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'It all boils down to respect doesn't it?': Enacting a sense of community in a deprived inner-city area

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**“It all boils down to respect doesn’t it?”: enacting a sense of community
in a deprived inner-city area**

Abstract

Audio recordings of meetings of two community groups in a deprived inner-city area were analysed, using discursive psychological and conversation analytic techniques to explore situated enactments of ‘community’. Participants situated themselves as members; of a geographical community; of an “imagined” community; and, of other constitutive communities. A sense of community was enacted through five interactional strategies: affirming moral codes, ‘defending’ other members, distinguishing insiders from outsiders, enacting empowerment and challenging institutions. Participants regularly employed emotional displays and affirmed moral positions, both to constitute ‘community’ and to take action in it. In so doing they worked up social capital and positioned community concerns in ways more reflective of their own situated values than of criminal law or government policy.

Keywords: sense of community, community, morality, interaction, discursive psychology, conversation analysis

Introduction

This article presents an analysis of how two community groups meeting in a deprived area enact a sense of community. Deprived, here, acknowledges the area's status on material indicators of deprivation compiled by the local authority and the European Union rather than any subjective or community-member descriptions. In common with other studies, ours does not treat community as a simple, stable fact of social reality, but as an achievement with practical, social and psychological dimensions that contingently embody its morals and values. For Silk (1999) "Community' suggests any or all of... common needs and goals, a sense of common good, shared lives, culture and views of the world, and collective action" (p.8). Whiteley (1960) treated community as a more static entity, linked firmly to morality. Community morality, he suggests, "consists of those ways of behaviour which each member of the community is taught, bidden and encouraged to adopt by the other members" (p.141). This perspective links both community and morality to individual behaviour, but remaining rather opaque here is how community itself is constituted. Moreover, both this and Silk's more dynamic perspective are potentially tempered by distinctions between notions of community rooted in either liberal or communitarian philosophies, with their differing conceptualisations of the relations between individuals and collectives (Smith, 1999).

Further complexities arise because community is sometimes construed as a straightforward, bounded physical territory (Silk,1999), and sometimes as a 'stretched-out' form (Allen & Hamnett, 1995; Miller, 1993): not necessarily

Comment [.1]: In full

reliant on face-to-face interaction but constituted through shared interests and goals and supported by technology. The relations between space, place and community can be fluid: social process is not always indicative of spatial form, and vice versa (Silk, 1999).

The concept of 'imagined communities' of nationhood (Anderson, 1991) encompasses both locally-based and 'stretched out' notions of community. One can be a member of a local place-based community and a citizen of a national state; members can observe customs and traditions (enacted through language, dialect, religion, dress and the like) and dwell within territorial boundaries without ever becoming acquainted with every other member - and consequently without every fully appreciating the diversities submerged within the commonalities they imagine. The community groups in the present study are constituted geographically with respect to a reasonably small inner city area; however they are also designated as groups whose actions should be in the interests of *all* residents of that locality, and to this extent the community they embody is also a symbolic one. Moreover, the groups are constituted for particular purposes and largely made up of volunteer residents, and so may also be construed as 'communities of choice' (Silk, 1999). This concept is indexed by Hirschman (1970) who differentiates between community members who exercise choice either to exit a community (physically or passively) or elect to act in that community to bring about change: he contends that the key factor in this is the degree to which members identify with, and are loyal to, a (particular, presumably imagined) community. This concept of community is highly relevant here, since the participants are almost all volunteer residents

who have chosen to develop a particular collective voice, and who attempt to interact with and within their locale, and to shape it in line with their remit as a group.

Taking a community psychological approach, Orford (1992) foregrounds the dynamic reciprocity between individuals and their settings; individuals' experiences and behaviours are influenced by their environment, whilst at the same time they create and shape it. They are "in a continuing *transaction* with the various settings in which they spend time" (Orford, 1992, p.14). This dynamic view, suggesting continuous iteration and the construction and reconstruction of a sense of community, emphasises the limitations of static, snapshot views for understandings of how communities are constituted and their associated moralities established. Fisher, Sonn and Bishop (2002) have highlighted both the lack of consensus on issues surrounding 'sense of community', and also the diversity of contexts in which it is explored. Some community psychological studies (e.g. McMillan & Chavis, 1986) discuss it as a somewhat innate psychological variable. Many studies have relied upon survey data generated using various scales and indices; an approach which largely precludes consideration of the emergent, lived, dynamic relations between community members. Shotter (1993) contends that:

to live in a community which one senses as being one's own.....one must be more than just an accountable reproducer of it. One must in a real sense also play a part in its creative sustaining of itself as a 'living tradition'. One must feel able to fashion one's own 'position', within t he

'argument' or 'arguments' to do with both constituting and reconstituting the tradition. (pp.162-163).

