Troubling identities: race, place and positionality among young people in two towns in northern England

Abstract

Central to the post-2001 British policy shift from multiculturalism to community cohesion is the assumption that the disturbances were the product of youth identities that were shaped by 'parallel lives', and that there is a need for increased contact between communities. There is evidence to support the notion that many young British people, particularly in areas of significant ethnic physical segregation, favour distinct and racialised identifications, although the positional and situational nature of youth identification is sometimes under-stated. This paper draws on research techniques based on word association, carried out in Oldham and Rochdale, two towns in Greater Manchester often portrayed as epitomising ethnic segregation. The research provides some evidence regarding ways in which young people view the 'other' in relation to their self-identification, and also how they perceive their town and area. The research suggests that the factors structuring the development of identifications and categorizations are complex and multi-layered, but that, although there is evidence of negative views of 'out groups' held by both white and muslim young people, the latter group have more positive place attachments, and attitudes towards multi-culturalism. The findings suggest that the context in which contact between groups takes place may be important for the success of enhanced contact as a strategy.

Key words: youth; identification; ethnicity; racism; cohesion

Introduction

Young people have been central to the focus and content of the post-2001 shift in UK policy approaches to 'race relations' and ethnic identity. The pre-2001 emphasis on ethnic diversity, multiculturalism and even institutional racism, in the wake of the Lawrence Inquiry, has been superseded by the foregrounding of community cohesion, shared values and a renewed 'Britishness'. The salience of youth in public concern has resulted from a number of factors. Racialised tension and violence between white and Asian-origin young people was crucial to the long-term causes and short-term triggers of the 2001 riots in the northern towns and cities of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford

(Bagguley and Hussain 2008), symptomatic of a complex interplay across the country between territoriality and 'race' within youth tensions and violence (Kintrea et al. 2008). Both because of their perceived place as the country's 'future' and the relative ease with which policy efforts can be targeted at young people in contrast to adults, the attitudes, identifications and behaviour of young people became a priority for community cohesion policy and practice. These concerns over the identifications of young people were exacerbated following the London bombings of 7/7, as segregated communities became seen as favourable environments for radicalisation processes.

School-twinning between schools dominated by a specific ethnic background, and the urging of greater efforts to create more ethnically-mixed schools was a concern from the start for community cohesion (Cantle 2001). A case study examination of how post-2001 community cohesion was understood, operationalized and mediated by local policy-makers and practitioners (Author B 2011) found that youth workers were prioritising processes of 'meaningful direct contact' between young people of different backgrounds through regular programmes of fun, experiential and associational activities that enabled the creation of safe 'space' for cross-ethnic dialogue and relationships to develop, so utilising 'contact theory' (Hewstone et al. 2007) with the aim of augmenting existing ethnic, faith and class identifications with stronger common identifications.

The perceived new orthodoxy of the community cohesion perspective stimulated a range of research which challenged some of the assumptions on which it was based. Urban geographers have produced a more finely grained analysis of physical segregation which has indicated that the degree of separation which could be attributed to ethnicity as opposed to other factors was exaggerated in the aftermath of the 2001 events (Phillips, 2006; Simpson et al., 2008; Finney and Simpson 2009; Harris, 2010). Studies of young people in Scotland (Hopkins, 2007)and Wales (Scourfield and Davies, 2005), and of Muslim young people in England and Wales (Alexander, 1998; 2004) have afforded a critical reappraisal of static and monolithic interpretations of identity and the dynamics which affect residential and educational choice, and other patterns of association. The concept of stable identity has become troubled, and given way to a more nuanced understanding of identifications as shifting and contingent on a range of factors including the complex patternings of urban settlement and re-settlement, and the local configuration of the regions, towns and the populations surrounding young people as they grow up: one such distinction being between diverse metropolitan areas and the more tri- or bi-polar character of the Northern mill towns where the 2001 disturbances took place (Amin, 2002).

In this tradition of concern with young peoples' identities, the way these are shaped by relationships with peers, and the way they are framed by the urban spaces they inhabit, we undertook action research with groups of youth workers in Oldham and Rochdale, two towns in Greater Manchester that have experienced significant racial tension and which were characterised by the post-2001 reports as exemplifying 'parallel lives', or in other words an existence characterised by residential and educational segregation and an absence of shared beliefs and values. Our aims were to find out more about the preferred identifications of young people, their views of 'others' and their experiences of 'cohesion'. Previously, we have reported on the identifications favoured by young people and how we might understand the responses of both 'Muslim' and 'white' young people, utilising their own preferred identification (Authors, 2011; 2012).

