So I was trying to prove a point of basically I'll kick off, I would go missing, and then one of my foster carers actually said, "Yeah, we have been doing it for the money." So I thought, 'Well, I'm not staying here.' (Danielle, YCL)

Social workers were another major source of conflict in the young people's lives, particularly affecting young people in care (or who had left care). There were many stories of conflict between social workers and young people whose families (parents and siblings, or children) had been split up by social work decision-making. Most young people felt that were not consulted in the decision that affected them, many of them hugely traumatic and life-changing such as being taken into care or having a child removed. They felt that social workers didn't listen, fobbed them off, didn't like them, or couldn't be bothered to help them. Many of the care leavers expressed significant concerns about the role of social workers in their lives, particularly in relation to judging their suitability as a mother. Having children taken into care was a source of great stigma and pain for many of the young women.

Feelings of being judged by social workers were common, with having a child removed set as the ultimate cost (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Sophie discussed her problematic relationships with social services and shared her own story of being pregnant and having to sleep on the floor because the social worker hadn't arranged for the flat to be furnished. The unfurnished flat was then used as evidence that Sophie was not a fit mother and given as the reason for taking her baby into care. The child was removed permanently, something that Sophie says continues to 'break my heart' and she clearly views as a source of stigma and embarrassment. She keeps the situation hidden from others as much as possible in an attempt to manage the shame of stigma through concealment (Goffman, 1963)

> I don't tell people that obviously I had a baby that's been adopted; if anyone asks I've got two kids. And it sounds dead bad, but as soon as I say that, they're gonna be like, 'Oh...' they turn their nose up, like, 'Oh god. Why?' Do you know what I mean? And like they automatically think things and put things in their own heads. (Sophie, YCL)

A few respondents talked extensively about the transient nature of the support they received from other adults whilst in care (Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006). The numbers of people mentioning this in the interview are low, but the discussions capture something important about the contexts within which conflict can arise in care homes, and raises issues for the provision of care (Winter, 2015). As mentioned earlier, a feature of care provision is the frequent movement of young people between care homes and foster care placements. Coupled with the high turnover of staff in some care homes it becomes very difficult for young people to form meaningful relationships with care staff. Amelia talked about the difficulties of forming 'emotional' relationships with care staff and the problems this caused for her as a teenager.

> But then you don't actually get like the emotional kind of, like... 'Cause obviously when you go in care homes, like it's different staff every day and like, yeah, you get attachments to them, like you bond, but it's not the same, you know it's not the same. Especially when you're getting older and you're a teenager and like you can't have a stable relationship with anyone. So it's just emotionally not good, but I suppose it is better than like, being abused at home. But I suppose you get abused in care as well. Like, when I was about, I think fourteen, and I was in a care home and obviously one of the staff like, you know, I've had sex with him and yeah, so it's really bad. So even in care like, you can get abused, but I suppose...(Amelia, YCL)

In our much lengthier discussion both on and off the tape Amelia recognised that the sexual relationship she had, at 14, with one of the care workers, which at the time she saw as consensual, was driven by her need to build an emotional connection, but instead led to further conflict. The adults around her had failed to provide her with the emotional support she required making her vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. After leaving the care home, Amelia had reported the abuse, and at the time of the interview the police were investigating the case. Amelia's story highlights the importance of positive, meaningful relationships with care staff to help young people manage the challenges of care (Winter, 2015). The importance of relationships in helping a young person build agency and transformational capacity is highlighted in our final section.

3.2.4 Schools

The majority of young people described common experiences around deprivation and a frustrating lack of opportunity in relation to education and what they thought constituted 'a good start in life'. A key feature of their conflict-laden experience was disrupted schooling and exclusion, or a history of disengagement with school, training or work.

School settings were described a site of conflict by many of these young people, with some having been excluded permanently, attending Pupil Referral Units or accessing a reduced timetable in mainstream schools. Conflict, labels and stigmatisation were discussed as a key part of young people's educational experiences, and impacted significantly on their achievements academically; the label of 'fail' was presented as a barrier for their experiences more widely. This stigmatisation is exacerbated by the labelling nature of results-driven school policies that seek to exclude those children who are achieving lower grades alongside records of poor attendance and 'problem' behaviour (Deakin and Kupchik, 2018).

Many of the young people had struggled, or, at the time of the interview, were struggling at school. Liam discussed being excluded from mainstream school after attendance issues, and the ongoing problems he faces attending the Pupil Referral Unit.

> I was like, "You know what, fuck you, I'm not coming into your school." ….So I stopped going in and then the next thing is like…. "Right, you're being moved." I was like, "Well, fuck it, it can't be worse." Gone to it, it was all right for the first couple of week. And I'm thinking, 'For fucks sake … and then half the time you just don't wanna go in because it's either the teachers just fucking waffle on shit or students just say, "Oh, yeah, I did this last night and it was sick and we robbed a car."(Liam, YOT)

Clashes with authorities in school, combined with the label of 'fail' made for turbulent educational experiences for many of the respondents and many felt this limited their life choices for the future.

3.2.5 Peer groups

The context in which conflict arises with peers was discussed by half of the young people. This included discussions of who they are in conflict with, how the conflict arises and how it manifests. Chris talked about having difficulty controlling his anger amongst friends, particularly if a joke is pushed too far, or someone makes fun of him: 'I don't want to get in trouble, it… just happens sometimes. It's like someone will say summat and that. I'll just snap straight away and then just go from there. (Chris, YOT)

In many cases, peer pressure can contribute to conflict with authority. A common story was the negative influence of other young people from the peer group who encouraged anti-social or criminal behaviour, sometimes in exchange for approval or acceptance within the group. Jaq and Chris, for example, both talk about 'hanging round with the wrong crowd' and how this led to them being associated with criminal and anti-social behaviour.