To capture such dimensions, then, it seems necessary to explore how community members work together to produce and enact particular, situated, versions of community (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

However, this does not suggest treating community as devoid of material consequences, since the "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity that arise from them" (Putnam, 2000, p.19) constitute a form of social capital. This empowers individuals and communities to take action: coming together and collectively enacting a sense of community is a way of developing and wielding power. However, social capital can be inequitably distributed no matter how much communities (and in particular community groups) work towards the common good. Members can use it as a means of maintaining their own (potentially privileged) position, and to sideline other members or ideas (e.g., Arneil, 2006).

How then is a sense of community to be understood, and how far is it bound up with morality (for example, see Opatow, Gerson & Woodside, 2005)? In recent years, numerous researchers have looked at sense of community as a social construct mobilised in talk. Columbo and Senatore (2005) identified various facets of a 'community repertoire', produced in interviews. Rapley and Pretty (1999) used conversation analysis of semi-structured interviews, finding that a particularised, localised discourse was used to build versions of 'community' and 'sense of community'. They concluded that future research should focus on

how members discursively produce accounts, where 'community' and the lived sense of it that is invoked, have specific, intersubjective relevances. They also emphasise the limitations of interview data with respect to this topic, suggesting that "Perhaps, it is time to return to naturally occurring discourse and to attend to the manner in which people talk 'community' into being in the doing of their everyday business" (p.709) ; the present study uses just this kind of data.

Everyday talk is also a suitable site for the study of moralities. Analysing actual interaction, researchers can identify how moral matters are made relevant in the organisation of talk, so avoiding de-contextualised, pseudo-theoretical accounts, and the unwarranted imposition of normative moral frameworks (Bergmann, 1998). In other words, researchers can study how morality and a sense of community get contingently constituted in the everyday talk of participants. Stokoe and Wallwork (2003) looked at neighbourhood disputes, observing that participants' descriptions contained definitions of 'good' and 'bad' neighbours and these categories were used to invoke and construct a moral order; participants "align and re-align the social and moral order and establish some version of events as social 'fact'or as constituting common knowledge about what defines appropriate and moral behaviours..." (p.556).

Thus, by examining everyday interaction, it is possible to explore how versions and notions of morality and a sense of community are simultaneously achieved. Our analyses also show how collective, community identities are used to work up situated versions of community that enable participants to develop empowerment and social capital in their dealings with each other and with

institutions. In these ways, they situate and re-situate themselves with respect to problems, using a variety of resources to develop potential solutions.

Data corpus

The data consist of audio-recorded meetings of two community groups collected between June 2006 and May 2009. These groups meet and work within a deprived inner-city area of Nottingham, a city renowned for its high crime rates; in particular its gun crime. It is an ethnically diverse area that has significant levels of income deprivation, poor health, disability and pensioner poverty (Nottingham City Council 2004). The two groups are supported by a charity that brings together business, local authorities and the local community, with the aim of keeping the local community clean and safe. The “Tidy our Community” (TOC) group focuses allocated resources upon the former whilst the “Watch our Community (WOC) focuses upon the latter. Membership of the groups was quite stable over the three years, with between five and twelve people attending each meeting. Several members of the TOC group were also members of the WOC group, so there was some overlap in membership. Although we didn’t systematically gather demographic information, members tended to be equally likely to be men or women, older (many were in their 40’s, the oldest in his 70’s), predominantly white British, long-term residents in the area. Meetings were chaired by a paid worker and included at varying times, local authority and Police Service representatives as well as residents and community wardens.