However, as we have already noted, identifications are clearly both relational and contingent, and it is this aspect of our data which we present in this article. Here, we report data on how white and Muslim young people view the 'other', and how this perception of the other differs from their self-perception. Alongside this, we report how the young people view the geographical context of their town and area (the distinction between the two proving to be highly significant). Our methodological approach and the context of our case study focus is first discussed before we go on to present our challenging and sometimes graphic data in both discursive and tabular form. We conclude by discussing how we might understand this data in terms of the grounding of perceptions both of the 'other' and of 'place'.

Methodology

There is a multiplicity of issues that confront white researchers attempting to work with participants who neither belong to the same social or ethnic group, nor are co-religionists (Hopkins 2007): these issues include the whole gamut of design, data collection and interpretation. In the complex environment of multiple, intersectional identifications that characterises 'liquid modernity', researchers can encounter difficulties when dependent on a singular methodology. For example, while Bowler's experience provides an interesting example of the pitfalls associated with the culturally contested form of the interview (1997), where majoritarian assumptions about the universality of the form precluded successful data collection, it has also long been argued (Spradley 1979), that outsider status can enable a researcher to elicit responses that might be shielded from members of the same cultural community.

In the course of the project which is reported here and elsewhere (Authors 2011; 2012) we used a range of research strategies, and attempted to avoid over-dependence on singular researcher perspectives or methods. A collaborative research design was developed, involving youth workers in the Oldham and Rochdale areas, who after training were able to employ a range of methods of data collection, consistent with the normal experience that participants had of youth work in the participating settings. The broad research approach was to employ projective techniques, used in research on prejudice since the 1950s (Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook 1951). These techniques included focus groups, 3-point scale questionnaires, mind-maps, sentence completion exercises, identity ranking exercises of the kind used by Basit (2009) and Scourfield and Davies (2007), and word association exercises, which have been used frequently in research into prejudice, although now mainly employed in second language learning, and in marketing research. The techniques were used in group sessions over a two month period, in 19 statutory and voluntary sector youth centres covering a range of areas of Rochdale and Oldham, and with both mono-cultural and mixed groups comprising a total of 242 young people.

The youth workers involved in the project took local decisions as to which of the possible research methods were suitable for each of their groups: an opportunity sample of 142 young people from 13 centres, 45% of whom were female and 55% male, were involved in the groups that participated in the word association exercises that are reported here, although not all of the young people in e ach group completed the response sheets. A brief description of the groups, their purpose and composition, is given in the table below.

It is important in thinking about the interpretation of the responses in this study to understand the economic, social and demographic context of these two areas. Northern mill towns, of which Oldham and Rochdale are good examples, are generally characterised by their position on the periphery of a major metropolis, and share histories of post-war immigration from South Asia. Immigration was encouraged to fill the gaps in the local labour market which arose from outward migration to larger urban centres in the South. These towns shared patterns of settlement in which immigrant populations initially settled in areas similar to Burgess and Park's classic inner city zones of transition before radiating out, whilst the white working class population have tended to occupy purpose built social housing either located on slum clearance sites near the town centre, or in satellite positions, either on the outskirts of the major town giving its name to the local authority area, or in neighbouring smaller towns and villages. Housing markets in these areas have tended to operate in such a fashion as to locate the most desirable housing in peripheral

zones close to the countryside. This pattern of distribution generates a strong identification of place with demographic group, and in the case of youth groups can generate a strong sense of territoriality.

Insert Table 1

We acknowledge here the dangers of compliance and conformity resulting from group-based research approaches , but clearly the views we were concerned with are generally formulated and expressed through group participation and a sense of group positionality (as we have argued above) and may have been expressed more openly in a group setting than an interview. The analysis of focus group, interview and identity exercises have been reported elsewhere (Authors, 2011; 2102), and the richness of the word association data, and the distinct form of analysis it requires, merits a dedicated report. It should be noted that the young people's associations are reported as written, and therefore include mis-spellings and terms which are undoubtedly offensive..

