
MYPLACE



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Deliverable 5.3: Report on interview findings

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
1. Context.....	4
2. Methods.....	6
3. Demographic profile of respondents.....	8
4. Key findings.....	12
4.1 Living in Coventry and Nuneaton.....	12
4.1.1 Industrial past.....	13
4.1.2 Loss of community	15
4.1.3 Gang culture and street violence.....	16
4.1.4 Labelling and stigmatisation.....	19
4.1.5 Comparing the field sites	21
4.2 Socialisation into political values	21
4.2.1 Influence of family.....	23
4.2.2 Local sites of memory.....	25
4.2.3 Commemoration	26
4.2.4 Attitudes to the armed forces	27
4.2.5 Equality and democracy.....	28
4.3 Civic and political engagement.....	29
4.3.1 Sexual and gender politics	29
4.3.2 Voluntary work and supporting charities.....	30
4.3.3 Symbolising difference	30
4.3.4 Demonstrations and riots	31
4.3.5 Comparing the two field sites	33
4.4 Economic and material resources	33
4.4.1 Experiencing recession	34
4.4.2 Deserving and undeserving poor	35
4.4.3 Comparing the two field sites	37
4.5 Managing difference	38
4.5.1 Tolerance and intolerance.....	39
4.5.2 Islamophobia.....	43
4.5.3 Comparisons between the two sites	43
4.6 Formal politics	44
4.6.1 Political parties.....	45
4.6.2 Politicians.....	46
4.6.3 Political system	47
4.6.4 Local politics.....	50
4.6.5 Fringe or extreme movements	51
4.6.6 Attraction	51
4.6.7 Criticism.....	53
4.6.8 Comparing the two sites.....	56
4.7 The experience of being young.....	56
4.9 Conclusions.....	59
5. Future directions	62
5.1 Themes for cross-case analysis.....	62
5.2 Issues for analysis through triangulation	63
References.....	64

Introduction

This report discusses the main findings of the interview phase of the research in which young people were interviewed about their political and civic engagement. Interviews explored the meanings attached to the statements and opinions expressed in the survey (WP4) and provided an opportunity for respondents to explain, in a more nuanced way, their positions on key elements of the survey and to articulate experiences and ideas of relevance to the research but not included in the questionnaire.

The report describes the context of the research and the rationale for the selection of the field sites. It then discusses the methodology before going on to explore the main findings. These are presented under seven themes: differences between the two localities; socialisation and political values; civic and political engagement; economic and material resources; managing difference; formal politics; and young people in society. In concluding, the report draws out the main differences between the two sites and revisits the assumptions about receptivity to radicalism which were built into our choice of field sites.

1. Context

The selection of field sites was driven by existing research on the appeal of radical, extreme and populist movements for young people (Cockburn 2007; Garland and Treadwell 2011; iCoCo 2007; Bartlett and Littler 2011; Dechezelles 2008; Ford and Goodwin 2010; Nayak 2005). Drawing on the review of this literature summarized in the WP1 paper 'Key factors influencing young people's receptivity to contemporary populist/radical movements in contemporary Britain', as well as the local context, it was concluded that the two most important criteria influencing receptivity to radical movements in the West Midlands were: community segregation/integration and socio-economic inequalities (deprivation). These factors were prioritised in the decision making about which locations to select although other factors such as levels of civic engagement (which can be conceptualised in terms of social capital), evidence of activism by radical organisations and political heritage were also considered.

Taking these factors into account field sites were selected in Nuneaton and Coventry comprising, in Nuneaton, the wards¹ of Bar Pool, Kingswood and Camp Hill and, in Coventry, an area incorporating parts of two wards, Foleshill and Hillfields. The rationale behind this selection was that levels of socio-economic deprivation should be kept constant across the locations while population heterogeneity and the 'supply' of radicalism should be different. The assumption was that Nuneaton might be a location of heightened receptivity to radicalism, primarily of the extreme right, while Coventry would be unlikely to show systematic receptivity to radicalism and be marked by greater integration of populations from different ethnic and national backgrounds.

The population of the two fieldwork sites differs in terms of ethnicity with Nuneaton being predominantly white while Coventry is ethnically mixed. The population of the Nuneaton wards was homogeneous in terms of ethnicity with between 98% and 99% of the population being white. In the Coventry wards the proportion of the population which was white was lower, ranging from 44% to 61%. This is reflected in the composition of the final respondent set (see Table 3a).

In Nuneaton there were indications of receptivity to radicalism in so far as representatives of the British National Party (BNP), a far right party, had been elected in two wards (Bar Pool and Camp Hill) in the 2008 local elections and the English Defence League (EDL), a far right street movement, had been active in the area in 2010. In Coventry there had been a much wider range of candidates in recent local elections, some of whom came from the Green Party and Socialist Alternative as well as the BNP. This reflects the ethnic diversity of the population and the high proportion of students in Coventry. The field sites therefore contrast in a number of ways that have been identified as significant in relation to receptivity to extremism.

¹ In the UK local elections are based on geographical areas known as wards. These are much smaller than the parliamentary constituencies which elect parliamentary representatives. Local representatives are known as councillors and sit on the local council.

The two field sites are not only different in socio-demographic terms but they also have different historical and cultural legacies. The city of Coventry, until the recession of the mid-1970s, had a thriving car industry to which workers from other parts of the UK migrated in search of employment; it had a manufacturing base which attracted workers from the commonwealth in the post-war years and a mining industry which ceased production in the aftermath of the 1985 miners' strike. Its earlier history includes the bombing of the city in 1940, during the Second World War; this is symbolised in the ruins of the old cathedral which the city council has preserved in commemoration of this event and to promote an identity for Coventry based on toleration and mutual respect between peoples. Culturally the area has experienced in-migration of different groups of workers including from south Wales and countries of the Commonwealth after the war and, more recently, asylum seekers and economic migrants from the 2010 EU accession countries, particularly those from Eastern Europe. The recession of the 1970s hit Coventry hard with the loss of jobs and the end of its role as a major manufacturing centre. This has been immortalised in the music of the band, the Specials, who are well known locally and widely held to be the originators of Two Tone music with its distinctive political engagement and commitment to anti-racism. Coventry's culturally diverse population tends towards political support for the Labour party and left-wing politics more generally. This is reflected in the Herbert Museum's portrayal of Coventry's history.