Method

After first separately obtaining informed consent from each of the participants, meetings were recorded using digital recording equipment. The researcher was

Comment [.2]: Is there another descriptor that does not reproduce problematic ‘race’ category

present at the time of recording but sat apart from the main group allowing them to proceed in as naturalistic a manner as possible. Eighteen meetings were recorded in all, comprising thirteen TOC meetings and five WOC meetings: the latter meetings were recorded subsequently, as a check that any findings were not simply the artefact of one group – hence there are fewer WOC meeting recordings. Data collection generated over twenty-four hours of data. Initially the meetings were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription service and subsequently selected sections were transcribed using Jeffersonian transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004). This enabled the capture of **hearable** features of the talk such as any added emphasis placed on particular words, particularly loudly or softly spoken words and increases or decreases in pitch within the talk, all of which could be used to inform analysis, in the sense that they were used to enact emotion or construct the matters discussed, in a particular way, with particular nuances. The data was then analysed using **discourse and conversation analytic techniques**. The use of naturally occurring data has the advantages of avoiding interviewer ‘interference’ and allows agendas to be driven by participants rather than the researcher (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). We were thus able to engage with issues that emerged in the interaction between members, rather than predefining them. Analytic rigour is maintained both through the rigour inherent in discourse and conversation analytic techniques, as well as the transparency enabled by presentation of representative extracts that can be scrutinized alongside interpretations.

Analysis

Comment [.3]: audible

Comment [.4]: i understand these as different. Any particular set of authors that informed this that can be listed for readers?

Comment [.5]: Perhaps analysis and interpretation? Just a suggestion

In regular discussions about a range of behaviours that are of concern to the TOC and WOC Community Groups, participants are observed to enact a sense of community by identifying and engaging certain moral codes as they apply to their community. They talk of having discretion over what is 'acceptable', or otherwise, and display themselves as protective of the interests of more 'vulnerable' members of their community. Furthermore in their interactions they identify and differentiate between those who are more transient members of their community and those who are culturally different. The group uses these resources to enact a sense of their community, producing themselves as community members who are collectively empowered and capable of taking action - both in an immediate, practical sense, and in the sense of challenging authorities and institutions to respond to their concerns. Since this is part of their remit as community groups, they also orient consistently to the wider communities within which they are embedded, and with which they interact.

Affirming the moral code of the community

In the following two examples members engage a moral code or framework to position certain behaviours. In particular participants construct and affirm a sense of what is acceptable and what is not with regard to cycling in the community and consuming alcohol in public places.

Extract 1

(TOC2)

((participants are talking about cyclists cycling on pavements))

- 1 **Mar:** i think it all boils down to (.) uhm respect
2 [doesn't] it,
3 **Joy:** [respect]
4 **Jun:** yes, that's what it i:s.
5 **Mar:** and that's just >gone out the window< and i think if i'm:
6 ↑cause i-i've been- i've nearly been knocked over on the

7 pavemen[t.
8 ? : [ye[ah
9 Mar: [with a [cy-]
10 Jun: [yes] I have yeah
11 Mar: uhm cyclist aswell. and he was ↑goin ↑at quite a
12 spee[d
13 Jun: [ye[h
14 Mar: [you know, and uhm its- >he just didn't seem to,<
15 be ↓bother:ed
16 Jun: °don't care°
17 Mar: you ↓know, uhm:
18 Dav: (>i mean<) cause they we[ave in and out don't they

Participants have been discussing the behaviour of cyclists some of whom cycle too fast on pavements and some of whom are more careful (participants have displayed a *general* acceptance of cycling on pavements – it is the degree of care taken that has formed the basis of the prior talk). In Extract 1, Martha draws upon a very particular, commonly-known, moral category (“respect”), to characterize the matter in hand. The notion that cyclists’ behaviour “all boils down to respect “ is suggested by Martha (line 1), restated by Joy (line 3) and agreed by June (line 4), thereby building this as a category of behaviour that belongs to a shared moral framework of which each member has shared appreciation. Martha further builds up the moral case by suggesting that respect is not just lacking but has ‘gone out of the window’. This suggests that people have not only *not* got respect but have *actively* discarded it, which again projects a moral dimension onto the cyclists’ behaviour. Martha attributes a particular disposition to a cyclist who almost knocked her over on the pavement (lines 14-15), claiming “he just didn’t seem to be bothered”. At line 16, June suggests that cyclists “don’t care”. Martha and June collaboratively build a picture of cyclists who are by their ‘uncaring’ disposition breaching the moral code of the community of which they share membership. Their membership and ‘right’ to comment is displayed through a shared and affirmed appreciation

of the moral category (respect) as used by each, and also through shared experiences of the behaviour itself (lines 6-10). They thus construct a particular sense of community by producing shared experiences, positioning them within a particular, shared moral framework. Martha within her next turn (not shown) also positions this in a wider community context, when she says “i suspect it’s illegal, yeah?”. Thus there is orientation to both a particular sense of community in which this behaviour is disrespectful and to a sense of a wider community in which it is also illegal. Sense of community is produced here as something quite local and particular, using common experiences and moral stances, but also as something existing within a wider community; an imagined community that has as one of its bases, a legal system which differentiates legal and illegal behaviours.