> Because I was hanging around with the wrong people at the wrong time. I had the wrong mates, but learned from that….I had like, yeah. I had deffo the wrong mates. I had like a mint, I won't say mint, wrong gang to hang around with. (Jaq, YOT)

I got a police warning for being around with the wrong crowd, that people were doing stuff that I was never involved in, but I was getting cautioned for being in association with them people. So every time they'd done something, they'd try and put the blame on me. (Chris, YOT)

Marcus and Helen described how they tried to impress their friends and others around them by cultivating a tough image ((Taylor and Fitzpatrick, 2006; Deakin et al, 2007). Helen, in particular, describes this as a tactic to gain approval and get everyone to like her:

I'd just get into trouble really for... Basically, I think it was, I tried to stand out to other people, but I'd end up putting myself in trouble anyway. So I'd always get in trouble for it. I realised that you can't really do things to make other people happy. You just have to do what you want to do yourself, and then it'll build up that confidence more for you to join in with others and do similar things with them. (Marcus, YOrg)

When I was on my own, I was a lovely young person to be around, and I was very mature, and I was very capable; but when I was with influences, that all just went to the side and just a horrible [Helen (pseudonym)] came out….So it was literally, it was very peer, peer... I think I must, I must have just wanted to be liked by everyone (Helen, YCL)

Another example of conflict amongst peers was evident in one of the photo sessions (at YCL) as there appeared to be tensions between some of the young women in the group. This was one of a number of observations highlighting tensions within the peer groups. Charlotte had taken a photo of her mother's grave in response to the photography task 'what makes you happy?' The incident, described in the researcher's field entry below, demonstrates conflict and a lack of empathy from Charlotte's peers in what was supposed to be a supportive group.

Plate 7: Photo taken by Charlotte of her mother's grave: a place she feels happy

When it came to her photograph, she said, "I feel happy when I visit her. That's all I can say because I feel uncomfortable" and did not expand beyond this. I got the feeling that this discomfort stemmed not only from the intrinsically sensitive nature of the subject, but also from Charlotte's relationship with other members of the group. For example, when Mark (the photo-elicitation lead) said that it was Charlotte's turn to discuss the photograph of her mother's grave, two of the young people that I was sat with looked at one another, with one rolling her eyes and another saying, sarcastically, "Oh great". (Field diary observation, Photo session, 8th November, 2017)

3.2.6 Family

Family was the site of conflict for some young people. Some of those living with their family discussed long-term conflict arising from arguments with parents and siblings, but also accepted that this may be a normal part of family life. Jo spoke at length about conflict with her family over expected norms, in particular, her inability to 'fit in' (Jo, YOrg). She felt, as a proud gay woman with piercings and a shaved head, she was far from her (conservative, Jamaican) parents' and siblings' idea of the perfect daughter/sister. For Jo, the conflict that ensued had caused her to feel isolated from the family and to seek approval elsewhere (through dance and the youth organisation she attends).

Unsurprisingly, the majority of family-based conflict was experienced by the young people who were care-leavers, or currently in care: many mentioned an abusive family situation, often a past characterised by neglect and violence, involving a parent with addictions, before being taken (or sometimes, electing to go) into care.

> My mum used to drink and she smokes weed, and my dad drinks and, I dunno, I just, I think obviously they've not been, they've not been taught how to like love and like, you know, proper (Amelia, YCL)

> So my mum was an alcoholic, so she drank very heavily; and she was, dare I say, bat-shit crazy…. I was supposed to go back [home] to my mum; and she was supposed to pick me up from social services, and she didn't turn up (Helen, YCL)

From the perspectives of the researchers, these stories were deeply sad and frequently shocking to hear, but they were told to us in a 'matter-of-fact' way, displaying a normalisation of experiences by these young people, and perhaps also demonstrating a 'hidden resilience' (Munford and Sanders, 2015) to negotiate traumatic circumstances. Their experiences were almost always presented with a sense of moving forward, either as a learning experience that helped the young person be a better mother to her own children, or as a turning point, during which the young person learnt to rely on themselves. Making the most of a 'least bad option' (Aaltonen, 2013: 377) and how key moments of a young person's life can 'operate to expand or restrict life choices' (Munford and Sanders, 2015: 2) were key features of the interviews and are discussed in more detail, below, in relation to young people's responses.

3.3. Young People's Response

The experiences of stigma and conflict have prompted a variety of responses by the young people involved, from action and resistance, to apathy and withdrawal. These can be divided into those located within structural milieus and those playing out in personal contexts. Within both of these contexts there are responses that inhibit young people's social involvement and those that enable their social involvement. The majority of these instances (enabling or inhibiting) can be seen as a demonstration of young people's agency.