Nuneaton is much smaller, being an ex-mining town which has lost all its main industries since the recession of the 1970s. Prior to this it saw an influx of economic migrants from other coal mining areas in the UK who came to work in the mines and were housed on a housing estate built expressly for them, Camp Hill. There is still some open cast mining in Nuneaton but its brick works has closed down and there are few employment prospects for its mainly working-class population. It has an association with the 19th century novelist, George Eliot, who used a male pseudonym and who is remembered with pride in the town, although her bronze statue was 'stolen' some years ago and has not been replaced. It also has associations with the armed forces. The local museum is largely a military museum and there is an army barracks, Bramcote, on the outskirts of Nuneaton where the 30th Royal Signals and the Queen's Gurkha Signals are based. This provides employment in the area and is also a flashpoint for pro and anti-war sentiments (provoked by UK intervention in Iraq and, more recently, Afghanistan) and a reason for movements of the far right to target Nuneaton for protests and demonstrations. One of these demonstrations was staged in 2010 by the EDL and is discussed at length by many Nuneaton respondents in response to a visual prompt used during the course of the interview.

2. Methods

The interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was divided into 6 sections: political heritage and transmission; history and memory in everyday life; participation and understanding of 'the political'; culture and lifestyles; the language of politics; and receptivity to populism/extremism. It began by asking respondents to talk about what was affecting people in Britain, who they talked to about these issues and their recollections of when their interest in particular issues arose or declined. This was followed by questions on their interest in Britain's past and their experiences of visiting local sites of commemoration, including museums. They were then asked to elaborate what the word 'political' meant to them and to describe their participation in both formal and informal political activities, including things that might be considered risky. Questions then turned to their cultural engagement and whether politics influenced them as consumers of cultural artefacts or in other ways. The next part of the interview focused on their views of political parties, politicians and of the political system more generally, tensions and conflicts in society, whether mainstream politicians were addressing them and whether they were attracted to other forms of political engagement which might be addressing these problems in a more convincing way. The interviews finished with respondents being asked what in their view a better society would look like and whether they felt able to contribute to bringing this about. Four interviewers administered the interview schedule and the interviews took place as conversations where the order of topics covered varied according to the way the interaction developed. Almost all the interviews took place in respondents' homes and, in some, other family or household members were present. They were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each respondent was given a £10 high street voucher as an incentive to take part. Interviews ranged in length from 53 minutes to 2 hours 21 minutes with an average length of 82 minutes.

Visual elicitation tools were used during the interviews at the points where history and memory were discussed and where politics was the focus of attention. It was decided, prior to the pilot interviews, that Conservative politician Margaret Thatcher's term of office as Prime Minister (1979-90) would be taken as a time in the recent past which could be regarded as traumatic due to her introduction of neo-liberal policies, the cutting back of the welfare state and the year-long miners' strike in protest over the planned closures which affected both Nuneaton and Coventry. Following the experience of conducting the pilot interviews discussion about key events in British history was encouraged, where necessary, by prompts referencing the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics which represented British history in the form of a pageant. At this point in the interview respondents were shown visuals of a Coventry car factory in the late 1940s early 1950s, an electronics factory with migrant women workers taken in the late 1970s, the cover of an album by the Specials and an image of a memorial plaque dedicated to the miners of Keresley, a colliery on the outskirts of Coventry. These visuals all prompted considerable discussion particularly amongst respondents who had lived in the field sites for a long time; they did not work so well for those who had moved to the areas relatively recently. Later in the interview, in order to encourage discussion of radical political activities, images of the 2010 EDL demonstration and the anti-fascist counter-demonstration in Nuneaton, the 2010 anti-university tuition fees demonstration in Coventry and the 2012 picket of Brown's wine

bar were shown. The image of the EDL demonstration in November 2010 worked particularly well and led to a lot of discussion about the demonstration itself and the policies and politics of the EDL. The image of the students' demonstration against the increase in tuition fees in December 2010 also provoked considerable discussion particularly amongst those who had experience of higher education. Appendix 2 shows the visuals used and provides detailed descriptions of them.

A total of 61 interviews, 31 in Coventry and 30 in Nuneaton were conducted (Table 1). Respondents were selected from WP4 survey respondents who had indicated their willingness to take part in a follow-up interview. WP4 fieldworkers completed a contact sheet for each WP4 respondent who agreed to take part. These were passed on by the fieldwork supervisor to the Warwick team, who recorded the details in a spreadsheet and used that sheet to select respondents.

Table 1: Number of interviewees

	Coventry	Nuneaton
Volunteers for interview from WP4	158	156
Interviews recorded and transcribed	31	30
Anonymised interviews deposited in the databank	31	30

The fieldwork began in Nuneaton on 14th October 2012 and in Coventry on 19th October and was completed in Nuneaton on 28th March 2013 and in Coventry on 29th March 2013. There were 4 interviewers, all of whom interviewed in Nuneaton and 3 of whom interviewed in Coventry. All interviewers were permanent members of the University of Warwick/University of Manchester MYPLACE team.

After the completion of 10 interviews in each site participants were selected in order to achieve a reasonably balanced sample with respect to age, gender and ethnicity and to cover the spectrum of passive/active in terms of participation and tolerant/intolerant in terms of attitude. An even split between the age groups was not sought as they are not evenly sized categories but respondents were divided according to whether they were over or under 18; this resulted in a one third-two thirds split between those under and over 18 which is similar to the balance between the two age groups in the WP4 sample (Table 2). These categories were chosen because 18 years of age is a socially and legally important age boundary in the UK marking, *inter alia*, the age at which people are able to vote.

All interviews were anonymised and coded using Nvivo 9.2. Respondents were given pseudonyms. There were 6 coders with the coding tree being developed by means of an iterative process of coding interviews, discussion and agreement of Level 1 and Level 2 nodes. The final coding tree contains 37 Level 2 nodes with associated child (Level 1) nodes (Appendix 3). Nodes reflect the content of interview narratives rather than being predetermined by the structure of the interview schedule. The analysis of Level 2 nodes and their child nodes was informed by theory to produce a number of key themes agreed by the coding team and used to structure the 'Key findings' section of the report.