In Extract 2 participants discuss whether someone having a picnic with wine in a ‘no alcohol’ zone would or should be stopped from doing so and whether they as ‘upholders’ of their community ‘rules’ have some discretion over how they apply them.

Extract 2
(WOC11)

1 **Mal:** would you turn a blind eye,=
2 **Jim:** =we:l[l,
3 **Ray:** [(its how far) if they have red wine.
4 **Jim:** it is.
5 [((other participants talking at same time))
6 **Ray:** [(y’can’t say)
7 NO, you can’t drink, but YOu, [you can.
8 [((several[participants talk))
9 **Mik:** [i, i disagree, i
10 disagree, there should be some discretion in there:
11 (0.4)
12 **Mik:** the target for the nos- the- from no drinking was the
13 >heavy< street drinkers, (0.3) who’re intimidating and

14 causing problems with the community.=
 15 **Mal:** =yeah.
 16 (0.2)
 17 **Mik:** but with discretion and i believe you have discretion to
 18 do, so.
 19 **Mal:** °yehh.°
 20 (0.4)
 21 **Mik:** >you can walk away.<
 22 **Mal:** °yeh.°
 23 **Mik:** and if you see a picnic that's going o:n, (0.5) and its-
 24 err its >being well managed;< =uh'its not row:[dy,
 25 **Ray:** [(whereabouts
 26 were they avin the picnic)
 27 **Mik:** [>then you have the discretion< to walk away

The matter raised here by Mal is the extent to which a city council 'no alcohol' directive would or should be enforced. Ray argues that you can't differentiate and allow some to drink in an alcohol-free zone whilst disallowing others. Mike, alternatively, suggests that there is room for discretion. In lines 12-13 Mike identifies the "heavy street drinkers" as those targeted in the no-drinking directive. In lines 13-14 he suggests that such drinkers are "intimidating and causing problems with the community". In so doing, he builds this particular set of drinkers' conduct as problematic and outside community norms of behaviour. Mike uses the expression *with* the community (line 14), so constructing individuals as 'interfering' *with* the community not only causing problems *in* it. This potentially situates the street drinkers outside of the community and suggests their problematic engagement *with* it. By implication the behaviour constitutes interference with 'standard' community norms or functioning. Constructing street drinkers as intimidating suggests a contradiction to the standard way in which this community works. Mike draws upon a category to describe their behaviour, that is identifiable as unfavourable and this enables him to build a contrast between the 'picnickers' and the 'street drinkers'. In so doing he defines the moral code applied to drinkers in this community,

distinguishing between those who are well-managed and those who cause problems. Again then we see a sense of community being built around a notion of what constitutes 'acceptable' community standards, through the defining of favourable and unfavourable behaviours. Mike constructs his argument for using discretion, by attributing experiences of intimidation and problems to the community as a whole. Constructed in this way "intimidating" becomes something experienced *by* the community as well as something that the street drinkers *do to* it. Furthermore, the notion that members of the group and the community might exert discretion in the application of morals and "rules", orients to aspects of community that are dynamic and iterative, illustrating that a sense of community is very much a situated construct.

Both examples then, show community members alluding to a community morality and positioning behaviours relative to a community 'norm', to construct a sense of *their* community; its behavioural norms, moral code and also their discretion over its 'rules'.

'Defending' community members

Another way in which participants enact a sense of community is in their support of community members and their right to have choices. Not only do participants construct problems as being of general concern but they particularly emphasise the impacts upon particular community members. In Extract 3 we see a community problem constructed in terms of the effect it has on carers who use pushchairs. Participants' recurrently orient to how anti-social

behaviours impact upon potentially vulnerable members of the community.

Here this is those who have to push their pushchairs “into the ↓road” because of obstacles on pavements. Referencing pushchairs denotes the involvement of children (potentially weaker, more vulnerable members) which projects this as a moral issue for the community to resolve.

