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Thomas, Paul

Attitudes and Dispositions within Marginalised White Communities: Implications for Policy and Practice

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## Attitudes and Dispositions within Marginalised White Communities: Implications for Policy and Practice

# White Communities and Diversity

- We are often not comfortable discussing ‘White communities’ but we need to do so!
- Evidence from the 2011 Census shows both that more and more residential areas are becoming ethnically-mixed and that there is a growing number of inter-ethnic marriages and relationships
- Many White people have very tolerant and anti-racist attitudes to ethnic diversity in society – change HAS happened...but there are also significant challenges within many White communities

# Attitudes within White communities

- Significant levels of racial harassment and violence and the support for/ association with the name and stance of groups like the EDL/WDL demonstrates that there is a significant problem of racism within some White communities
- Our research in Oldham/Rochdale suggests that some white young people seem resistant to and pessimistic about ethnic-mixing: **60% of the group self-identifying as Muslim (n=76) agreed that 'Britain is a stronger country because of difference' as opposed to 23% of white young people (n=172). In response to the converse statement that 'Britain is stronger if groups live separately', only 16% of Muslims definitely agreed and 71% definitely disagreed, as opposed to 36% of the white group definitely agreeing and 30% definitely disagreeing, so displaying a small but significant white majority in support of the idea that even greater ethnic segregation would be better for all concerned**

(Thomas and Sanderson, 2013, 'Crossing the line: White young people and Community Cohesion', in *Critical Social Policy*, 33:1, 160-180)

# Attitudes within White communities

- White communities are much more monocultural and ‘segregated’ than non-white communities and have less experience of ethnic diversity (even if we question ‘white flight’)
- The previous policy approach to multiculturalism had the unintended consequence of leaving majority White communities less sure of their ‘identity’ (Nayak, 1999), as in the Netherlands (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2009) – many think ‘multiculturalism’ means favouritism towards ethnic minorities
- At the same time, economic change has significantly un-made many industrial communities – Baumann’s ‘liquid modernity’ - and created anxiety
- In parallel, discussion of ‘class’ identity and inequality has diminished, as discussion of ethnic identity has grown, leading to racialised understandings of the ‘white working class’, with social class resentment ‘acted out’ as ‘race’

# Cohesion Policy and White communities



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- Multiculturalism never really knew how to describe or engage with ‘White communities’
- Some positive multicultural and anti-racist education work happened in schools and youth work, but other attempts were clumsy and counter-productive, leading to a ‘White backlash’ (Hewitt, 2005) – too often it focussed on ‘policing’ attitudes amongst white young people rather than encouraging open dialogue that might lead to attitudinal change
- Central to this was a failure to focus on the aims of such work and on the skills and confidence of the educational practitioners involved
- Community Cohesion recognised this, but has found it hard to engage some White communities, partially because of weak civil society locally

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# Initial Research data: Local area of West Yorkshire

- Co-designed research in partnership with two West Yorkshire local authorities – results here are from the larger of the two.
- Mixed methods research involving 434 household surveys in key neighbourhood patches, 15 Focus Groups with 3 age groups of residents and 7 Key Informant interviews with local professionals
- Aim for local authorities is that data informs local cohesion and Prevent strategies, as well as their broader community engagement work

For the University, it is about understanding:

- Attitudes to community cohesion and greater cross-community contact and mixing in such marginalised white areas
- The extent to which the themes and issues articulated by political groups such as the EDL are representative of attitudes and dispositions within such wider white communities

# Research Case Study area

- Local Authority case study area has two main urban areas:
- **Town A** – Larger, more successful and varied economy/jobs market, significant ethnic diversity with several different and substantial minority ethnic communities
- **Town B** – Medium-sized town, higher unemployment and largely duo-cultural –substantial Muslim Asian community and majority White community. This town has seen historic racial tensions and far-right agitation. This town area is , as a result, the main focus of local community cohesion work and most of the research activity focussed on this area.