3. Demographic profile of respondents

The demographic characteristics of the final respondent set and how they compare with the WP4 sample are shown in Tables 2, 3a, 3b and 4.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total	Survey sample
16	1	5	6	147
17	4	7	11	147
18	1	1	2	105
Group 1: aged 16-18	6	13	19 (31%)	399 (36.5%)
19	6	4	9	136
20	4	0	5	128
21	5	2	7	113
22	3	2	5	93
23	2	0	2	80
24	4	5	9	82
25	1	4	5	60
Group 2: aged 19-25	25	17	42 (69%)	692 (63.4%)
Total	31	30	61 (100%)	1092 (100%)

The sample included more young women (35) than young men (25) with the imbalance being greater in Coventry (Table 3); there is a similar though considerably smaller imbalance in the WP4 sample. Because respondents were asked to state their gender rather than it being assigned by the interviewer, as in WP4, a transgender respondent was identified. During fieldwork the under-recruitment of young men in Coventry was addressed by attempting contact only with male potential respondents; they proved to be more difficult to recruit than the young women.

Table 3: Gender of respondents

	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total	Survey sample
Male	11	14	25	531
Female	19	16	35	560
Transgender	1	0	1	0
Total	31	30	61	1091

Note: For the interviews gender was self-assessed while for the survey it was assessed by the interviewer.

Care was taken to select respondents from a range of ethnicities in both locations but there were no specific criteria for selection. The final sample in Coventry is very mixed in terms of ethnicity but much less so in Nuneaton where there were only two respondents who did not identify as 'white' (Table 3a). Overall, however, the WP5 sample has a higher proportion of white respondents than the WP4 sample in both field sites (Table 3b).

Table 3a: Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnicity	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total
White	1	12	13
White English	8	9	17
White Welsh	1	0	1
White British	4	7	11
White (Romanian/Bulgarian/French)	6	0	6
Mixed/multiple ethnic background	1	1	2
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	1	3
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	2
Another other Asian background	1	0	1
Black/Black British	1	0	1
Any other Black/African/Caribbean	4	0	4
Total	31	30	61

Table 3b: Ethnicity of WP4 and WP5 respondents

Ethnicity	Coventry		Nuneaton		Total	
	WP4	WP5	WP4	WP5	WP4	WP5
White	233 (43%)	20 (64.5%)	445 (81%)	28 (93.4%)	678 (62%)	48 (79%)
Mixed	16 (3%)	1 (3%)	22 (4%)	1 (3.3%)	38 (3.5%)	2 (3%)
Asian or Asian British	179 (33%)	5 (16%)	74 (13.4%)	1 (3.3%)	253 (23%)	6 (10%)
Black or Black British	109 (20%)	3 (10%)	8 (1.4%)	0 (0%)	117 (11%)	3 (5%)
Other	4 (1%)	2 (6.5%)	1 (0.2%)	0 (0%)	5 (0.5%)	2 (3%)
Total	541 (100%)	31 (100%)	550 (100%)	30 (100%)	1091 (100%)	61 (100%)

In practice it was difficult to select respondents on criteria other than age, gender and ethnicity though criteria of 'active/passive' and 'tolerant/intolerant' were employed in the middle phase of the fieldwork. In terms of participation, categories of 'active' and 'passive' were derived from question 16 of the questionnaire; respondents were classified as 'active' if they had answered 'twice' or more to 3 parts of question 16. Selection also sought to ensure heterogeneity in tolerance; a respondent was determined to be 'intolerant' if they gave an answer to any part of question 40 of the survey which suggested a negative perception of other and/or minority groups. In practice this classification proved overly sensitive and resulted in almost all potential respondents being classified as 'intolerant'. The 'activism' category, however, was useful for boosting the number of active respondents. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, more respondents in the younger age groups and more young men were recruited in order to balance the sample.

Selection was not made on the basis of education or employment. The education and employment status of the final sample is shown in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Education

Education	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total
Currently in general academic secondary education	3	7	10
Currently in vocational secondary education	0	3	3
Did not complete secondary education and left	0	1	1
Completed general academic secondary education to age 16	1	9	10
Completed vocational academic secondary education to age 18	1	1	2
Completed vocational secondary education	2	4	6
Currently at university	17	0	17
Completed university	3	0	3
Currently in post-secondary vocational training	2	1	7
Completed post-secondary vocational training	1	0	1
Studying for post-graduate education	1	1	2
Completed post-graduate education	0	2	2
Other (left school temporarily because of having baby)	0	1	1
Total	31	30	61

Table 5: Employment

Employment	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total
In full-time employment	2	7	9
In part-time employment	1	4	5
In full-time education	24	9	33
Working and part-time education	0	1	1
Unemployed	4	9	13
Total	31	30	61

These tables show significant differences between the two samples. In Coventry 18 respondents were currently students in Higher Education while in Nuneaton this was the case for only 1 respondent. In both field sites a further 3 respondents had completed Higher Education. This means that the proportion of respondents in Coventry who had experience of Higher Education was significantly higher (21) than those in Nuneaton (4). There was also a higher proportion of students in Coventry in the WP4 sample. This reflects the presence of 2 universities in Coventry, one in the city centre, and that interviews took place largely during term time. In terms of employment there was a much higher number of employed and unemployed respondents in Nuneaton than Coventry (20 compared with 7) and in Coventry a far higher proportion of the sample was in full-time education (24 compared with 9). This was also evident in the WP4 sample. These differences are reflected in the number of parents in the two samples and in residential status. In Coventry only 2 respondents had children (both women) while in Nuneaton this was the case for 10 respondents, 4 of whom were men. Seventeen of the Coventry respondents, mostly university students, lived independently with friends compared with only 1 in the Nuneaton

sample; 10 Nuneaton respondents lived independently with partner and/or children compared with only 3 in the Coventry sample; and 17 respondents in Nuneaton lived at home with parents compared with 8 in the Coventry sample. Overall the Nuneaton sample was more likely to be economically active (either in employment or looking for employment) than the Coventry sample who were more likely still to be in education.