3.3.1 Agency in Young People's Lives

Agency is a key concept to unpack, in the case of young people's lives, as it is fundamental in understanding their broader social involvement and engagement. Further, it is an undercurrent to all of these young people's narratives. Socio-political debates on the constructions of human agency are complex and of course, cannot be tackled in the remit of this report, however Lister's

key tenets of citizenship and agency are particularly useful when considering the agency of children and young people. For Lister, agency encompasses the legal, socio-political elements of action, participatory practice and rights which critically "are the object of struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695)**.** This struggle for agency is an undercurrent of young people's narratives throughout the dataset, as young people's status as embodied agents is sometimes recognised and enacted, sometimes overlooked or constrained (Marsh et al, 2007). Understanding young people's agency is not straightforward, however key signposts of expressions of agency have emerged from their narratives within this case study. Broadly, agency is understood and presented by young people as power or independence, which thematically emerged in stories of respect for others, and being respected by others, peers and adults alike. Young people also expressed agency through attempting to take responsibility, for their own actions and futures, and for the welfare of others, such as friends and family. Moments of resistance, whilst also expressions of agency are, typically enacted, however, in less pro-social ways, through what would typically considered to be antisocial activities and behaviours. Responses of non-participation and apathy were also recorded and the conceptualisation of agency in this case study allows for the inclusion of these less pro-social responses (Ekman and Amnå, 2012; Amnå and Ekman, 2015). These (anti)responses are indicative of young people's voices and these expressions of agency are particularly important to record in circumstances dominated by conflict or trauma in young people's lives (Munford and Sanders, 2015). Again, Lister's notion of "struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695), is useful for encapsulating both 'positive' and 'negative' forms of social engagement and involvement (Amnå and Ekman, 2015) and is particularly relevant in relation to marginalised and criminalised young people. Young people's agency has been exhibited in both structural milieus and individual contexts in response to a range of experiences.

3.3.2 Structural Milieus

There are a range of structural milieus in which young people respond, in both 'positive' and 'negative' ways, to the various experiences of stigma and conflict discussed above. All responses can be seen as a form of resistance to the label and stigma they face: those we have termed 'positive' typically prompt mobilisation in young people, whereas 'negative' responses generate apathy and withdrawal. There emerges a parallel then, between these positive and negative responses, which present young people with barriers to, or opportunities for, social engagement and innovation within various spheres of their lives.

Barriers and Opportunities

Place and Space

Place and space emerged as a theme in young people's narratives in relation to where they live, spend time and how they, and others, perceive these places as well as young people's presence here. Understandings of young people's use of space are important in understanding their agency, as young people's "embeddedness in their local worlds" (Harris and Wyn, 2009: 327) offer key insights to their self-making, as well as opportunities for efficacy in everyday life (Harris and Wyn, 2009). As discussed above, experiences of conflict as well as misrepresentations and stigmatised identities are prevalent here and young people respond with a sense of frustration as well as resistance and resilience to these experiences. Responses to the place young people live in are mixed, with some feeling positive due to the sense of peace and quiet, whereas others report the negative impacts of anti-social behaviour and criminality in these areas. In relation to the latter however, some were resistant to misrepresentations of local areas, which they feel are perpetuated by the media in some cases.

'Cause like, obviously you get on the news it's like, "[local area 1] this, [local area 1] that" and then you've got a youth centre in the middle of [local area 1] where it's a load of kids that are probably outside smoking drugs and doing this, you know, fighting and, and then all you're thinking is, all that. Then it's just a centre of full of those kids, but that's not what this is. (Becki, YOrg)

Plate 8: I love Salford image

The resistance towards, and resilience despite, negative stereotypes associated with place are also present in some of the photographs produced during the photo-elicitation exercises. The images in Plate 8 and 9 represent young people's responses to some of the negative connotations they are confronted with and show that young people enjoy their localities, despite perceived or actual negative activities.

Plate 9: Litter vs flowers
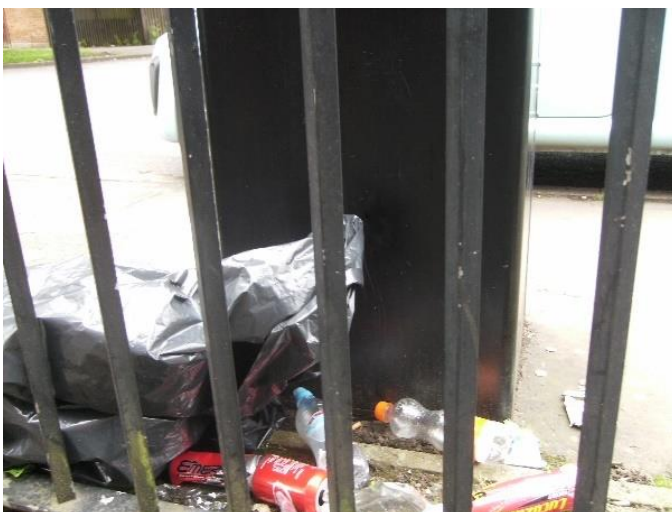
The class identity of the local areas in which these young people live are discussed in terms of poverty and lack of opportunities, particularly for children and young people. The responses to these experiences are ones of frustration, but also hope for a better future, as Brian explains: "the

kids out there, then it's either they could be in danger or they could end up doing that [getting a job], innit." Brian (18, YOT).

This sense of resisting, as far as possible, the negative impacts of crime in the area is mirrored in young people's resistance towards the constraints imposed on their use of space:

> So it's like, if you tell somebody that they can't go to a certain place, gonna make them want to go there more, rather than if they weren't told it as much, maybe they wouldn't do it as much. (Keira, YOrg)

Kiera discusses the overall sense that the more young people's use of space is policed or constrained, not necessarily directly by the police but authority in general, the more likely they are to respond with resistance or even in direct conflict. The formal or informal *policing* of young people's space is another key intersection with their opportunities for or constraints on their agency (Kennelly, 2011). Fundamentally, there is a sense of engaged frustration in response to young people's experience of space and place across the case study.