# University Research Team

- Joel Busher, Graham Macklin (Sociology/Politics)
- Michelle Rogerson, Kris Christmann (Applied Criminology Centre)
- Paul Thomas (Education)

# Key Themes

- Place
- Political dispositions
- Dispositions and attitudes to ‘contact’ and Integration
- Weak community leadership
- Implications for local and national Policy

# What's good about own local town? Town B



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nothing  
shops  
market  
train service

countrywide  
community  
parks  
events  
buses  
public transport  
train station  
swimming pool  
parking  
churches  
accessible  
walks  
clean  
hospital  
buildings  
berghams  
nightlife  
amenities  
town hall  
things to do  
town centre  
supermarkets  
friendly  
pubs  
amenities  
environment  
not too busy  
hospital

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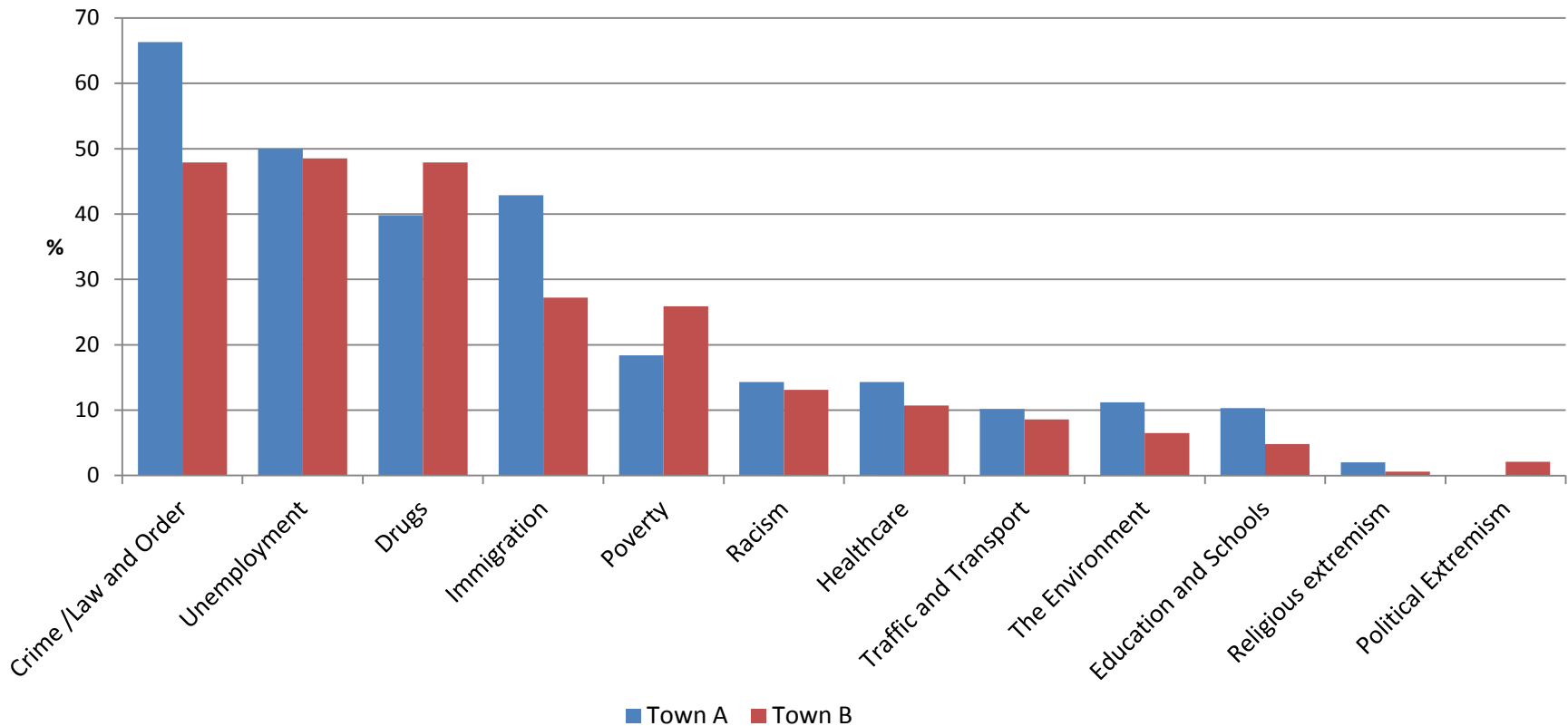
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# Problems in Town