Extract 3
(WOC17)

((Participants are discussing the ongoing problem of a garage proprietor conducting business on the pavement and street))

1 **Mik:** >i think< (.) if we >take it to the meeting< on Thu:rsday
2 and try and find out (0.9) ↓uh:m: if we can >open it up<=
3 cause >I think if he’s< gettin’earhole bent by more and more
4 >people<= cause i r- >i ↑think< (0.7) ↓people feel ↓intimidated
5 (0.4)
6 **Mik:** [by his presence
7 **Mal:** [() [yeah he’s]
8 **Mik:** [as well e:] e’s he’s (0.3) ↑↑not an
9 intimidating guy ↓generally
10 (0.6)
11 **Mik:** but ↑you >↓go an approach him he can come up with some attitude
12 (0.4)
13 ? : (°mm::°)
14 **Mik:** and I think people [>who push their-< (.)
15 **Mal:** [yea::h::
16 **Mik:** ↑cha:irs, (0.4) uh push their pushchairs into the ↓road
17 rather than try an force em ↓down the ↓pavement and havin a go
18 [at him]
19 **May:** [((throat clearing))] see I went down there=
20 **Mik:** they just keep the ↓peace and walk into the road,

There are potentially two facets to this problem; carers of children have to push their pushchairs into the road, (notably this is constructed as *into* the road, highlighting the dangerous nature of this necessity), and people do this to keep the peace, as the perpetrator “can come up with some attitude” (line 11). Mike summarises the choice as that between forcing (note ‘forcing’ is not always easy and requires some extra effort) the pushchair along the pavement whilst grumbling at him (lines 17-18), or “they just keep the ↓peace and walk into the road,” (line 20). Furthermore Mike suggests that “people” in general (line 4) feel

intimidated, indeed more and more people (line 3) are becoming vocal, about this matter. It is described as affecting the community at large and is produced as of collective concern. Here then participants produce this as having a 'moral' dimension; one member of the community poses problems and limits the choice of other (potentially more vulnerable) members of the community. Mike's construction of this dilemma (in particular in lines 16 through to 20) contains emphases (signalled by underlining) on all the aspects which build this as morally questionable. Additionally, his suggestion, that people may decide to "keep the peace", also alludes to a community that is fundamentally peaceable. Thus participants enact a sense of community through collective definition of a problem and orientation to supporting 'vulnerable' members of the community. Again participants display a sense of what is reasonable behaviour in their community (displaying "attitude" is not reasonable) and that they are intrinsically peaceable. They mobilise this sense of community in order to develop a plan of action to deal with the problems they are reporting.

Comment [.6]: Suggest para.

The moral case is also built in part through the delivery of the talk. For example participants use loudness, rising and falling intonational contours and particular emphases on words, indexing something of their emotional response to the situations they are constructing. Emotion displays thus provide participants with a means of indexing particular responses to situations and so enables them to be built as moral issues. Notably too these examples build upon a notion of mutual respect and consideration; not in the broad sense that people may have respect for people in authority, for more senior people, or for more affluent

people and so on. Rather the constructions denote how people within the same community should or should not behave towards each other. It is mutual respect for one's 'neighbours' that is constructed here.

Distinguishing between Insiders and Outsiders

Participants also enact a sense of community through their constructions of what, and how, one might be an insider *of* and/or an outsider *to* the community.

In Extract 4 participants are discussing strategies for approaching students regarding their late-night noise-making.

Extract 4 **(TOC6)**

1 **Cra:** i mean] i- i know of- of people who have gone to
2 the students next door: and all they've got is a
3 mouthful, of a buse.
4 ((various murmurings))
5 **Cra:** we live here, we pay to live here.
6 (0.3)
7 **Cra:** what they don't seem to realise is you're only here for
8 nine months of the year, (0.3) some of us (.) live
9 he:re, (.) all year round. its our own propertie[s and things.]
10 **Bar:** [that's right,]
11 ? : mm::
12 **Cra:** And to get, (0.2) the occasional student; (.) cause one
13 year you might get a great group of students in, (.) >and
14 have no problems whatsoever.<
15 (0.1)
16 **Cra:** the next year you hav- y've a houseful, (0.4) and all of
17 em are noisy students
18 (0.4)
19 and it's not fair, (0.4) on the general, (0.5) >resident
20 population,< (0.4) when you do get a bad house (with)
21 students.

In Extract 4 Craig indexes the transient nature of students and contrasts this with residents, including himself, ("some of us" line 8) who live there constantly and have a material stake in the place (line 9). Eventually this can be seen as contributing to the case that Craig builds, suggesting that "it's not fair" on the

general resident population when you get a 'bad' house of students. The use of 'general resident population' projects these as regular people living in the area, members of the community whose regular lives should not be affected by 'bad' behaviour from people passing through. This is built as a moral issue, through the contrasting of 'good' and 'bad' groups of students (lines 12-14 and 16-17). Furthermore Craig builds a sense of the moral code by which the community lives, by invoking a notion of (un)fairness. His comparisons of 'transient' students and 'stakeholder' residents, and 'good' and 'bad' students, indexes the issue as a moral one, on the basis that it isn't 'fair' that 'bad outsiders' should pose problems for established residents. Craig enacts a sense of community both by distinguishing 'insiders' and 'outsiders' of the community and the consideration that that should afford, and in terms of those 'outsiders' who may belong to 'good' and 'bad' groups who may or may not adhere to community codes of behaviour.