Closed association tests, such as the Implicit Association Tests (Greenwald et al. 1998), have been frequently used to explore and measure automatic associations between mental representations of categories and characteristics, and they are held to have the advantage of avoiding the processes of rationalization and social desirability that might affect more dialogical methods. This approach has been historically used in research into prejudice (Jahoda et al. 1951), and is still used currently on ingroup/outgroup face stimuli and word valence (Hurtado et al. 2009). We used word association not in the expectation of being able to 'measure' any underlying construct, but in order to explore what Vincent (1992), following Edelmann (1934), refers to as 'condensation symbols', ideas or images around which emotions may be focused. While recognising the limitations of using word association in an uncontrolled environment, and in conjunction with other forms of data collection that might prompt responses, the approach offered the opportunity to elicit associations at the 'doxic' (taken for granted) level of classification through identification and categorization (Bourdieu 1977, p. 164). The young people were asked to list three associations with the following terms: 'British', 'English', 'White', 'Muslim People', the name of their local authority area (Rochdale/Oldham), and 'multi-cultural', and were advised to write only the first word(s) that came into their head without subsequent correction. The words were chosen to explore the various responses to ideas of national and ethnic identity and also to explore tentatively how these might be related to identification with place and space.

The results of the exercise were analysed using the following approaches: firstly, aggregating responses into narrower thematic categories; exploring the finer grain of responses through looking at the different responses to the words that might be seen as homonyms (White, British, English); and exploring the relationship between the processes of

identification with 'own' group and classification of 'other' groups. There are clearly caveats to be entered concerning the data: it can be argued that by using a religious label for 'Muslim' (but not any other religion), and implicitly counter-posing it to 'White', 'British' and 'English', we are loading the dice in favour of religiously-based self-identification by young 'Asians'. Further, clusters of responses might be the consequence of the clustering of stimulus words, and in this sense, our use of word association technique needs to be sharply distinguished from the approach taken by other scholars who use a more parsimonious design. It should be noted that the use of the term 'Asian' in the text is intended as distinct from its use as a form of ethnic labelling: it reflects a folk usage of the term as a form of categorization and identification by both groups of young people.

Analysis of Results

Free Association norms provide a relative indication of what is known as 'forward strength', that is to say the likelihood that one word will cue another (Gillund and Shiffrin 1984; Nelson et al. 2004, p. 402). The figure for f orward response is reached by dividing the occurrences of a specific association by the number of respondents. Since we asked respondents for three associations, a forward strength of 0.2 for 'white' from 'English' therefore indicates a one in five chance of a respondent producing 'white' as one of their three responses to 'English'. Our data is distinct from that produced by free association studies, in that the aim of most FA studies is to reduce to a minimum the possibility of immediate contextual factors influencing the extent to which one word cues another: this increases the usefulness of any resulting set of norms for studying change. In our study, however, the specific research context, and the stimulus words themselves, would strongly cue words related to race, ethnicity and religion. The other elements of the study and the youth work context would establish a schematic predisposition towards certain associations, and our analysis must be read in that context. Also, our study differs from strict FA studies in grouping together synonyms since we were interested in exploring broader indicators of stress and tension between groups and the relationship between these indicators and feelings about place, and what the implications of the data were for the prospects of community cohesion.

It is useful, however, to take as a benchmark the association norms established by the Florida study for two of the words we used as stimuli, namely 'White' and 'English'. The Florida norms take two forms: 'forward strength', which is the likelihood of a word in the right hand column being cued by the stimulus word in the left hand column, and 'backward strength', which is the reverse. So while more than 1 in 2 (65 out of a 100) of the Florida population would

be likely to respond to the stimulus word 'White' with 'Black', while a slightly smaller proportion (55 out of 100) would be likely to respond to 'Black' with 'White'[i].

Insert Table 2

Source: Adapted from Appendix A to Nelson et al (2004), http://w3.usf.edu/FreeAssociation/AppendixA/index.html

We analysed the associations by comparing and contrasting the responses of the two broad groups who might be seen as Muslim and White, thus exploring the complexity of what Jenkins describes as the 'internal-external dialectic of identification' (2008, p. 59), the relationship between individual and group images of self and others, the public images through which each are refracted, and the formal and informal contexts in which these relationships are shaped. Associations that a group appeared to make with a label that might be applied to them we explored as forms of 'identification', while associations that were generated in relationship to label that might be associated with an out-group we construed as 'categorization'. Clearly some of the labels were ambiguous ('British', 'English') and others evoked identification indirectly (like place labels or 'multi-cultural'), and points of interest from this are explored below.