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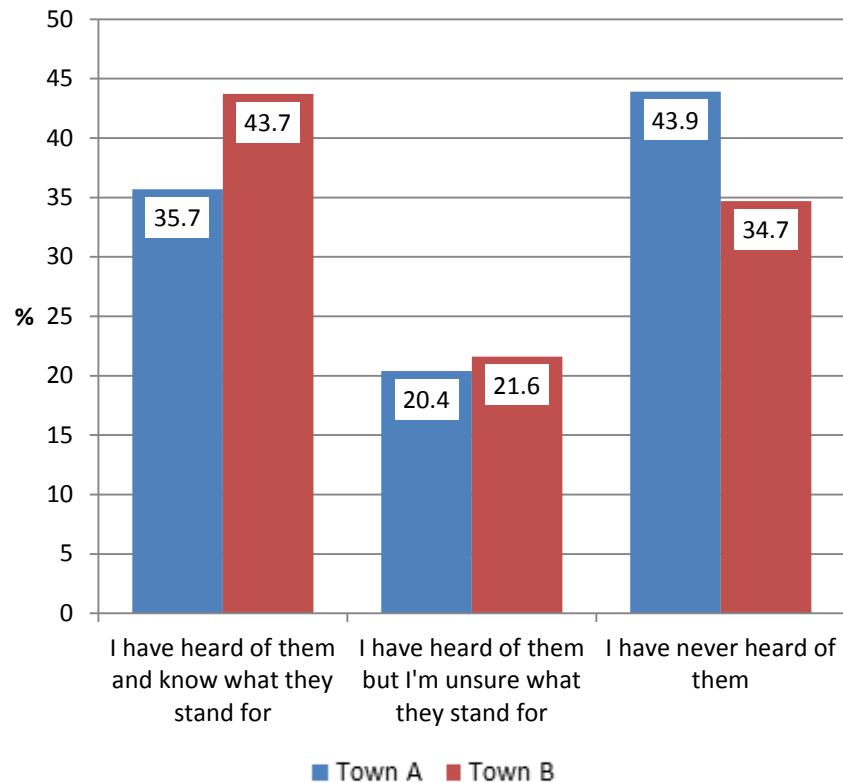


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# Place: Qualitative Themes

- Decline/Decay/external stigma
- Territoriality/micro communities
- Youth – lack of places and safe space
- Racialisation of space and changing ethnic balance
- Racialised understanding of sexual harassment

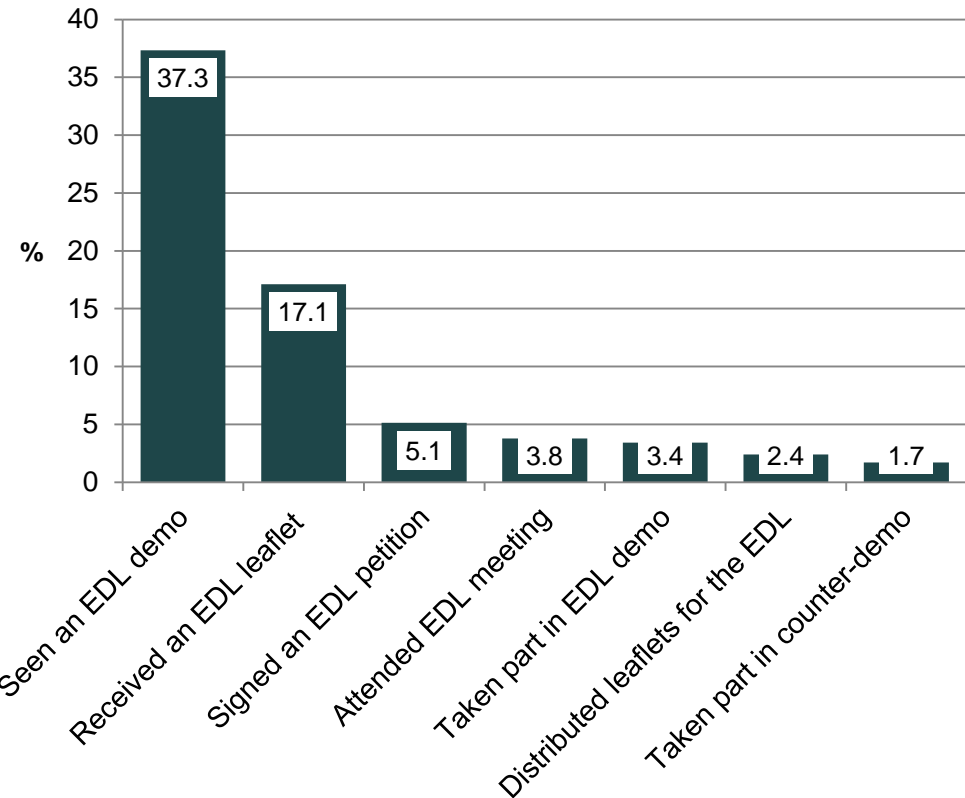
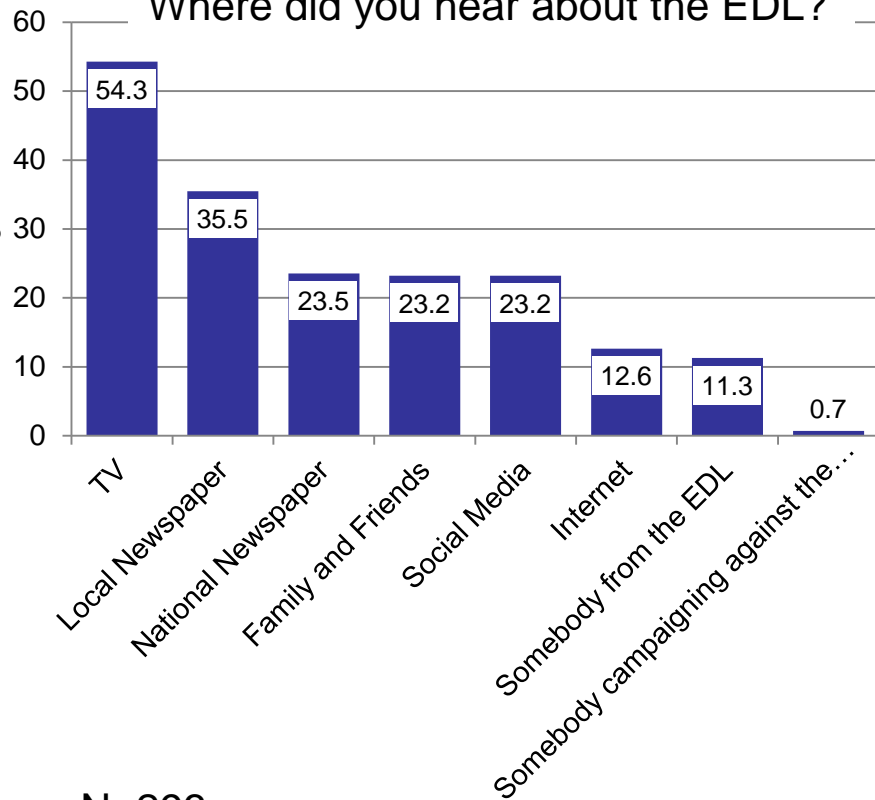
# EDL Awareness