Knowledge and Learning

In this case study, young people's experiences of educational institutions and authorities has largely been negative, as discussed above. Understandings of education and learning experiences of young people are key again to their agency as typically, young people's identities are polarised as troublemakers or achievers (Narin et al, 2006). Young people's responses to their negative experiences (discussed earlier), however, offer a more nuanced sense of identity than the dominant perception of academic versus deviant concepts present.

Despite largely negative experiences in education, many young people respond in a reflective manner, attempting to carve out opportunities and compensate for low attainment by attending college, for example, or focusing their attention more closely on specific skills training such as mechanic courses.

> And then I done my college, my first year, which was my maths and English. And then I went, and my catering and I got a B Tech in my catering. And then I went on to my second year, doing my employability and everything. And obviously, I got the offer to do my mechanics on the side as well. So I did that and I've passed, I've passed it and I've passed my maths and English and everything. (Aiden, YOrg)

Aiden's response to a sometimes-difficult educational experience was to focus on aspects or specific subjects which corresponded to his key strengths, like many other young people did, such as photography and sports. For others, like Liam, the mobilising factor to achieve academically is evoking the pride of his parents, especially his Mum. This is particularly important when set against some of his less positive behaviours and actions (resulting in wearing a Home Detention Curfew tag):

> say if you got a good GCSE, you've shown the school, your mum, everyone, that you just achieved like, I don't know, a GCSE. So really, your parents are thinking, 'Well, going to school, you've paid off then. Not going to school, you've fucking come back doing nothing.' So it's what it is really. (Liam, YOT)

After moving schools, Jacob's positive response to education is prompted by the friendships and more supportive relationships with his teachers:

> It was brilliant, like it was all right, like. I got on with the teachers well. And I don't know like, I met new people. I just like, I don't know what I can say like. I just loved it. I loved my school (Jacob, YOrg)

This reflection is seen as a mobilising response and further, as a form of agency and resistance, in other words, attempts to prevent their negative past experiences adversely affecting their future. The friendships and supportive relationships with teachers provides the 'hooks for change' (Giordano et al, 2002) that Jacob required to move on from the problematic patterns of behaviour he had adopted in his previous school. In contrast however, others respond with a sense of inevitability or powerlessness; they feel resigned to the low educational attainment of their educational experiences. A strong sense of futility underpins Kade's response to his difficult educational experience: "I try my hardest and hardest but I don't know, I don't even know if I can do it" (Kade, YOT).

Further, in stark contrast to Jacob's positive response to his teachers, Becki resigns herself to the 'label of fail' which she feels has been imposed on her by her teacher, with little she can do to the contrary (Wood, 2016).

> … felt so degraded that I just felt useless and it was like, it's not even the way like, it was the way he was saying it as well, very direct like, "You're gonna fail," like. There wasn't like, "If you don't do this [Becki (pseudonym)], you're gonna fail." It was, "You're gonna fail," like and after that he didn't even seem like he cared. He was like, he made his judgement, "You're gonna fail," is there even a point in teaching her anymore? […]After that, my grades were a lot worse than they were before. I was skipping maths, wasn't coming in and I had to think to myself, 'Is it all because that teacher told me I was gonna fail?' I really thought I was gonna fail and really got my mind to the point where I was gonna fail. (Becki, YOrg).

Responses to educational experiences are mixed across the data. Positive responses, even when some of their experiences have been difficult, are typified by mobilisation to improve or please others. Less positive experiences have prompted a sense of powerlessness and a perception that young people are unable to make a difference to their own lives through education, a barrier they feel unable to navigate. In all responses, relationships are set out as a key enabling factor, as well as a key inhibiting factor, to young people perceiving and activating their agency.

Aspiration: Employment and Careers

Responses to discussions and experiences of employment are more often positive amongst the young people in this case study. Young people frame these experiences and respond to opportunities and experiences of working as chances to realise independence, 'normality' and see the economic benefits as offering them a choice, to an extent, as to how to spend their time and enjoy their lives (Bryant and Ellard, 2015).

> So definitely, I wanna get out there and meet new people, 'cause I'm just kind of isolated, stuck in all the time and it's boring and yeah. So I would love to have a job and earn money so then I can progress in life and, you know, get somewhere. (Amelia, YCL)

There is a clear sense from Amelia's discussion that employment is associated with independence and agency. Amelia is a young mother and she has ambitions to gain employment not only for the special benefits she anticipates, but for personal, professional and economic progression. Others, such as Finn, view employment as a distraction from negative behaviours and actions. He explains how his life would be different if he had a job: "just would, wouldn't it? I'd be working so I wouldn't be out doing daft shit" (Finn, YOT).

Young people distinguish between jobs and careers in their discussions and many have ambitions to pursue a variety of roles including psychologists, graphic designers, youth workers and firefighters. Stephen discusses his career plans and his pathway to achieving this:

> BTech in sports, level 3. Whilst playing football at the same time. […]Right now I'm looking to get a scholarship in America next year. That's what I'm looking for. So all that would help me get there […] I already knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a physiotherapist, so I thought I'd just do something in sport. […] So I can go uni, but I do need to get distinctions in all the modules and the sciency stuff. […] So I just thought stick to what I want to do. 'Cause that can get me where I want to be. (Stephen, YOrg).

A strong undercurrent of the realisation of agency is present in these responses to employment, and young people's plans for the future are discussed by them with confidence and excitement in the majority of cases (Bryant and Ellard, 2015).

Organizations, Support and Change

Young people's responses to the organisations they have contact with in their daily lives differs but can be roughly divided based on statutory compared with voluntary services.