INSERT Table 3

Table 3 summarises the associations made by the 'white' population with the three words, British, White and English. In other papers, we have explored the issue of relative affiliation with the national and racial identities (Thomas and Sanderson 2011; 2012), but this data provides some interesting details to enrich the analysis. There are strong indications of a desire to have affirmative associations with all three terms, but clearly the group see 'White' and 'English' identity as significantly more positive than 'British', even though 4 in ten of them associate 'British' with 'England'. These positive associations are mirrored by the stronger personal identification with 'White' and 'English' illustrated by the relative forward strength of the 'me/my race' cluster of responses. Both forms of national identity also appeared to be significantly racialised, although, contrary to data emerging from interviews conducted contemporaneously (Authors 2011,2012) 'British' appeared to prompt a 'white' association almost twice as often as 'English'. As might have been anticipated, national symbols such as royalty, the two flags and aspects of diet (fish and chips in particular) provided strong associations, as did 'language' with 'English' (where the forward strength was almost identical to that in the Florida Free Association norms).

Associations which we did not feel could be embraced within a broader category, and were only made on one or two occasions are included in Table 4. It would be possible for any reader who wished to add one of these responses to a category in the previous table to include it and re-calculate the forward strength by using the base forward strength indicated at the bottom of each column.

Insert table 4

Noteworthy are some of the more extreme associations which use own-group cues as a launching pad for expressing hostility towards the perceived out-group ('It's our country meant for white people', 'hate racist Asians', 'paki'). There are also limited references to pubs and alcohol as identifiers, in contrast to the way these categories are associated by the 'Muslim' group with the three cue words.

Insert Table 5

The 'Muslim' group provide further contrasts in terms of the associations they made with British/White/English . The single most significant association is 'language' with 'English', and some of the variants in the broad category indicate the way in which bi-lingualism may render English as a language less of a taken for granted characteristic. The association which is strongest across all three cue words is 'white', indicating that the sense of national category is quite highly racialised as 'other' (interestingly equally between British and English). However, clearly for a large group of respondents, 'British' was perceived as a category which allowed for hybridity, as it was associated with diversity and different cultures (.31 forward strength), allowing for a degree of identification which was less possible with 'English'. A factor in this identification might be the reinforcement provided by the passports that the Muslim group were more likely to have used, and which would be a badge of citizenship and rights of residence (it was notable that 'passport' or 'red passport had a forward strength of .19 for the 'Muslim' group but only a singular response in the 'white' group).

Negative associations seemed to achieve greater salience for the Muslim group in relation to the 'English', and most significantly, the 'White' cues: while there was a 4% chance of an association between British and the alcohol/drunk cluster, there was a 22% chance of an association with 'White' and 14% with 'English'. The 'White' cue produced the

most negative associations, particularly in relation to racism, and the 'Scallie/chav/thug' cluster, while the 'English' cue attracted some negative associations in terms of expressions of physical disgust, and references to haram food.

Insert Table 6

The 'Muslim' cue produced the most sharply differentiated associations, and here it is important again to recognise the rather asymmetrical character of the research design, since there was not really an equivalent religious cue for the 'white' group. The 'Muslim' group identified strongly with religious symbolism, the idea of religiosity, and notably, religious observance (the significance of actually performing the five pillars of Islam). In addition, Muslim was predominantly associated with positive cultural and personality traits, (with a .35 forward strength for words like clam, peaceful, respectful). Of course this association might be cued by the idea of traits that are asserted as characteristic of Islam rather than those observed by the group in their co-religionists.

Insert Table 7

The 'white' group responded to 'muslim' with a set of associations that appear to express quite strong hostility. The apparently neutral and non-judgemental associations with religious symbolism or general acceptability were counter-balanced by expressions of physical disgust which mirrored those expressed by the 'muslim' group as associations for 'white'. Further negative associations appeared to cluster around stereotypes of benefit claiming and the owner ship of key services in the town. These might be tied to the most powerful negative association of disrespect, cheekiness, arrogance expressed with a forward strength of .25.

Insert Table 8

In line with our concern with the ways in which group relations might be shaped by the specificities of the socio-economic experience and spatial configuration of the northern mill town (Amin, 2002), we were interested in the associations that the two groups might make with the name of their own local authority area, given that the name came from the main and ethnically-mixed, town. In this context, we can note the tendency of each group to associated their identified label with the immediate locality they lived in (Smithybridge, Wardle, Werneth) reflecting the residential segregation which has been the subject of so much discussion and debate (Phillips, 2006; Simpson,

Ahmed and Phillips, 2008; Finney and Simpson, 2009). The 'white' group expressed overwhelmingly negative associations with their towns' names, and also associated the town with ethnic and racial labels. Both groups associated the town centre with conflict, while the Muslim group were more likely to associate it with drug-taking and prostitution. Both groups made associations with a negative physical environment (dirty, smelly) although this was far stronger in the case of the white group (.52 forward strength). The 'Muslim' group were far more likely to produce a positive association (family, community, home), or to express an identification, and were also more likely to refer to the political expression of the town in the form of the Town Hall, MP or councillors).