Extract 5 begins after Mike has reported that residents have raised the issue of youth hanging around in large groups in public spaces.

Extract 5
(TOC6)

1 [((several participants talking)
2 **Ste:** [()] the Po:lish
3 (.) TRAvellers,
4 (0.3)
5 **Ste:** and I think they've got nothing do and what (do they
6 do's)'right,
7 (0.1)
8 **Ste:** five or six lads on (.) every single corner,
9 (0.7)
10 **Ste:** >and people just< (0.1) they're afraid to walk past >them
11 in case< (0.1) °you know they say anything.°
12 (0.5)
13 **Bar:** ↓Mm:↑mm,
14 (0.6 including unidentified noise)
15 **Bar:** where's [this

16
 17 -----omitted - several turns establishing location-----
 18
 19 **Mik:** i- i- it[s jus
 20 **?** : [([cultural (it's obvious >a]problem)
 21 **Mik:** thing< that that is what (.)they do=
 22 that is- that is (0.2) a [gathering point.]
 23 **?** : [([])
 24 **Mik:** groups of young people outside the shops.

Steve singles out Polish travellers residing locally as potentially being part of the reported problem. He talks of there being five or six males on “every single corner” (line,8). This extreme case formulation emphasises the consistency of this potentially problematic behaviour. Using the term “people” (line 10) Steve suggests that people, *in general*, in this community, are afraid to walk past the youth. Steve and Mike use various person references, describing the Polish travellers as “they” (lines 5, 11 and 22) and “them” (line 10). These references attribute a kind of ‘otherness’ to this particular group. Thus by drawing contrasts in behaviour, orienting to the transient nature of other groups and attributing to them a kind of ‘otherness’, community members enact a sense of their (more permanent) community.

Enacting an empowered community

Since the remit of the TOC and WOC groups is to identify issues and generate solutions to community problems, on a practical level the groups have power to take action on community matters. Participants enact this empowerment, by orienting to collective needs and frustrations, and by collaboratively developing desired future actions.

Extract 6 (WOC11)

1 **May:** ↑↑RIght, can I ↓ask if there's ih- e==
 2 **?:** =↓no:.=

3 **May:** =↑E↑VER: >gonna be anything done about< these (.) ↓yobs
4 on Charleston Street,
5 (0.9)
6 **May:** in the car park.

---turns omitted---

7 **May:** [we nee:d-
8 **Bar:** [when is it, [night↑ime;]
9 **May:** [do sopned-
10 (0.1)
11 **May:** we need ↑something ↓done, >thi- p- < they- bee:n
12 re↓por:↑ted;
13 (0.9) uh:m: (0.8) ↑numerous occ↓asions, (0.5) Councillor
14 ((Name)); (0.2) ↑told em to turn it ↓down,=the music
15 ↓down an: (0.3) [just got told ter]:: ...
16 **Bar:** [()]
17 **Mik:** it's d's- its anti soci[al
18 **May:** [>go away<

In Extract 6, at line 3, May's question reflects an expectation that inside and/or outside the immediate community some action is required to deal with "yobs" in a certain street. In lines 7 and 11, she uses a collective reference ("we") to build this as not just her problem but one related to a wider group. Furthermore the issue is framed as a "need" – a stronger form than simply a desire for action. Expressed thus, it becomes a necessity, belonging to a wider community and requiring their action. May also refers specifically to anti-social behaviour (an upgrade from the aforementioned 'yobbish' behaviour), which raises this not only as a matter for those locally affected, for the TOC and WOC groups as community activists, but also for a wider community in which such behaviour is treated as a legal issue.

Extract 7 begins with May's reaction to the local council suggestion that they keep a record of incidences.

Extract 7
(WOC11)

1 **May:** but we're ↑SIck to DEath of ↓doing that.=its
2 [bin GOin On for ↑Ow many] y↑ears.
3 **Bar:** [yeah >(i know i know mm:)<]
4 (0.6)
5 **Bar:** mm:

6 (0.3)
7 **Bar:** mm:=
8 **May:** and we're just hitting us head against a brick wall.
9 **Bar:** mm: (.) mm:
10 **May:** >but< (0.2) we've had enough, now.