Table 6: Residential status

Residential status	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total
Living at home with parents	8	16	24
Living independently alone	1	2	3
Living independently with partner and/or children	3	10	13
Living independently with friends	17	1	18
Living at home with parents, siblings, partner, children	2	1	3
Total	31	30	61

Family status also contrasted between the two samples. A higher number of respondents were single in Coventry than Nuneaton while there were more married or cohabiting respondents in Nuneaton (Table 7). These data are not available for WP4.

Table 7: Family status

Family status	Coventry	Nuneaton	Total
Single	26	17	43
Married or living with partner	5	12	17
Separated	0	1	1
Total	31	30	61

4. Key findings

4.1 *Living in Coventry and Nuneaton*

This section explores questions of local identity and subjectivity, how these relate to space and place, and how constructions of community, identity and belonging alter with industrial decline (Mah, 2012; Pilkington, 2012). It draws out respondents' own views of Coventry and Nuneaton and their sense of place (Agnew 1993:261), focusing particularly on differences between the two field sites and the sense of loss associated with the decline in mining and manufacturing, the main sources of employment until the recession of the 1980s.

Respondents' accounts suggest that these industries were important not only as a source of employment but also as a source of identity and that their decline has led to the loss of a sense of identity and belonging. Respondents experienced Coventry as a better place to live than Nuneaton where there were expressions of dissatisfaction. This may relate to Nuneaton being a small town which has been particularly hard hit by the recession but may also reflect the different composition of the samples. Over half the Coventry respondents were students in higher education who had a sense of themselves as having a future and a stake in society. This points to a difference in social and cultural capital amongst respondents in the two areas despite the fact that they were selected for similar levels of deprivation.

The different educational levels in Coventry and Nuneaton meant that respondents were at different stages of the life course. Students in Coventry were studying for a degree which would enable them to gain employment; they were usually living independently with friends. Most of the Nuneaton respondents were in the workforce and many were already parents. Most, especially those who were in working-class jobs or unemployed, expressed a bleak view of the future in a context of the cuts in benefits introduced by the Coalition government and a lack of employment opportunities.

One of the main differences to emerge is that Nuneaton is associated with racism and intolerance while Coventry is associated with multiculturalism and tolerance. Respondents in both areas talk about having friends who are different from them but some in Nuneaton spoke about not being able to celebrate multiculturalism because of the perceived racism of the town. As against this, an Asian respondent in Nuneaton spoke about the cultural diversity he experienced at school where he played football with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Students view the multiculturalism of Coventry in a positive light and some talk about the city being less prejudiced than their home towns, in terms of tolerance of diverse sexualities as well as in relation to race and ethnicity.

RES: I think it's quite accurate. I think Coventry is a very international place, which I like personally.

INT: Probably within [names respondent's local town] you have very international communities.

RES: Yeah. Within [names town] there's lots of Chinese people, Indian people, but where I actually live, because I live in a tiny little village, I think we're about ninety-nine percent white British. So it's quite a culture shock, but in a good way, to come to Coventry because I've never really met anybody who wasn't white British [laughs].

INT: How do you feel about this?

RES: I really liked it. In my first year of university I lived with a Chinese boy and a French girl, and a girl from Guyana. And they were all really lovely. It was really nice. And they cooked me lots of fine food and I liked it [laughs]. It was great! (Coventry, Nicolle)

And one of the young parents interviewed spoke positively about the multiculturalism of her son's education.

Yeah, I'd say. I'd say in Coventry because like my son, he goes to a school near a mosque and someone I know said to me why are you sending your son there and I was like why shouldn't I? He's not affected, my son is 5, he knows what a mosque is, he knows what a Sikh temple is, he knows everything, he knows about Eid, he knows about Christmas, he's like, you know, he's amazing, I said why wouldn't you want your children to know about everything, and it's just like because of the race of somebody or something, it's not fair, I just find it like a negative view (Coventry, Susan)

These views mean neither that there was no racism in Coventry nor that there was no racial tolerance in Nuneaton, quite the reverse as shown later in this report. However the view of Nuneaton being a racist town was reinforced in respondents' minds by the election of BNP councillors, the EDL demonstration in 2010 and the existence of the biker gang known as the Outlaws who policed Camp Hill in order to keep it white.

RES: I think Nuneaton as a town is very racist and I don't

INT: Very racist?

RES: Yeah

INT: Really

RES: And we've had them English Defence League marches and stuff, it's really stupid, I don't like that about Nuneaton but it is quite racist as a town (Nuneaton, Poppy)

4.1.1 Industrial past

The industrial pasts of Coventry and Nuneaton are very different; Nuneaton's economy was based on quarries, brickworks and ribbon weaving as well as mining, but, while there were coal pits on the outskirts of Coventry, it was renowned as a centre of car production. Respondents talked about these different heritages usually when prompted by our visual elicitation tools.

There was much more awareness of the mining industry amongst Nuneaton than Coventry respondents. This probably relates to the high proportion of students in the Coventry sample who were not local to the area and to the greater significance of manufacturing to Coventry. Some Nuneaton respondents talked about their parents or grandparents having worked in mining and how miners had been recruited from far afield to work in Daw Mill and housed in Camp Hill which had been built specifically for them. The importance of coal as a driver of industrialisation was spoken about and some felt that it was vital to respect the mining heritage and its contribution to Nuneaton. It was also seen as a basis of community.

RES: Everybody lives in each other's pockets

INT: And are there families that sort of go back generations here

RES: Yeah. It's an old coal mining town, isn't it, so, so yeah, everybody knows everybody, everybody's related. I'd say it's not, it's just, it's the weirdest place I've ever lived really, never, it's weird.

(Nuneaton, Gianna)

A discussion of car manufacturing was prompted by the visuals and respondents talked about Coventry having been a 'car city' and parents and grandparents having worked in the car industry. Some respondents (mostly Black and Minority Ethnic – hereafter BME) reacted to the image of Asian women workers in the GEC factory by talking about migrants being invited into Britain in the 1950s; and a few spoke about the huge contribution of overseas workers. There was sadness at the loss of this industrial past which was associated with the loss of jobs and there being nothing in Coventry now. One respondent said:

There was everything really, weren't there. There was engineering jobs, any sort of job you wanted. You come to Cov, people were coming from London, everywhere to work in Cov, back in them days and now - everyone's travelling out of Cov - and it's sad. (Coventry, Vincent)

Another spoke about the unemployment and associated loss of a work identity which went along with industrial decline.

