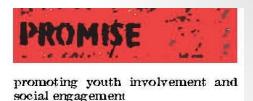# 'Risky Youth': Realities and Responses in Young People's Lives

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	Education/justice/society (Cluster Synthesis Lead: UCP)	Culture/politics (Cluster Synthesis Lead: CJD)	Economy/leisure spaces (Cluster Synthesis Lead: IPI)	Gender/sexuality (Cluster Synthesis Lead: HSE)
P1: UNIMAN (UK)	**From criminalisation to innovation: youth penal voluntary sector.**	**Youth mobilisations of 'suspect communities'**		
P2: IPRS (Italy)		**No-TAV** (anti-high-speed rail track movement)	**Youth activities at leftist/ex-squat social centre**	
P3: CJD (Germany)		**'Autonomists'**		**Identity Politics of (fe-)male Muslims**
P4: UAB (Spain)	**Active NEETs**		**Young people involved in alternative building practices**	
P5: UCP (Portugal)	**Young people with risk and deviance pathways**			**Young gender activists**
P6: UMB (Slovakia)		**NIOT (Not In Our Town)**	**Returning young migrants**	
P7: FYRN (Finland)			**Intergenerational contests in the media city**	**Generational negotiations, social control and gendered sexualities**
P9: UTARTU (Estonia)	**Young ex-offenders and recidivism**	**Rural youth in Seto heritage region**		
P11: HSE (Russia)		**Public morality and order activism** **People living with HIV and HIV-activists in St. Petersburg and Kazan**		**LGBTQ scene (Petersburg)** **Feminist scene (Petersburg)**
P12: IPI (Croatia)			**Varteks and White Stones (football supporters' club**	**Zagreb Pride- LGBTIQ NGO**
Total no. of cases	4	7	5	6

Concept

- Respondent group *constructed as problematic and labelled (by authorities)* as offenders, ex-offenders or 'at risk' of offending due to socio-economic factors/deprivation: key source of conflict/tension.

- Increasing and varied interventions shaped by the *political rhetoric of punitiveness resulting* in a climate of regulation, criminalisation, **stigma** and reduced life chances.

- Young people's responses? What form does response/reaction take?- resistance, apathy, ambivalence

Data collection and analysis

- Fieldwork conducted in bursts between Jan 2017 and April 2018

- 21 individual interviews with young people aged 13-30.

- 3 group sessions with 12 young people aged 14-29 taking part in photo-workshops.

- Participant observation at 35 events producing field diary entries.

- Young people accessed via

  - drop-in voluntary support groups 'youth clubs' for young people 'at risk' in 'troubled' neighbourhoods

  - a mandatory arts programme for young offenders serving sentences (run by a 3rd sector arts-in-criminal-justice-group employed by the Youth offending Service)

Analysis: data transcribed, anonymised and coded using NVivo 11

Interview Respondents

- Wide scope of experience within the group; range of engagement with authority; complex biographies.

- All respondents have experiences of **deprivation,** varied individual and social problems.

- 21 interviewees:

- 10 female, 11 male

- 12 white British, 6 Black or Black British, 3 shared heritage

- 5 employed, 9 in education (full or part-time), 7 unemployed

- 9 'looked-after' children (current or at some time previously)

- 6 currently subject to a criminal order –YRO, some with HDC

Creative outputs

- Documentary artist's drawings
- Art-based activities and video

- Photo Elicitation:
  1. Identity, place
  2. Resilience, control
     - things that make you feel safe/secure, things that make you happy
     - things that control you, things you'd like to change.

Emerging themes

- Complex biographies including significant trauma – closely tied with identity

- Multi-layered relationships with authority (and others)

- Stigma, injustice and the 'label of fail'

- Resistance, acceptance and apathy – responses to control and perceived injustice (including opportunities for, and barriers to, agency)

Biography

- Common experiences around poverty of opportunity, deprivation, multi-layered often negative relationships with authority, poor self-image.

- Varying degrees of **challenges** experienced by the respondents:
  - poor schooling and exclusion;
  - disengagement with school/training/work - NEET;
  - lack of family/lack of support from family;
  - criminal record;
  - Currently subject YRO - HDC tag;
  - history of trauma:
    - emotional, sexual & physical abuse;
    - bereavement;
    - living in care & moving between homes;
  - early motherhood - children taken into care;
  - addictions.

Realities: Stigmatisation and the disgust agenda

- Theorising stigma: from Goffman to new conceptualisations of stigma as power (Tyler, 2018; Link and Phelan, 2001).

- The disgust agenda

- Narratives of stigma and disgust

  - How it was experienced? – examples of active stigmatisation, discrimination, shaming- the label of fail

  - How was it felt?– wider sense of discrimination, shame, awareness and unease

  - What were young people's responses?