- Awareness not new
- Awareness higher:
  - Male
  - Younger
  - Employed
  - BNP, UKIP

# EDL Contact

Where did you hear about the EDL?



N=293

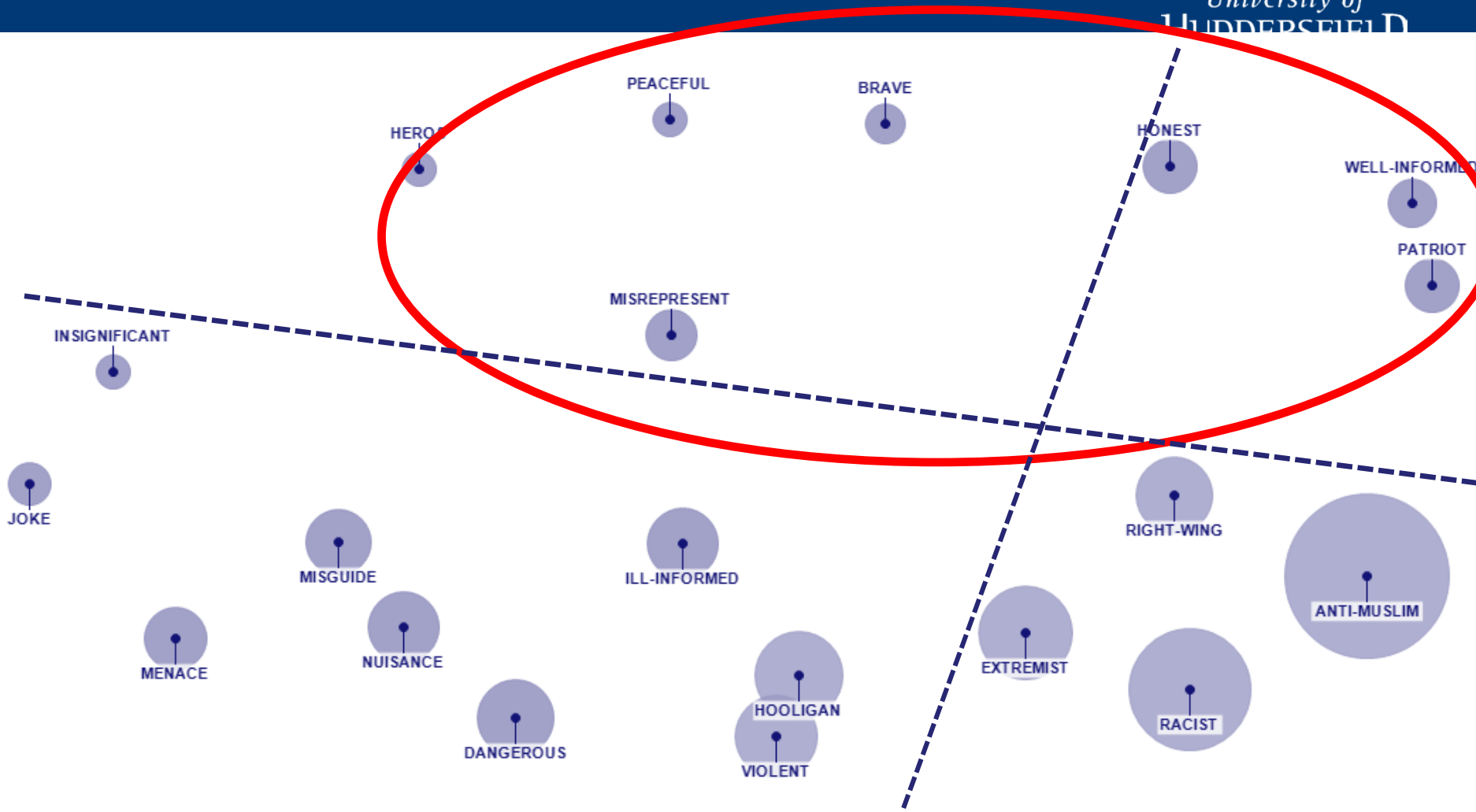
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# EDL Views