Well lots of people lost their jobs, didn't they, they lost their livelihood, that, that's everything that they knew, you know, that's what they'd done for their lifetime, you know, worked in the factories. You know, it was a very sociable thing as well, they'd always be there on the line and they'd all have a laugh and a chat and they'd all go for a pint afterwards and things like that, that was, you know, that was their livelihood. So I'm sure it affected a lot of people, and perhaps some people are still trying to get back into work or, you know, trying to brush up their skills to do something else. I tell you I think it was sad that the car left Coventry. (Coventry, Nick)

The disappearance of the motor industry was associated with increasing unemployment, everything being closed down and the idea that Coventry was becoming 'a ghost town' (as

in the Specials' song, Ghost Town, see below). Unemployment in Coventry was said to be visible and young people's unemployment was increasing.

In Nuneaton there are not many employment opportunities and some respondents wanted to move away. There is some employment in warehouses (distribution) and in the local army barracks but at the time of interviewing there had been a mine closure due to a fire with the loss of 600 jobs. The town centre in Nuneaton was losing its big stores and pub chains were moving out. There was a perception that chains of stores and other consumer outlets would close in Nuneaton before they would close in Coventry.

Nuneaton itself is just – I don't know – it's not very good any more. Compared, like even the town in Nuneaton, it's just turning into a ghost town. Loads of the good shops are closing down to open all these pound shops and things.
(Nuneaton, Chloe)

There was a sense that losing an industry (cars, mining) is about losing an identity, something that was reflected in the music of the Coventry group, The Specials, and which respondents talked about when talking about another of our visual prompts, an image of one of the group's album covers. The Specials were a two tone band who came from Coventry in the late 1970s and wrote politically informed and anti-racist songs. Many respondents had not heard of the band but those who had talked about the band's music and particularly their song, Ghost Town, where the lyrics refer to the decline of manufacturing in Coventry and resulting unemployment especially among young people. Quite a few Coventry respondents talked about their parents knowing a member of the band or being fans of the music and there was a pride that this band had originated in Coventry.

An important source of employment and identity in Nuneaton but not in Coventry is the army barracks. Although only one serving soldier was interviewed, the presence of the barracks was associated with an interest in issues relating to the armed forces and many respondents had personal experiences of friends and relatives in the army and having lost friends and relatives in combat. There is a local Nuneaton charity 'Army of Angels' supporting the families of those who have died which some respondents talked about.

4.1.2 Loss of community

Recession and factory closures, as well as being associated with a loss of identity, were linked to community decline. This goes along with the loss of a sense of belonging and is something that has been noted many times in community studies in the UK (see for e.g. Charles and Davies 2005; Charlesworth 2000; Mah 2010; Watt 2006) reflecting a sense of nostalgia in the face of social change and/or the emergence of other ways of creating a sense of belonging at the local level (Pilkington 2012). For respondents, community decline was an outcome of factory closures which suggests a link between identity, community and occupation.

RES: Like where all the factories have shut down and the community has gone as well.

INT: Do you think that? How would you recognise that?

RES: Like our communities have gone because nobody really knows each other.

INT: Right.

RES: Like, somebody that lives like three doors up, I probably wouldn't even know.

(Nuneaton, Carly)

But the term 'community' was also used in relation to geographical areas, like Camp Hill or Hartshill in Nuneaton, and to refer to an ethnically-based community. One respondent spoke about the mosque-based community organising a coach to take them to a demonstration in London while another spoke about a lack of a sense of community which she linked to the wide variety of national and cultural groups in Coventry and specifically to East Europeans who were not integrating because of the language; she herself was Asian. Respondents also spoke about areas being safer in the past when everyone knew everyone else although there was also a view that there were still strong communities in certain areas.

4.1.3 Gang culture and street violence

The decline of community was linked to less safety on the streets and a rise in sexual violence and child abuse although, in some accounts, street harassment and a strong sense of community co-existed.

But no, Hillfields is, erm, it's got a charm, like I love it to bits, but it's definitely the kind of place, like in the summer I had someone knock on my door, with like a black binbag that was full of, like, make-up, and perfume, and was like, er, "are you interested in buying any?" I was like this is, no, no! I don't want your bin-bag full of fenced make-up! [laughs]. But that's like really standard. Like, there's a certain, and the same, like, working at [names organisation], we work a lot in this area, like there's, erm, there's real bad problems with prostitution around here. Like, just literally, just maybe like a stone's throw that way is like one of the main roads where women get picked up and stuff. So yeah, no, Hillfields is, erm, it's a dodgy area, but in the same time, in the daytime, all these doors will be like open in the summer, and everyone sort of knows each other at least by sight. And there's a lot of like friendly nodding goes on, and all the houses along here, like, just let their kids out. Like that's okay. (Coventry, Pam)

Respondents spoke about violence in both the private and public spheres. Several, particularly in Nuneaton, had histories of domestic violence, usually as children when their mothers were abused, they also spoke about street harassment, gang-related violence and street violence associated with the demonstrations of the EDL. A particular pub in Nuneaton was associated with racist violence because of its situation at one end of Edward Street, the street where the Asian population in Nuneaton lives.

Respondents in Nuneaton spoke about a violent gang culture involving young men. It was described as violent, criminal, involving families and 'names', and as racist. Those in gangs were said to be angry with nothing to do and no work and they made money by drug dealing, stealing and engaging in other 'unsafe' activities. Gang culture was territorially based and, in the view of some, caused unnecessary divisions within Nuneaton. There was also reference to tensions between young and old in Nuneaton because of a fear of gangs of young people wearing hoodies. Several women respondents talked about the threats to their own safety from gang activity on the streets in Nuneaton.