Statutory services and youth programmes

The statutory services young people have contact with include the police, social services and branches of youth offending teams such as mandatory youth programmes. Contact with the police and judicial system more broadly is an overwhelming source of frustration for the young people involved. Resistance towards, in young people's opinion, unfair treatment and targeting by the police is encapsulated in a largely adversarial relationship with and positioning towards the police (as discussed earlier). Only a small number of young people saw the police as a source of support. Many reported being labelled as 'criminal', feeling this was unfair in the context of being young and are concerned that this would limit their future life chances. Jo expresses in her discussion of contact with the police, the reason many young people's reaction to police is that of resistance:

> Yeah, 'cause he was rude. He didn't have no manners. But then my mum always taught me, you always be... like show adults respect innit. So you speak... I was speaking to him like yeah, like I respected him. And he's speaking to me like, like he didn't respect me. (Jo, YOrg)

Fundamentally, young people feel that police lack respect for them which in turn, significantly undermines young people's agency within these direct interactions, as well as more generally.

This constraint on young people's agency is palpable in their discussions of their experience of mandatory orders issued by youth offending teams.

To be honest, when I, when I started my YOT order, I was thinking, 'Right, I'm just gonna get through this YOT order, be easier, quick and simple.' That's mostly my choice, that's what I, that's what I decided. But then I didn't know I were gonna be doing this with my YOT order. (Liam, YOT)

Young people's responses to and descriptions of these programmes is predominantly negative, sceptical, cynical and typified by resistance. Many report the programs as a waste of time and discuss the notion that they could be doing something more productive with their time which can be sensed in Liam's discussion above. At points, this resistance develops into refusal to participate, as exemplified in the below illustration.

Plate 9: YOT Illustration: "Do you want me to help you or go away and leave you alone?"

In the context of this case study, non-participation is taken seriously as an example of agency in young people's lives (Amnå and Ekman, 2015). Resistance or refusal to participate in activities represents an attempt for young people to experience power over their day-to-day lives. In the case of these youth offending orders, refusal to participate is problematic, given the mandatory nature of the programmes. Here again, this "struggle" (Lister, 2007: 695) is present as a way to understand agency in the context of young people's lives. Thus, the response of frustration to the point of refusal to take part is understandable on the part of these young people.

Whilst there is generally resistance to some of the mandatory programmes young people are attending through youth offending teams, there are some elements young people find interesting, or in the worst-case scenario, some aspects of the programme they dislike the least (Munford and Sanders, 2015). Generally, these are the creative activities including music and video production, poetry and artwork. During interviews, some respondents even expressed pride in their work here. The illustration below shows one young person enjoying a creative project as part of the youth offending programme.

Plate 10: YOT Illustration: "I'm getting into it!"

Social services and another statutory service some young people have contact with. As discussed earlier, young people's relationships with social workers, and the welfare services more generally, are inherently problematic. Therefore, young people's response to this is a sense of mistrust towards the workers and the services, as well as explicit anger, especially in cases where young people have felt judged or that they have been treated unfairly.

> I just don't like them…Because they just judge me. I think it's because my mum didn't look after us and stuff. So they're gonna judge me, aren't they, 'cause my mum and dad didn't look after us? So that's why I don't like them […] I hate them. I had loads in the past. Loads. In and out, in and out, in my life. So I just don't like them. (Samantha, YCL)

Such emotive responses are understandable in the context of some of the reported experiences with social services in this case study, especially when fears of having their own child removed from their care is viewed as the ultimate cost of these judgements by social services.

The mandatory and legal component of these statutory services presents a response to authority as constrictive and unnegotiable, whether this was the case in reality or not. The overwhelming response to the experiences with statutory services was that of refusal and reluctance, non-participation and apathy. While these are absolutely expressions of agency, these responses have negative connotations. The most pro-social responses of young people are found in the context of their encounters with voluntary organisations.

Voluntary Youth Organisations

Young people's responses to their experiences with voluntary youth organisations are overwhelmingly positive (Mason, 2015) and provide many of the much needed hooks for change (Giordano et al, 2002). Young people's participation in these related activities results in feelings of being welcome, specifically the shared experience, they report enjoying the freedom to spend

time relaxing in a youth-friendly space and feel respected and supported by the staff in these organisations.

> I don't know, but it's just nice to just... I don't know, I think it's just like socialising and like the kids love it. 'Cause there's usually like a lot of kids that come as well, so they all play together. I don't know, just have a nice laugh with them. I don't know, it's just chilled.[...] I just enjoy getting out and just like, I don't know, like the people. I don't know, it's just a thing innit? It's like, more of like a... I don't know. It's just nice with people, it's just a happy, it's a happy environment. Yeah. (Sophie, YCL).

Some of the young people spoken to, as well as attending these organisations, have developed voluntary roles within. Much of this generative participation sees young people seeking to benefit others in their communities or fellow peers through their actions (McAdams et al, 1998). This altruism provides a strong sense of satisfaction for these young people, and for some, stands to counteract some of the stigmas and misconceptions that persist about young people.

> I wanted to be a good person and help people. And helping people makes me feel good about myself, 'cause I know, I'm helping other people and making their opportunities better. (Aiden, YOrg).

Largely, young people's participation in these organisations can be seen as a response to the conflict experienced in other areas of their lives. These organisations, and young people's membership of them, are predominantly conflict-free zones (with some exceptions). They stand as contexts of support for these young people, where they learn about further opportunities, perhaps build new skills and build strong friendships with their peers and strong, positive relationships with the members of staff at these organisations. Time spent in youth organisations are not without restrictions, however, as youth clubs have been hit hard by funding cuts in the UK. Youth workers, despite being the authority figures within these organisations, are liked and respected by these young people. The relationships they have developed with these youth workers are the key to these positive responses. The impact of these positive relationships is unpacked in more detail within the context of the individual responses of young people.