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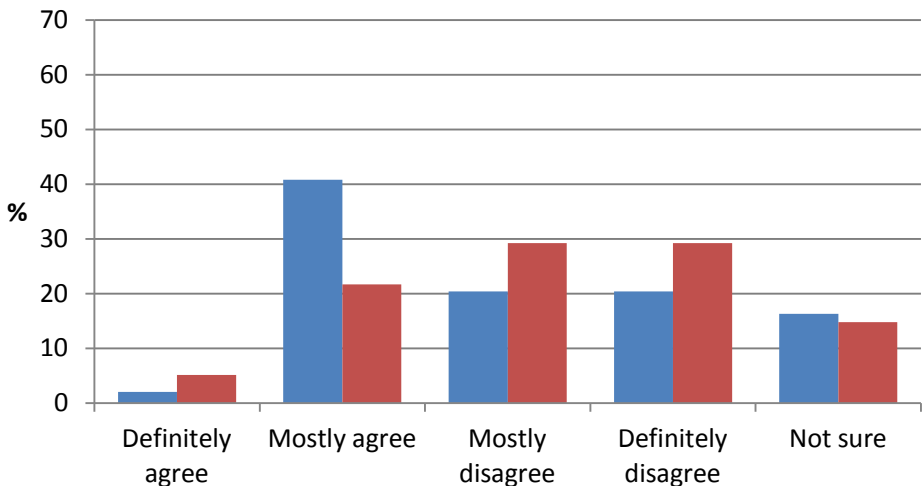




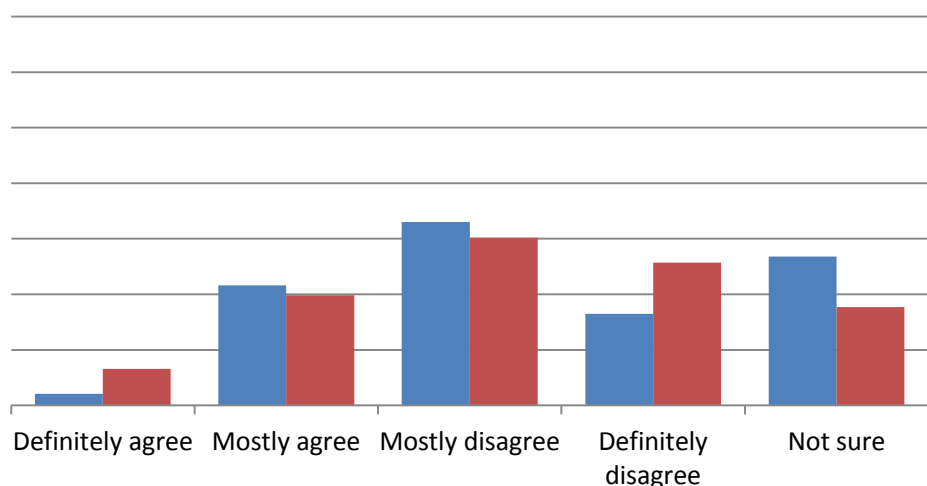
# Political Dispositions: Qualitative Themes