The stress upon, and loudness of “↑Slck to Death” in line 1 displays frustration and indexes the ongoing problem with which help is expected. Again May refers to a collective “we” (lines 1, 8, and 10), when she indexes the frustration of a consolidated group. She also suggests (line 10) that the present situation cannot continue, again indexing an expectation of further support from a wider source. In both extracts May makes clear that her expectations are not being met. May displays here a sense of community that is empowered to make requests, and an entitlement, to receive support from a wider community in enforcing wider community rules. She displays that, as a group, they have some purchase in a wider community in receiving support to resolve collective problems. Participants throughout the corpus, (exampled here by May), invoke a collective identity (“we”) and harness their emotions such as their displayed frustration to empower them to take action about a shared concern. Specifically, May draws upon a sense of ‘imagined’ community (cf. introduction, p.4); one in which her co-participants appear to collaborate, through their use of continuers (‘mmm’) and acknowledgements (‘I know’). Participants enact a sense of community in which they have collective rights to support from a wider community, and a right to be frustrated when this is not delivered.

Challenging institutions

Above, we showed participants enacting a sense of community in which they are empowered to have expectations met by the wider community. Below we observe participants enacting a sense of community, in which their

empowerment extends to challenging wider community decisions. Prior to this extract participants have expressed safety concerns about the time given for pedestrians at a crossing. An additional sensor could remedy this but has previously been rejected by the department responsible for traffic management/highways.

Extract 8

(WOC15)

1 **Mik:** ↑i'm ↑just wondering at what point would we say no's not
 2 good enough,
 3 **Bar:** we will do when somebody gets [↓killed,
 4 **Mik:** [whe- whe- when can we stop
 5 `saying (.) o↓kay you say no so (0.3) >it's not
 6 gonna'appen<=
 7 **And:** =°°>↓i ↓don't ↓↓know<°°
 8 **Mik:** when does it get to the point of you said no and i don't
 9 care if you said no (.) ↑this is ↓what we ↓want to
 10 'appen

--turns omitted - people make suggestions about what to do --

11 **Mik:** it's not good enough to say ↓no;
 12 (.)
 13 **Mik:** the answer's yes; and now make it yes
 14 **Bar:** mmn mmn yeah
 15 **Jun:** yeah
 16 **Mik:** fer the pedestrians (.) not fer the drivers
 17 (0.2)
 18 **And:** yeah.
 19 **Mik:** whe- ↑what ↑stage do we ↓get to when we get that
 20 **And:** [t's such a BUsy ↓crossing.]
 21 ? : [([)]
 22 **May:** [its terrible

In lines 1-2 and 11, we see Mike orient to the council's (in)action as "not good enough". Constructed thus, not good *enough* suggests a breach in what they might reasonably expect. Barry's extreme case formulation (line 3), offered in response, invokes a particularly severe and potentially emotive point at which they could reasonably claim that council (in)action is not good enough. Two other speakers (lines 20 and 22) also invoke aspects of the dangerousness of the situation to index that more not only *could*, but *should* be done. As we saw

in earlier examples, danger to others is used to inject something of a moral dimension to people's behaviour/actions. Here we see similar practices being used in relation to the (in)action of the council. We again see potentially 'vulnerable' groups cited as those affected by adverse behaviours; pedestrians (mentioned here alongside drivers, line 16) can be construed 'vulnerable' since they are likely to be more severely hurt in any collision. Notably then we see constructions of events about individuals' adverse behaviours, being applied to authorities too, in this case the local council. Once more then we see a sense of community being built around the notion of the power-ful and the power-less. This particular extract also illustrates that not only do participants build a sense of community that has them as an empowered body of people ("we" – lines 1,3,4,9,20), with expectations ("no's not good enough") , but here participants enact frustration, indignation, and go beyond this to enact a sense of community in which they have rights to challenge decisions ("the answer's yes and now make it yes").

Discussion

Our analyses demonstrate how a sense of community and associated moral codes are locally constituted, mobilised in situ to legitimate decisions and as a call to action. Members affirm the community's moral 'code', when an action or behaviour has potentially breached a community 'norm', whilst claiming discretion about how community 'rules' are applied. They use moral categories (e.g., "respect") differentiating between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, particularly referring to potentially vulnerable groups who may be affected adversely. This indexes a sense of community where 'weaker'

members are to be defended, and simultaneously strengthens their purchase when seeking action. Such defence thus serves, rhetorically, to legitimate action, build social capital, and so empower members.