3.3.3 Individual Contexts

Relationships

The relationships young people have with their peers, as well as adults, stand as the key contexts of support in their lives (Mason, 2015; Munford and Sanders, 2015) and vital hooks for change (Giordano etal, 2002). A key source of support is those voluntary organisations discussed above, which will be returned to shortly. Other sources of support have been found in peers and friendship groups, partners and family. As Troy explains, a positive home life results in his happiness more generally:

> My family makes me happy. [...]just make me happy. Like when I'm down, they make me laugh. (Troy, YOrg)

For those young people who are parents themselves, their relationships with their children act as a mobilising force in their lives:

Like they've made me, they've made my life. [...]They've just made me like realise what life's like about. Like you can do good in life. Because obviously I've got them, so I've done good with them, do you know what I mean? So they've made me feel like I am worth something. (Sophie, YCL)

Despite a dominant theme of conflict in education settings, schools are also cited as a source of support for some young people, particularly on account of the positive relationships with teachers and teaching staff.

School, which was really good. And they supported me amazingly all the way through to year eleven. [...]Even when, like, they kicked me out so many times and let me back in. Even letting me back in just for one day a week, just to do the subjects that I enjoyed doing, that I believed in. (Helen, YCL)

The key response to these positive relationships is that young people feel able to build personal resilience alongside these supportive relationships. To return to the voluntary youth organisations, the support young people report here is fundamental to their everyday lives. This can be seen in the below exchange at a youth organisation, as the respondents describe their feelings about their relationships at this support group (Café Lime):

RESPONDENT: Café Lime is our family.
RESPONDENT: Yeah. Like here a lot, like everyone here, it feels at home. It feels like, do you know what I mean?
RESPONDENT: It's safe.
RESPONDENT: Yeah, you feel safe and secure.
RESPONDENT: You feel wanted (YCL Photo session discussion)

Other respondents, in individual interviews, specifically discuss the respect and equality present in the relationships between them as young people and the key workers of these youth organisations:

You're made to feel quite equal anyway. So like they don't, like the staff don't look down on you, like, 'We're staff and you're not.' They aren't like, they're on your level, do you know what I mean? They chat to you, they involve you. They're not like... they don't look down to you or anything. (Sophie, YCL)

Everyone that works here, I love them. Because they like show me the respect that... like I don't usually get treated with respect, so like it's a new thing. (Jacob, YOrg)

These relationships are some of the key contexts of change in young people's lives. The support received from these relationships helps young people to navigate many of the barriers they encounter in various aspects of their lives. Opportunities are seized through this support and for many young people, these supportive relationships help to prompt significant turning points in their lives.

3.3.6 Turning Points

Turning points represent junctures at which young people have made changes in their lives, on account of specific experiences or general changes in attitude or outlooks. Overall, these are positive, personal responses to sometimes difficult circumstances. The specifics of these turning point responses were varied across the dataset. Some specifically are prompted by young people's involvement with the judicial system as in Kade's case:

> Well, obviously, I regret it all 'cause now I'm in care. But when I go back home I'm not gonna mess it up. I'm not gonna get involved with the police again.[…]'Cause it's, I think it's just a waste of my time and a waste of the police time. (Kade, YOT)

Again, notions of independence emerge, as young people discuss general growing-up and maturity, taking responsibility, whether through parenthood, employment or leaving home and in some cases, going into care as positive turning points in their experience. Also, attending particular programs and organisations were cited as helping young people to navigate some of the barriers to social involvement they had previously experienced. Marcus' response centres on respect and maturity:

> I became, like, more respectful. 'Cause obviously, when you're younger, I would, like, if I was to be told off, I'd probably be a bit more disrespectful in a way. But as getting older, I just realised that, if I do something wrong, just like apologise and just respect what the other person's saying and just get on. (Marcus, YOrg)

Helen presents a particularly reflective response to her experiences, which have been quite difficult at times. Helen explicitly discusses feeling relieved and happy when she was moved into a care home after her mother was no longer able to care for her. She discusses, with determination, a sense of power over her future:

> Like, people can do it. Just because you've come from the past, it doesn't have to determine your future like that. That doesn't have to determine where you're going in your life. Absolutely not. (Helen, YCL)

Another specific turning point she describes, tying in with McAdams et al's (1998) thesis on generativity, is her career path as a youth worker: 'It's working alongside the people that used to look after me. It's good. It's kind of one of those 'Look at me now' moments.' (Helen, YCL)

Helen's sense of pride and satisfaction is obvious here. Each of the young people's stories of experiencing a turning point in their lives represents a sense of empowerment for them and having a sense of control over their future (Munford and Sanders, 2015; Bryant and Ellard, 2015). In other words, they have been able to navigate or overcome some of the many barriers which have been present in their lives.

3.3.4 Recasting Authority

A dominant theme present in the above structural and individual responses has been the struggle for agency on the part of young people but also their response to authority. Authority is responded to either in different terms, that is to say, authority is not always resisted by the young people spoken to in this case study. In particular, two examples stand out from the data. Firstly, Helen's experience of foster care (Bryant and Ellard 2015). As mentioned above, Helen was relieved to be placed in the care of social services. Whilst at times she experienced conflict with

some social workers, police and other young people in the care home, she described her experience of the foster-care system and particularly her foster parents, as a fundamentally positive experience.