- Significant antagonism towards/only minority support for EDL and its rallies
- ...but they are a 'badge' for wider feelings/dispositions of marginalisation and sense of 'unfairness' within wider white communities – feel forgotten and have a racialised envy at facilities and apparent economic growth in 'Asian' areas, alongside some envy of the apparent solidity of Asian communities/families
- Feelings of unfairness and decline fuelled by local media and word of mouth
- Observations/perceptions about some parts of BME communities fuels feelings
- Feel stigmatised/judged by other communities and marginalised by authorities

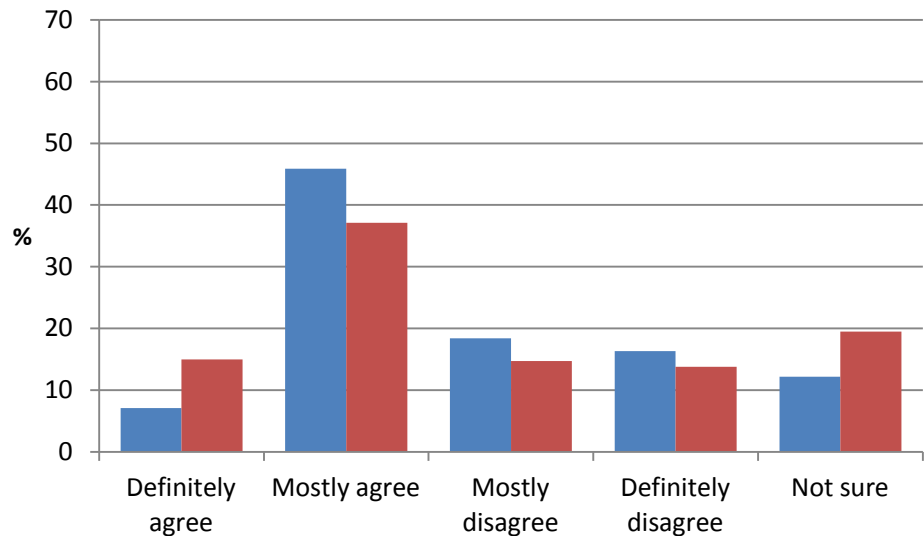
**[Town] is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together**



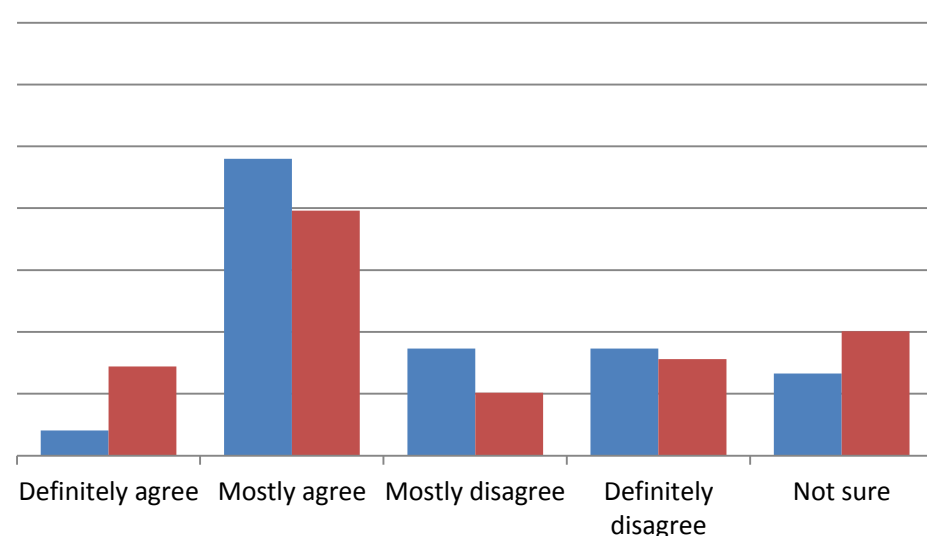
**[Town] Is a place where people from different religious backgrounds get on well together**