Participants also enact a sense of community by constructing situated divisions between insiders and outsiders. By invoking behaviours that contrast with community norms, students and travellers, in particular, are produced as outsiders, bearers of 'otherness' and transience. Conversely, these distinctions engage notions of *permanence* that index the existence of a stable community *within* a more 'fluid' whole. This orientation to an enduring, stable presence confirms that even within the same spatial community there exist 'co-communities'; in this case the concept of permanence/endurance is its assigning feature. Columbo and Senatore (2005) found that ethnicity was another possible assigning feature. In our data, differentials are used to moralise about the behaviour of community/co-community members: these behaviours, and their concurrence with community norms, are more salient than insider/outsider status per se (however that status is assigned). Our participants' sense of community is a malleable one that assimilates demographic diversity., and only when behaviour deviates from the norm is the insider/outsider distinction drawn. There is nevertheless a tension here, rooted perhaps in the practical impossibility of participants fully appreciating the many diversities within their area. Hence they sometimes reinforce societal norms by discursively working up notions of 'other' as a means of mobilising people to action and giving them purchase to solve issues, but the unfortunate effect of

this may be to further marginalise subcultures and groups who are already somewhat excluded: in our data, 'heavy drinkers', 'polish travellers', 'youth' and so on. This has broader implications for the composition and effects of groups such as these, and illustrates once more the very situated nature of that which constitutes a sense of community; situated in time, geography, cultural composition and so on.

Members also enact a sense of being an empowered community. The groups have a fundamental remit to keep the community 'tidy' and 'safe', but they also construct needs and expectations such that they have a right to have them met by the local authority and other institutions: in this way they enact a much broader form of empowerment. However, whilst our data bears out Orford's notion that people are both influenced by their setting and themselves influence and shape it, it also shows that our participants are in many ways 'ahead of the game'. They do not simply enact a sense of community as empowered members as per their group remit; they also question and challenge initiatives and policies that contrast with their own priorities. In so doing they produce themselves almost as lobbyists, and take a more radical line than a simple notion of reciprocity or transaction suggests.

Indeed, there is something almost 'self-governing' in our participants' sense of community. For example, they cite 'respect' as an important value and apply it proportionately to the local authority and local businesses, as well as to individual members (students, cyclists). This contrasts with current government

policy which disproportionately demands 'respect' from potentially impoverished minorities, imposing exemplary standards of behaviour despite the societal inequalities which characterise their environment. Their sense of community is imbued with a respect which is applied equally to all members: in the application of its moral code it is cognisant of, and does not differentiate between the potentially powerful sectors (businesses, local authorities) and the potentially less-powerful (students, polish travellers, street-drinkers). Moreover, although the (il)legality of some behaviours (for example cycling on pavements) is noted, it is not their point of reference for whether it breaches the norms of the community: rather, it is whether people cycle on pavements *carefully*. Thus, community members themselves define and re-affirm moral rules, presenting solutions to community problems and substantiating them via a locally constituted moral 'mandate'.

Our analyses, then, show how members talk community into being. On the one hand they highlight the intangible character of a sense of community; on the other, they demonstrate how such constructions can be discursively utilised to build social capital and to increase collective purchase. These residents of a deprived inner-city area discursively enact a sense of community by affirming, 'defending', distinguishing, empowering and challenging. Notably these are all *actions*, brought to life in sequences of talk. 'Sense of community' is thus practically and procedurally negotiated for and between members - rather than being some inner 'sense' that individuals may or may not possess.

Appendix: Jeffersonian notation

The principal elements of Jefferson notation are:

[]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech.
↑↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement.
<u>Underlining</u>	Signals speaker's emphasis.
CAPITALS	Mark speech that is louder than surrounding speech.
° know°	Degree signs enclose quieter speech.
(0.8)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses longer than 0.2 secs.
(.)	Pause of 0.2 seconds or less.
((text))	Additional comments from transcriber.
:::	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound; more colons, more elongation.
hhh	Aspiration (out-breaths); proportionally as for colons.
.hhh	Inspiration (in-breaths).
Ye:ah,	Commas mark weak rising or 'continuing' intonation.
Ye:ah.	Full stops mark falling or 'completing' intonation.

Comment [.7]: Perhaps delete this here and insert reference in the text.

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