Stigma

- Experienced in some relationships with authority, older generations. Impacts on sense of self.

- Visible and hidden stigmas (perceived stigma, possible stigma)

- Treated as problematic – examples of police treatment, poor relationships with teachers, social workers – prejudicial, negative and normative discourse- young offender/young mother/young disengaged person. (*Not just excluded but despised)*

- Impact on capacity for resilience

Identity and self-image

- Identity: criminal; troublemaker; problem *(social abjection; challenges to social order)*

- Gaining confidence through friendships, partners, positive relationships with voluntary workers

Relationship with authority- a sense of disgust

- Mostly problematic relationships with authority : police, social workers. More positive depiction of relationships with voluntary organisation support staff

- Police: descriptions of excessive control- heavily policed, heavily regulated– an exercise in youth social control. Clear sense of a 'them' and 'us', descriptions of police heavy-handedness, police over-surveillance. Frustration with police, hostility, problematic relationships. They don't listen before they act. Lack of trust in police, and lack of trust from police.

- Social workers (described by young care leavers) - again, they don't listen, are in control of major decisions that affect the YP- serious consequences eg removal of child. No respect for YP opinions, judgemental, YP feel they are not trusted .

Node – Level 2	Number of references	Number of sources
Contexts of conflict	328	53

Node – Level 1	Number of references	Number of sources
CARE HOME	14	6
Family	44	14
GENERAL GETTING INTO TROUBLE, CONFLICT WITH AUTHORITY	14	9
Injustice, state policy and foreign policy	1	1
Media	5	3
PEERS AND PEER PRESSURE	27	9
Police OR JUDICIAL SYSTEM	128	33
Public places	5	4
Racism	3	1
Resisting norms	2	1
SOCIAL SERVICES	25	10

On the police:

- I just can't be bothered with them. They hurt my ears…. They won't listen to me anyway, they'll think that I'm lying or something. And they chase us for no reason; follow us for no reason. When we're just riding our bikes they actually ride behind…. They're grown men – don't they have nothing better to do?
- (Troy, aged 13)

Responses: to stigma and disgust

- Shame (and concealment)
- Resistance
- Ambivalence and apathy
- Anger

- Action, inaction - agency

Agency: Action and inaction

- patterns of resilience (and survival): huge range of responses:

  - refusing to participate;

  - withdrawal from what's expected;

  - avoiding contact with authorities;

  - planning for the future- jobs, careers;

  - creativity, descriptions of activities- dancing, music, art;

  - anti-authority/anti-society action- criminal and anti-social behaviour;

  - marginalisation as an enabler – fighting back

  - generative activity – giving back

- Most were individual, not organised,

- Actions were often a response to situated injustice

Lack of engagement with organised activities.

Non-participation, apathy

Engaging with the rules, and with authority.
Self-regulation, engaging with the activity

Fighting back and giving back

- (Talking about YOT) **"**Some of them are all right, but they don't fucking listen. So, I don't... It's like, when I say, when I say to someone, **"I cannot be arsed," trust me, do not tell me to do something 'cause I've just told you I cannot be arsed."** (Liam)

- So right now, I'm pushing as many people as I can to get off their arses, to motivate themselves and do something with their lives. If you're sat at home, you've got a talent, I'll find as many things as I can do. I'll even let you join my entrepreneur group. If you're good at drawing you can come join me. **I'm trying to motivate as many young people as possible to do something. Because I don't want us to get pushed into a box or formed into a place that you don't have to be in, you don't have to be there**" (Becki)

https://youtu.be/CY1BvwmQo04

Song and video created by young people attending Salford's Summer Arts College in 2017. With thanks to Salford Youth Offending Team and all the staff at TiPP.

Change

- Some evidence of motivations for change, desire for change (desistance from crime, regain custody of child, become a good mother, get a job) innovative potential and some personal success BUT …

- For some (esp those with a criminal record), low transformational capacity: individual and group

- structural barriers to change: housing, schooling, job market, lack of pastoral support, lack of earnings, lack of opportunities, **stigma,** lack of trust from/in authorities,

- challenging circumstances, struggle for recognition, struggle to manage self, struggle to meet the requirements of adult (authority) expectation

Where does this lead us?

promoting youth involvement and social engagement

- Key barriers to change:
  - Poverty of opportunity
  - Social abjection
  - Labelling by authorities- stigma
- Young People are cognitive of inequality, poverty of opportunity, and the discourses of abjection that marginalise them.

- Catalysts for change:
  - Positive relationships
    - Authority
    - Friendships
  - Opportunities to be creative
  - Recognition of alternative engagement
  - REDUCING STIGMA