**It is good that there are people from different ethnic backgrounds living in [Town]**

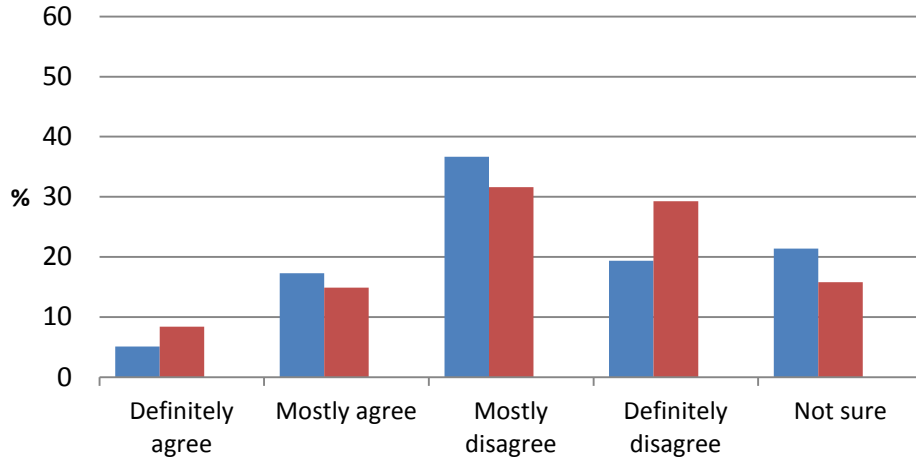


**It is good that there are people from different religious backgrounds living in [Town]**

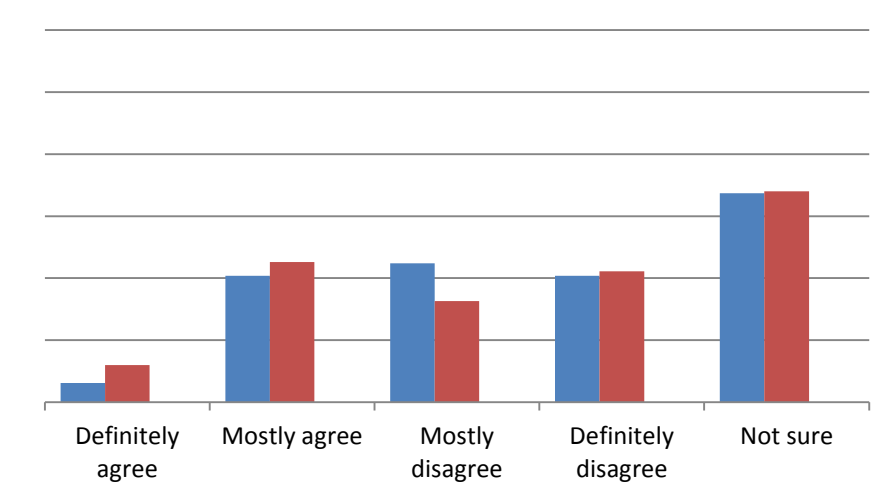


**Town A** **Town B**

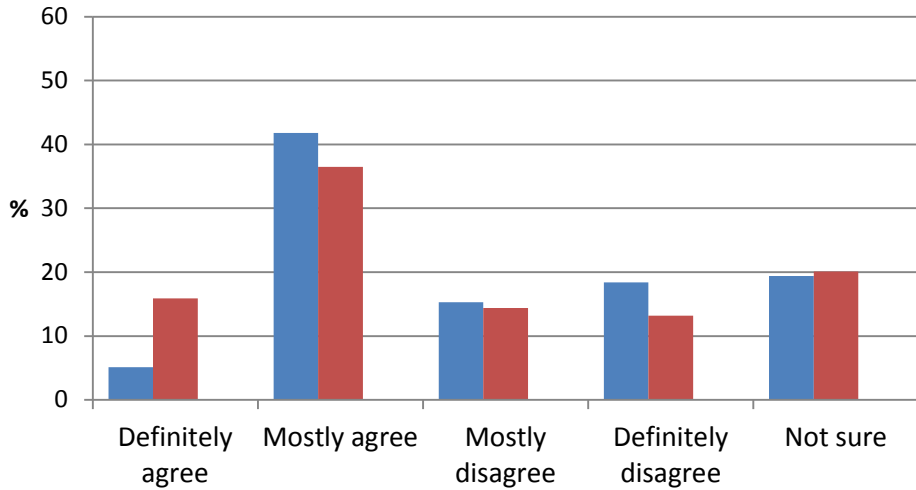
**All people in [Town] are treated equally by by the authorities**