Insert Tables 9 & 10

Both groups identified the environment represented by their town as diverse and multi-cultural, though the extent to which this was a valued or rejected characteristic was polarised, and this was reflected in the two groups' views on multi-culturalism. Given the lower response rates on this item, we have not analysed and presented the results in as much detail. However, our respondents reacted to the label of 'multi-cultural', with a shared, spare, core definition which included a recognition that it involved different beliefs and religions, as well as mixed marriage, but with sharply different, and more intricate constructs. A large group of white respondents responded by refusing to recognise the word as having any meaning at all (*'don't know', don't understand', 'what does it mean?'*), while some others expressed explicitly negative connotations (*'smell', 'waste time', 'mongy', 'fights', 'boring people'*), or rejected the idea explicitly (*'dress like us in England', 'bad to mix with other* races'). Others made positive associations, but in relation to symbols of Black African-Caribbean culture (*'Bob Marley', 'cool'*). Responses that either acknowledged the positive benefits of multi-culturalism, or associated the idea with positive symbols were few and far between.

By contrast, our 'muslim' respondents combined an extended understanding of the word's meaning with a set of positive connotations that appeared to amount to an endorsement of the concept, and a sense that it could be identified as a positive aspect of British (if not Oldham and Rochdale) life (*'getting on with each other', 'happy', 'friendly', 'equal', 'not racist', 'neighbourhood', 'community', 'interactive'*).

As we noted in the methodology section, the data discussed here has obvious limitations. It was not collected under experimental conditions that seek to exclude the influence of specific context: in fact the intentional effect of the methodology worked in the other direction, and this is reflected in the highly specific and local character of some of the associations. The emphasis here was on ecological validity: what associations come to mind for young people in areas apparently characterised by tension and periodic conflict? Some of these associations will be very time-

sensitive. The data gathered here preceded by a couple of years some of the controversies which have more recently dominated the local and national[ii] press in relation to Oldham and Rochdale in the form of racialised accounts of drug dealing and the 'grooming' of vulnerable young women by individuals and groups using taxis and take-away outlets. It is certainly possible that these events would be reflected in the results of any replicated exercise undertaken now. However, this very context dependence emphasises the corresponding value of this data as a potential benchmark for exploring differences between locations and over time. We also need to recognise that an association as such does not necessarily imply a personal identification with the association, or imply that specific behaviour would follow on from holding such an association. However, taken en masse they provide an indication of the prism through which these young people saw these kinds of issues in the aftermath of urban riots in the early 2000s.

Discussion

In this concluding discussion, we will briefly explore the kinds of contextual factors which might be seen as affecting the findings as we have presented them, as well as the relationship of our data to parallel studies of multi-culturalism and ethnically-based tensions among young people. One reading of the data could see the mutual suspicion and hostility which some of the associations appear to illustrate as an endorsement of aspects of the 'parallel lives' argument (Cantle 2001; Ouseley 2001; Oldham Independent Review Panel 2001): lack of contact between groups does generate judgements based on mutual suspicion partially grounded in poorly understood external aspects of differentiated cultures. However, a range of research studies in different parts of the United Kingdom suggest that processes of identification and categorization with national, religious and ethnic labels are far more nuanced and contingent: for example the contrast between Hopkins' finding of a comparative preference amongst Muslim young people in Scotland for the label 'Scottish Muslim' (2007) as opposed to Scourfield and Davies' discussion of the rejection of the 'Welsh Muslim' label by young Muslims in Wales (2005). The precise nature of the contact which occurs between groups, and the context which frames it, is a key factor in understanding mutual perceptions and dispositions. So for example, our data might suggest that a greater sensitivity to the socio-spatial factors which structure relationships might be an important aspect of research in this area.

So in Oldham and Rochdale we might pay attention to the historically segregated school place allocation system (Burgess et al. 2005; Harris 2010; Carter 2011) which these areas share with many others, and to the evidence that this is the product of residential choices made by all groups in the area. A substantial proportion of the young people in our study shared secondary schooling with members of their 'out-group', and our companion research suggests

that they often conceived of in-school friendships as possible (Authors 2011,2012), but by this stage previous conceptions of the other group, reinforced by contextual factors may have produced a situation where the processes of identification and categorization for each group could come to be locked in a kind of negative synergy.