They should, they should spilt gangs up you know and, because it causes nothing but trouble. I mean at night there was a group of lads erm, I went out on my own cause obviously [name of child] was in bed and it was a Friday night I think it was and we get a lot of, they are not gangs, but they are like gangs of children or like teenagers that hang around and they go out and they drink and take drugs and stuff and I went down to the shop just to go and get some nibbles for like me and his dad you know and I went down to the shop and I got abused by um you know. They were like 'ah give us some money', and I was like 'I ain't got no money' and because I'd said that to them and because I'd been in the shop and they could see the baccy and stuff like that, you know, and they started following me up the street you know and like you know the rest of them spurred off in different, and I thought I'm really in for it now they are going to beat the crap out of me, you know, and I practically ran home. [...] And now at night I won't go to the, say if I need milk I'll go when he's not in bed. I'll go, all of us will go, cause I won't go on my own because at night I'm, with it being dark, I am that scared of, I'm just that scared of being out because of what's happened to me that I won't, I won't go out at night you know. (Nuneaton, Rachael)

One Asian respondent, in contrast, said that he felt safer walking around Nuneaton at night than in Coventry or other bigger places.

I can walk around town, without, you know, I can walk around in different areas thinking, you know, I feel quite safe and I don't feel like you know 'oh that guy's not English or not White let's just beat him up'. Some areas of Coventry and some areas of Birmingham I would definitely think that. I wouldn't walk there because I wouldn't need to and I wouldn't put myself in that position whereas in Nuneaton I feel quite safe. (Nuneaton, Imran)

There was less talk of gang culture in Coventry though one respondent spoke of white supremacist gangs in Coventry.

Oh yeah. Like I know people that I've say spoken to for like two years that I think of as rational, perfectly nice, normal human beings. And then I find out like through a crazy string of etceteras that they've got like a swastika tattooed on their stomach. And I'll be like "and we're never speaking again!" Like, what! But it's really common, like I know a lot of, lots of people especially in the rock

clubs in Coventry have got, erm, quite like aggressive like tattoos, quite like, racist leanings. There's a lot of problems especially in this area with like.
(Coventry, Pam)

Incidents of violence were also reported in Coventry. A student from Eastern Europe recounted her friend's experience.

RES: Well I have an example. A friend of mine, she's Romanian, her boyfriend is Bulgarian, they were in, in a pub, club, whatever, here in Coventry and there were like some British guys, they started harassing the girl so the boy stood up for her and they started fighting and beating him, so they didn't hit her, they just leaved her alone so she went to the security guard in the club, I think it was Mortimer's or something like that
INT: Where was it?
RES: Mortimer's
INT: Mortimer's, okay
RES: And the security guard told her get out of my face, you ain't no British, you cunt. I think he got fired from the job but anyway
(Coventry, Oana)

And another recited the experience of a Polish family who had had to move out of their home due to racist harassment.

RES: We've got quite a few, not very nice people on our street
INT: So when you say you haven't got nice people tell me something about that
RES: To the point where they've like, they think, well they think all Germans are like Hitler supporters and they think that like international people have come to take jobs. Like we had next door, we had a Polish family and in the end they had to move
INT: Oh, right. Why did they have to move?
RES: Because they just got, it's not so much my street, like my area, you just got, sometimes they were even kids that I suppose didn't have anything better to do, they would just stand outside, heckling
INT: So they'd stand outside the Polish people's house
RES: Yeah
INT: So they got harassed, basically?
RES: Yeah
(Coventry, Taminder)

Some Coventry respondents mentioned a community police initiative designed to make the streets safer in which they were involved. The field site in Coventry was a district where sex workers plied their trade and efforts were being made to reduce the incidence of street harassment. There were no references to any similar project in Nuneaton which may reflect different levels of social capital, in the sense of formal associations (Putnam, 2000), in the two areas.

Respondents in Nuneaton spoke about alcohol and drug abuse and the problems arising from this: one spoke about a friend who had committed suicide due to alcohol and drug

problems, another told us about a sibling who had drink and drug problems following a relationship break up, and a third talked about a busker who had been a drug addict. There was also an account of a local drug dealer and gang leader being imprisoned.

4.1.4 Labelling and stigmatisation

Coventry and Nuneaton are known for their predominantly working-class culture and this is associated with labelling and stigmatisation. There were references in both places to 'chavs' and one respondent said that Coventry was known as Chaventry, a term which refers in a derogatory way to the class identity of its inhabitants. 'The Oxford Dictionary, in 2013 defines Chav as an informal British derogatory [term] meaning a young lower-class person who displays brash and loutish behaviour and wears real or imitation designer clothes' (Wikipedia, 1/10/13).² The term came to prominence in the late 1990s and has been popularised through various TV programmes. David Cameron's 'hug a hoodie' speech in 2006 resonates with a particular understanding of Chavs as young people wearing hoodies, hanging around street corners intent on engaging in criminal behaviour. Indeed respondents in Nuneaton recounted how young people wearing hoodies had been banned from local shops in groups of more than two because they were regarded as a threat and that they felt very angry at the labelling processes involved.

You can't walk, like I like to be warm in what I wear, so I will like wear long johns, vests, to keep myself warm, and you can't wear a hoodie down the road without an old person thinking you're carrying a knife or something stupid. (Coventry, Vivienne)

Stigmatisation was not only experienced in relation to clothes but also to area of residence. Several respondents live or had lived in Camp Hill and objected to the whole area being stigmatised and to being stigmatised themselves as Camp Hill residents.

RES: It [Camp Hill] still is a very strong community. And I think it's misjudged by a few little people who have done the wrong thing. And I don't think areas should be.

INT: Labelled...

RES: Labelled, I don't agree with it. Like Stockingford, I've lived in Stockingford, that's this area, all my life.

(Nuneaton, Emily)

Other parts of Nuneaton, such as Stockingford, also suffer from stigmatisation. There are references to a divide between poor and 'posh' areas but there is also a view that Nuneaton is not marked by massive social inequality.

RES: Yeah, I think so. You've got, I mean not around here so much 'cause around here everyone's quite similarly, in similar sort of jobs, in similar sort of...

² Although there are various versions of the etymology of the term, one – that it is an acronym for Council House and Violent – while almost certainly inaccurate is indicative of the strong class association of the term.