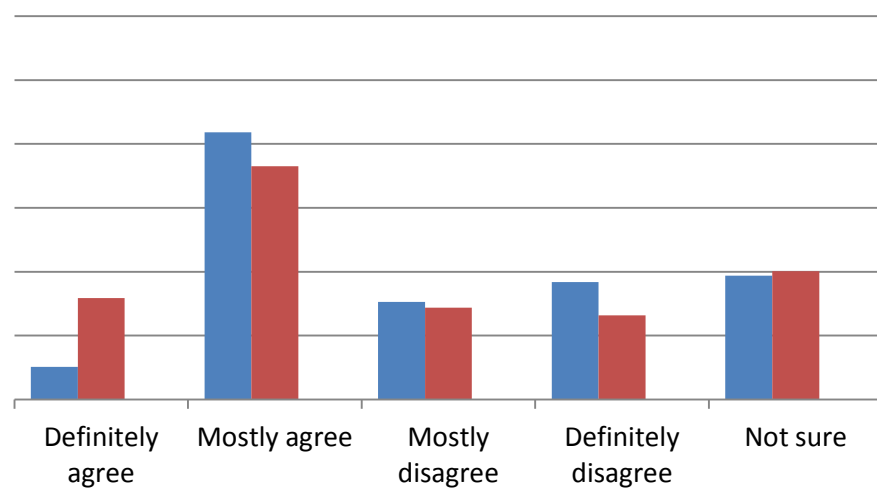
**People are able to come together around a set of common values**



**There should be more contact between people of different ethnic backgrounds in [Town] than there is at present**



**There should be more contact between people of different religious backgrounds in [Town] than there is at present**



■ Town A ■ Town B

# Contact and Integration: Qualitative Themes

## 1. Schools and Colleges

- Some good mixing in some schools but attitudes of peers/families prevent out-of-school mixing
- Continued perceptions of 'unfairness' in inter-ethnic conflicts between pupils
- Demographic balance shifting rapidly in some schools – not comfortable with this
- **SOME** support for more mixed schooling, but some yp want **MORE** separation

## 2. Communities

- Some people **CAN** get on on a neighbourly basis
- Contradictions of prejudiced statements/attitudes, but willingness of some individuals to take part in cross-community contact at same time
- Gender – contact with Asian men but not with Asian women
- Differences between contact with people from Asian backgrounds and people from Eastern European backgrounds

# Contact and Integration: Qualitative Themes

3. Some slow, steady progress is happening in that some areas are becoming somewhat more mixed and some people's attitudes are changing (Cross ethnic relationships/marriages will happen in time – long-term view) but...

4. Significant, submerged racism and anger/frustration amongst many white adults that negatively impacts on young people – how does policy/practice influence them? 'They' don't want to integrate with us...

## 5. Some whites don't want, or see the need for, cross-community contact

– they believe that it will only lead to conflict - this is particularly strong in some small, specific housing patches where hostility to any outsiders is strong and some ASB is common

# Community Leadership

- Who speaks for them? Lack of authentic ‘community leaders’ in marginalised white communities
- Weak civil society in many of these areas
- Unfavourable comparison here to Asian areas
- Reliance on/importance of local state professionals within communities
- However, there ARE strong family/community networks

# Policy: Themes and Recommendations

- Continued efforts to regenerate Town B centre are important as negative feelings about the decline of the town centre and of neighbourhood shopping areas is impacting on perceptions of community relations.
- Community capacity building work in target areas and the creation of opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making processes will help to strengthen the development of local community organisations and authentic leaders speaking for them.
- Ground-level professional practitioners play a vital role in many of these areas and their presence should be retained as a priority.
- A continuing focus on ‘myth-busting’ is required.
- Similarly, schools need to continue to demonstrate transparent ‘fairness’ in the way they handle conflicts.



# Policy: Themes and Recommendations

- Encouraging cross-community dialogue and contact is a long, slow process within many communities and a policy/practice focus on this does need to be maintained consistently.
- Regular, fun opportunities for such cross-community contact need to be available to people within communities.
- Although there are people in predominantly white communities who are resistant to greater cross-community contact, there is also a substantial proportion of these communities that recognise that greater contact can create a better environment for all. Indeed, there have been a number of 'grassroots' efforts to promote such contact. Efforts are required to build on these initiatives and this appetite for contact.

Paul Thomas

School of Education and Professional Development,  
University of Huddersfield, UK

d.p.thomas@hud.ac.uk

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