> It turned around when they moved me out of the children's home and put me in foster care. […] So that was the day, that was the day it changed for me, absolutely, completely and utterly. […] So, it was scary, but it was good. It was, it was the... I had boundaries. I had, I had set things to do. I had, I had a routine. I had people that I had to answer to. I had to go back to school. Like, my mum didn't care if I went into school or not […] And at the home. They was dead supportive as well. […] I've been out for lunch today with my foster mum […]had a really positive time, so I'm really, really lucky. I'm really lucky […] Because they were, it was a family home, like. It was, it was a family (Helen, YCL)

Helen discuss the specific aspects of foster-care she found to be the most impactful in her life. She specifically highlights boundaries, routines and an overall structure to her life. As with the relationships with staff in voluntary organisations, Helen's foster parents are figures of authority in her life. However in these cases, relationships with authority have not rendered these young people as feeling powerless. A similar example is found in a mandatory youth program through the youth offending team in the illustration shown in Plate 11:

Plate 11: Documentary artist Illustration of a YOT art session: 'Oi, no swearing'

One of the young respondents is monitoring the behaviour of another young person, by reprimanding their use of bad language. Here, this participant is happily conforming to the rules of the programme, in other words, as in Helen's case above, enjoying the structure and boundaries of a relationship with authority.

A key undercurrent to the positive experiences, which have enabled social engagement and innovation in these young people's lives, are young people's responses to authority which 'recast authority' as reassurance not restriction, thereby providing a much-needed 'hook for change' (Giordano et al, 2002). Fundamentally, young people feel that respect is reciprocal within these relationships and responses to authority. These are flexible relationship, in which young people have freedom of expression and feel listened to. Here then, there is space for social engagement to be encouraged and for social innovation to emerge to encourage agency and support the key turning points in young people's lives (Nolas, 2013; Wood, 2016; Mason, 2015; Munford and Sanders, 2015; Bryant and Ellard, 2015; Lister, 2007; Ekman and Amnå, 2012).

4. Conclusions

This case study has explored experiences of conflict and stigma in the lives of young people, from 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods, who are labelled by authorities, and through public and media discourse, as 'troubled youth', and are seen to be 'at risk' of offending. They are undoubtedly the target of increasingly punitive and controlling policies and practices, from policing to school discipline, and this has resulted in a variety of responses from young people including various demonstrations of resistance: some that we have seen as enabling of social involvement (whether that's in line with, or against, the expectations of the state), and some that we see as a barrier to social involvement.

Our analysis has addressed 1) how young people view themselves through the lens of older generations 2) the modes, sites and agents of the conflict they experience and 3) what we can learn about, and from, young people's responses. The key themes of identity, stigma and conflict, and young people's responses are closely linked to issues of respect, relationship bonds and independence, and highlight the opportunities and barriers in young people's experience.

A key finding of this study is the perception amongst young people that there is an unfair/incorrect representation of young people by the media, older generations and authority. They feel that, as young people, they are judged by the mistakes of other teenagers and all tarred with the same brush. For some young people the process of conflict itself can be seen as a source of identity, particularly when conflict is in pursuit of greater independence on the part of the young person, or fighting against a label or some other stigma. Whilst not expressed in such terms, young people were aware of the constructed identity of 'the criminal underclass' that, through stigmatising language and ideology, are designed to exclude. They feel silenced, unentitled to speak and are aware that they are labelled as troublemakers if they try.

The majority of young people revealed an oppressive level of conflict in their lives. Conflict and stigma exist at multiple and overlapping sites and with multiple and overlapping agents. For example, a 'looked-after' young person may experience conflict with peers or teachers arising at school related to their 'looked after' status (or factors resulting from it). Similarly, they may experience inequality of treatment on the streets due to police targeting of young people 'hanging around', and they may also experience conflict in their care home after an incident of conflict with the police or at school. When the care home is not a supportive or enabling place to be, these young people are caught in a viscous 'chicken-and-egg' cycle of reaction and authority response.

The experiences of stigma and conflict prompt a variety of responses by the young people involved. Many young people, despite having had several difficult and negative experiences, report supporting relationships with some authority figures, encouraging positive attitudes towards, and hopes for, their futures. Whilst the experiences discussed above create many barriers for young people, opportunities are created and seized in a number of spheres. Conflict can be a spur or enabler to social involvement and personal change, and feelings of despair, injustice and an inaccessibility to power can be a route to alternative forms of action. In short, conflict can constrain or enable social engagement depending on a number of structural factors, social conditions, relationships (or lack thereof) and the actions of individuals.

For many young people, authority figures represent agents of conflict rather than support. However, discussions of the agents of conflict reveal complex relationships with authority (within certain groups, such as the police; and within individuals such as a particular care worker) involving a nuanced (and often confusing) mix of stigmatising and supportive elements. The

positive elements of support are fundamentally related to respecting young people as independent individuals and providing structure and guidance to allow young people to seize opportunities to realise potential, whether in relation to educational, employment or personal development. Relationships with those in authority provide a spectrum of experiences for young people: as enablers of change and innovation; as agents of resistance, or sometimes to further stigmatise and control young people, posing barriers to social engagement. Supportive relationships are a critical key to unlocking agentic potential and provide some clear pathways towards policy recommendations.

There are some clear policy implications from this research. Young people need supportive people and supportive places. The nature of those relationships and those places, and how they can be encouraged within the voluntary and statutory sector are important discussions to have.

5. Future analysis

Further research and analysis within the cluster mighty include:

1. A more detailed elaboration of the concepts of 'stigma', social abjection and 'trauma' and their correlation with 'agency' and 'response'. Is there evidence of intergenerational disgust?