For example, it might be sensible to think of Muslim communities as 'distinctive' rather than 'separate': the role of family and community values which in other contexts, the communitarian strand in public policy has sought to encourage, appears to be represented in our data. Certainly, the associations expressed by our Muslim respondents with their own faith label (strikingly similar to the representations of Muslims expressed by Hopkins' respondents [2007]), resonated with Basit's finding that religious identity represented an important resource for young Muslims, which also enabled them to develop a clear identification with the idea of citizenship-based national identification (2009), more compatible with Islamic religious identity. Some element of this positive view of citizenship can be found in the 'British' associations made by the Muslim group, alongside the less positive connotations which form a cluster with the morally tinged negative associations made by a substantial minority of Muslims with 'White' and English'. This critical prism appeared to find reverse image in the 'white' association of 'Muslim' with words connoting arrogance, and the phrase 'think they're better than us'. It seems a reasonable assumption that these reciprocally negative associations may be the product of contact rather than its absence, emphasising the view that 'contact' per se can re-enforced existing prejudices and fears, and simultaneously highlighting the importance of policy approaches to cross-ethnic interactions that genuinely meet the necessary conditions of 'contact theory'.

In fact, reluctance to 'mix' appears to be stronger amongst white young people, some of whom define Whiteness and Englishness in terms of their incompatibility with and Asian or Muslim identity, and amongst whom the response to the idea of multi-culturalism appeared to be very negative. This is in line with the findings of others concerning the tendency of white working class young people to express negativity towards multi-culturalism and community cohesion policies and discourse (Beider 2011), and the inter-weaving of this negativity with a narrative of unfairness, neglect and dispossession which is a core component of what has been described as 'white backlash' (Nayak 2009; Hewitt 2005; Rhodes 2010, Authors 2012).This makes all the more urgent the need for policy around cohesion and Integration to engage with predominantly white communities much more than it has done to date. In a similar fashion to the 'Muslim' group, a minority of the white group appeared to perceive Britishness as a hybrid identity which they viewed less positively than 'Englishness'. The 'white group' expressed some very positive associations with

the own identification labels, though these appeared assertive and to refer to symbolic associations with national identity, rather than specific attributes.

The experience of marginality may be seen as an important frame for understanding the associations of the 'white' group, a marginality which assumes a multiple form: socio-economic marginality is reinforced by a dual spatial marginality, in which Oldham and Rochdale are marginalised in relation to their more successful metropolitan neighbour, Manchester, and the white group feel further marginal to the local town centre that gives name to their local authority area. While both groups absorbed and reproduced the sense of spatial stigma against which Northern Towns have struggled, where the centres are associated with second-rate shopping, binge-drinking and the least positive aspects of the 'night-time economy' (Hollands 2002; Roberts 2006), the Muslim group appeared more likely to express positive identification and association with their town and to associate it with self, family and community, and words used in councils' politico-economic project of regeneration.

 Kearns and Forrest identify social networks and capital, common values and a civic culture, and a degree of place attachment as key local dimensions of social cohesion (2000), and our findings seem to indicate differentiation between our two groups of respondents in relation to these three dimensions, with the Muslim group producing more positive place associations, and more cohesive response to their identification label, and aspects of place appearing to indicate a fault line rather than a potential source of mobility. There has been a considerable effort to ensure that Oldham and Rochdale are less isolated from metropolitan Manchester through the development of the Metrolink extension, and equally a concern that in the aftermath of the riots and negative press coverage, that a form of 're-branding' should provide a more positive image of Oldham town centre (Kadembo 2009). Attempts to encourage more positive contact through the education system have focused on secondary education, and the data suggests that primary schools remain as highly segregated in Oldham as they were at the time of the disturbances in 2001 (Burgess and Harris 2011) although this may now be starting to change through newly-established academies.

In a telling passage in his discussion of community, Bauman identifies the way in which, in an increasingly complex society we may attempt to deal with the unfamiliar by projecting *'our fears on to the strangers that triggered them, and to blame city life for being dangerous … because of its variety'* (2001: 148). The contact advocated in community cohesion policy may, even in its most positive guise, be an incomplete and particular solution to this anxiety and fear, given the background of generalised negative associations about out-groups and place attachment against which our evidence suggests it occurs, but it remains a viable policy response.

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[i] We have not included the statistics for backward strength in the current paper.

[ii] 'Rochdale grooming gag leader gets 22 years for child rape', The Guardian, 2/08/2012, www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/aug/02/rochdale-grooming-leader-child-rape

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