INT: Round here you mean Nuneaton or you mean this part..?

RES: Nuneaton generally, everyone's on similar sorts of pay scales, I mean you've got, obviously you've got your business owners and things who have more money but everyone lives the same way.

(Nuneaton, Cara)

Some parts of Nuneaton were regarded as 'no-go' areas especially at night. This emerged from a discussion of proposals to turn off street lighting after midnight which would be dangerous for young people coming home after that time.

And I'm, I'm not trying to be stereotypical about the estate but the estate just down from us is one of the roughest, it's, it's half council, half privately owned now but it used to be mostly council and it's known throughout Nuneaton for being one of the roughest estates and they're planning on turning off the street lights all across it. (Nuneaton, Cara)

Cara was talking about Camp Hill which was regarded as rough by some but as having a strong sense of community by those who knew it.

Yeah I'd say so like my Dad lives in Camp Hill which is seen as like a run down area of town but I obviously because my Dad lives there and I've spent a lot of time there I can see past that and I can see it's not that bad of a place. Like there's the odd person who does that but there's that odd person everywhere.

(Nuneaton, Callum)

Others spoke of the area having gone downhill because of the increase in the number of council houses and the way it is policed by a gang called the Outlaws who make it impossible for anyone who is not white to live there. Respondents also mentioned the vet surgery in Camp Hill which takes care of the dogs that are injured in organised dog fights, something which is illegal in Britain but which is engaged in by largely working-class, unemployed young men and is part of gang culture (Harding, 2012).

RES: Well even though there's laws and that you do see a lot of racism in Nuneaton and that without realising it. Like one of the roughest areas is Camp Hill, it's just up there, you've heard about it?

INT: Yeah, yeah I've been up there.

RES: Camp Hill's so racist like. You can walk through Camp Hill and all you'll see is white people like cause there's like a lot of racism about like that people don't realise.

INT: Why is that place in particular racist do you think?

RES: This is from what I've heard like, have you heard of the biker group The Outlaws?

INT: Yeah.

RES: They are a really racist group and most of them live up on a road in Camp Hill called Tudor Road.

INT: OK.

RES: And I've heard stories of where say like a black person or an Asian has moved in and they've been chased out and...like... the police they don't hear about these things like.

(Nuneaton, Ed)

4.1.5 Comparing the field sites

Coventry and Nuneaton differ economically and culturally. The higher levels of cultural capital in the Coventry respondent set are associated with a sense of a future which may reflect the high number of students in this sample. There is a more mixed population, support for multiculturalism, and evidence of local associations that are engaging with issues like street harassment. In contrast there is a lack of sense of identity in Nuneaton, more talk about violence, whether on the street or in the home, and more hopelessness; despite this there is local pride and a strong link to the army. They are both working-class areas but Coventry is more mixed in class terms because of the presence of the universities. And in both areas respondents speak with affection about where they live.

And actually it's a lovely place to be, the people there [Coventry] are much nicer than the people in Nuneaton, you know, you'll talk to people and they'll be, you know, they're more friendly and, yes, again you get the people that don't talk to you, erm, and some of my friends, you know, they say, there's a boy called [names friend] and he says, 'I can't believe the way that you can just say hello to people in the streets, you don't know them', I said 'well, that's just me, I just do it', you know, if we were to pass somebody on the street and I had to step off, you know, I would perhaps be a little bit offended if they didn't say thank you. Or, if I walked past them and we had to brush past each other, I might say 'oh, hello' or something like that, as a joke, you know, and they, they'd perhaps just walk past them, and not do that. But I think people associate Coventry and Nuneaton as kind of these, because, I don't know what it is about them, because I think Nuneaton's quite a nice place to live actually, you know the area that we live in is quite quiet. (Nuneaton, Duncan)

4.2 Socialisation into political values

One of the project's main concerns is how young people's political values are shaped. In exploring this, an understanding of collective (historical) memory as an intersubjective phenomenon that emerges in the process of interaction between social actors is adopted (Boyarin 1994; Cappelletto 2003; Pine *et al* 2004). The family provides one of the most common domains for the transmission of collective memories with the stories that are told within families being a means of transmitting memories of cultural or collective trauma (Hirsch 1999; Pine *et al* 2004: 16). In the particular context of interest here - the transmission of radical political identities - Dechezelles' (2008) study of youth involved in Italian extreme right-wing organisations illustrates clearly the important role played by family memories and/or amnesia about political heritage. Political heritage is thus approached from the perspective of the intergenerational transmission of memories of earlier historical periods such as the recession of the 1980s and the Second World War. Also

of interest is social memory, which is an aspect of the present and, as such, distinct, from history which is preoccupied with the past. The interconnections between memory and identity, culture and history are considered and, following Pine *et al*, this is approached starting from the premise that social memory plays an important part in the construction of identities, since people build their identities and social relations 'through mutual understanding and hence confirmation of particular shared pasts' (2004: 4).

Here the focus is on young people's values, the factors influencing their political development, and how memories of the past shape their understanding of the present. The main findings are that respondents' memories of, and the meanings they attach to their political heritage, are shaped primarily by their families and through what they learn at school. Grandparents are particularly influential and tell stories to their grandchildren about their lives; this provides respondents with a sense of family history and how it intersects with local, national and global processes. Grandparents talk about the experience of migrating to Britain in the 1950s, about fighting in the Second World War and about the factories and mines in which they worked. Parents talk about the Thatcher era, how easy it was to get jobs when they were young and the experience of recession and unemployment. Through these stories young people learn about the past and derive certain understandings of the value and significance of events that the older generations of their families have lived through.

However, familial memory, as Pine *et al* remind us 'is only one part of a much larger process of social remembering' (2004: 10). Memory of the past is also performed in commemorative rituals and embodied through repetitive practices (Connerton 1989). Respondents learn about significant historical and political events through school and through outings to sites of commemoration such as museums which they may visit with their family or on school trips. In Coventry the memory of the Second World War is kept alive by the ruins of the old cathedral which almost all interviewees had visited. The First and Second world wars are learnt about at school and some respondents reported that family members had fought in the Second World War. There was a lot of significance attached to the bombing of Coventry, its reconstruction post-war and the community spirit which was allegedly part of it. Respondents also reported learning about the industrial heritage of the city at school and being told about work in the 1970s and 1980s by their parents and grandparents.