2. Explore a narrative approach to the data drawing on McIntyre's notion of Narrative Unity and the notion of "a whole life" (1981, After Virtue) in relation to critiques by Rudd (2007)

3. Exploring the concept of agency, including an analysis of the uses of 'bounded agency' in which young people from marginalised communities seek out and grasp opportunities to demonstrate alternative forms of agency (see the work of Aaltonen, 2013; Allard, 2007; Evans, 2002; Shildrick and MacDonald, (2008); Munford and Sanders, 2015), and thinking about agency through the concept of 'hope' (Bryant and Ellard, 2015)

4. withdrawal, refusal, non-participation, resistance, retaliation, apathy and acceptance

5. Exploring relationships – what are the features of relationships that enable young people to achieve agency (as well as of those that inhibit)? How do these develop, how are they sustained and how do they support or inhibit young people? How is authority sometimes recast? What are the conditions of recasting authority?

6. Exploring support/interventions (voluntary and mandatory) accessed by young people: How does intervention encourage, support and facilitate innovation? In what ways does it operate as a site for change, innovation and resistance? Is there a sense in which intervention poses barriers to social engagement or further stigmatises?

7. Develop a theoretical construct of criminalised young people's responses to stigma and conflict. This would seek to describe and explain the range of responses from reaction to inaction, anger to apathy, and the contested concepts of resilience and resourcefulness.

   The elements we would wish to include are:
   1. Recognition of poverty and disadvantage, and poverty of opportunity.
   2. Breaks/ disconnections in a young person's biography / disrupted narrative. This would include a recognition of the role of trauma.
   3. The role of stigma, labelling and conflict.
   4. The role of relationships
   5. The impact of control.

Synergies with quantitative data from WP4 and WP5 include the following analytical themes and areas:

- young people's confidence in the justice system,
- young people's confidence and trust in authority more generally
- young people's engagement with the police and the social welfare system;
- the extent young people feel discriminated against and in what ways;
- young people's experiences of discrimination by the police and other indictors of relationship with authority;
- How trust in authority is related to forms of participation
- How agency (using measures of self-efficacy and self-esteem) relate to forms of participation/ social involvement.

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Appendix: table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Name and Organisation	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Aiden YOrg	18	M	Currently in post-secondary vocational training	In full-time education	Live at home with parent(s)	Single	White	UK	No Religion
Amelia YCL	21	F	Left school prior to GCSEs	unemployed	Lives independently with child	single	white	UK	Atheist
Becki YOrg	18	F	Completed general academic secondary education	In P/T employment	Live at home with parent(s)	Single	Black or Black British	UK	Christian – Roman Catholic
Bradley YOrg	18	M	Full Time College	In Full Time Education	Living With Parents	Single	Mixed	BRITAIN	Christian (Other)
Brian YOT	18	M	Stopped attending school on a regular basis in year 8	Starting a new job the week after the interview took place	Lives with mother and one younger brother	Single	Black British	ANGOLA came to UK when he was 1 year old, moved to the area 5-6 years ago	Muslim
Chris YOT	16	M	Just finished final year of secondary school	None at present; no plans for future employment or education	Lives with Dad; no siblings. Mother mentioned briefly in interview	Single	White	UK	None
Danielle YCL	20	F	Left at 16	Unemployed, full time mum	Live independently with partner and children	Living with partner	white	UK	None
Finn YOT	17	M	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Live at home with parent(s)	Single	White	UK	No Religion
Helen YCL	30	F	NVQ Level 2	P/T Youth Engagement Worker	Lives with her 3 children	Single	White British	UK	None
Jacob YOrg	17	M	Completed secondary school	Customer Service Apprenticeship	Lives with Mum	Single	Black or Black British	UK	None
Jaq YOT	17	F	Planning to start FE college	education	In care	Single	white	UK	None

Jo YOrg	19	F	BTec	Seeking	With parents	Single	Black	UK	None
Kade YOT	14	M	Attending a Pupil Referral Unit and transitioning back into mainstream schooling (2hrs a day)	/	Care home	Single	white	UK	None
Keira YOrg	16	F	Completed GCSEs in general academic secondary education; about to start 'A' levels at local college	Part time work at SM community partnership (where youth club was hosted) helping out with summer holiday club with younger children	Lives with Mum and 2 siblings (14 years, and 18 months)	Single	Mixed	UK	None
Liam YOT	15	M	Starting year 11 in Sept. Attends PRU (2nd one Liam has attended, having been removed from school and 1st PRU)	None	Care home	Single	White	UK	None
Marcus YOrg	18	M	Completed secondary school, currently at college	In College and working P/T in a nightclub	Lives with Mum	Single	Black or Black British	UK	Catholic
Princess YCL	20	F	Completed general secondary	In full time employment	Supported lodging-room in a family's house	Single	white	UK	None
Samantha YCL	24	F	Did not complete secondary education and left	Unemployed	Lives independently with children	Single	White	UK	None
Sophie YCL	23	F	Completed General Academic Secondary Education	Unemployed	Lives independently with partner and children	Single	White	UK	None
Stephen YOrg	17	M	Completed General Academic Secondary, Currently in college	In F/T Education but about to start PT job	Lives with Parents	Single	Black or Black British	UK	Christian – Other
Troy YOrg	13	M	At school	/	At home with mum and 2 brothers	Single	mixed	UK	Catholic

YCL – young care leaver
YOrg – youth organisation
YOT – youth justice intervention