School we did about the car industry. Um, gosh, I can't remember when, many years ago. Probably secondary school so may be year nine or something. I know we were talking about the car industry and how Coventry obviously was booming with industry. And then at a certain period in time it all disappeared. I think my nan has talked on about the ribbon factories? Used to talk on about the sewing and things like that. She showed me photographs of the different machines that you used for doing up the ribbon and stuff. (Coventry, Rita)

4.2.1 Influence of family

Parents and grandparents were sometimes referred to as an embodiment of particular political cultures or values (such as '(not) being racist', 'being liberal', 'Christian') which may be accepted or rejected by respondents.

Respondents often took their political values from their parents. One respondent said that her father had been a supporter of Thatcher, whom she also admired, but her university friends were critical of her views because Thatcher closed the mines.

RES: My dad loves Margaret Thatcher. He talks a lot about Margaret Thatcher, about how great she was and stuff. But I don't know. I think she did do some good things. I live with two northerners, so if I dare say anything nice about Margaret Thatcher [laughs, quotes others], 'No, she closed the mines', 'She took children's milk away.' My housemates, they're from Liverpool, so [laughs].

INT: It's no go territory with your friends?

RES: No, you can't be a Conservative supporter and young. It doesn't bode well [laughs]. (Coventry, Nicolle)

Another knew Thatcher as the 'milk snatcher' as this was how her parents referred to her. This is a reference to Thatcher's decision to stop providing free school milk to children in the early 1970s and demonstrations protesting against this with the chant 'Maggie Thatcher, milk snatcher'. At the time she was Secretary of State for Education and Science in the 1970 Heath government.

INT: Do they [parents] talk about Margaret Thatcher or, you know, the government that was in power at that time?

RES: Ah, the milk-snatcher. Yeah.

INT: The milk snatcher [laughs]

RES: That was always our thing, as children being brought up, do you know why you don't get milk at school? That's because of Margaret Thatcher that is, she's a milk snatcher. (Nuneaton, Emily)

A third explained that his father had been involved in policing the miners' strike in 1985 as a young man and a fourth that, while she considered Thatcher to be a strong woman, she herself had grown up in south Wales where Thatcher was reviled for her role in closing the pits. A fifth talked about Thatcher's anti-gay policies and was prescient in her view of what would happen when Thatcher died (interviewing had been completed before this happened).

Well you have the eighties with Thatcher, obviously, complete utter nightmare, frankly. When that woman dies there will be, it's not pleasant, but there will be a lot of people dancing. And her politics just wrecked goodness knows how many institutions, not to mention she was, not to mention she stopped the, she passed that bill that stopped homosexuality being allowed to be discussed, just discussed or talked about in schools. (Coventry, Krys)

Inter-generational differences within families were also evident and meant that respondents challenged the older generations' views. One respondent talked about not being able to tell her parents that she was transgender and another spoke about her sister's lesbianism as something that their father, who was Catholic, found it difficult to come to terms with. One of the Muslim respondents reported that her parents and grandparents were 'traditional' and wanted to arrange her marriage which she does not want to happen; she was critical of their values which she did not share. Views on gender and sexuality could also be shaped positively by experiences of growing up in single-parent households; a respondent who had been brought up by her mother did not think families had to have a heterosexual couple at their centre.

Yes, because my mum's like a bit of a role model to me. I always look up to her and think that, she's showed me that we've survived. I don't know. Some people think that you need a man in the house to like have a family, but I don't think that's the case, because my mum pays the bills, looks after us, does everything on her own. (Nuneaton, Chloe)

Voting patterns were also shaped by family. Not all respondents were old enough to vote but a lot of them talked about the influence of their families on their voting behaviour in terms of which party to vote for, feeling it a duty to vote or not voting at all (this last was more common in Nuneaton than Coventry). Parents were also influential in terms of political identities; one of the feminist respondents identified her mother as a strong role model.

INT: And how did you become a feminist then?

RES: Yeah, I guess you can blame my mum [laughs]... From a young age I think my mum's always raised me with those kind of values, and then when I went to university and we started studying it as part of a, a look on general persuasions against literature, I sort of was sitting there in the lecture and I just went, "oh god, that completely applies to me, I've probably been a feminist my entire life". And yeah. And then just sort of like threw myself into it and explored it. (Coventry, Pam)

Several respondents from Nuneaton were critical of the racist views of their grandparents which they were aware of because they used to discuss politics with them. They also spoke about the contrast between their own views on gender and sexuality and those of older generations.

Well, at school there was like one openly gay guy and he used to get harassed quite bad but in college I think everyone's like grown up a bit and we've all, I think our generation is a lot more accepting, than like the older generations and I think everyone just doesn't really care, get on with it, don't really care (Nuneaton, Poppy)

There was a view in both sites that younger generations are more tolerant than older generations in relation to race and sexual orientation.

I think so yeah because obviously Britain's becoming more multicultural, like I've got friends like are Asians or blacks or female. Like I've got friends but yeah I think there's a bit more tolerance like. My generation especially. (Nuneaton, Ed)

At the same time as there being a narrative about the younger generation being more tolerant than the older generations, there is a view that conditions are more difficult for younger people in terms of employment than they were in their parents' day. There is also a perception that there is more information on which to base opinions and, as a consequence, young people are freer to make up their own minds about social and political issues. University education is one such source and the internet is another.

But I think that's had a very, very big impact for, for us as, as Muslims as well and we kind of, we socialise and interact, I guess it's gone a bit easier in, in the last couple of years as we've kind of grown older, you know, matured, probably and, and, and understanding the world around us as well, you know, it's always your parents, our parents informing us of what's happening and they have their own prejudices and stereotypes and views but you know, my mum comes up with lots of funny things but I always say you don't see what we see, you don't interact in, in, in the way that we do, you know, at the work place or in schools or you know, where I work so it's a bit different, you know, you have your own world view and I have my own world view, it's been changed or influenced by university mainly. If I hadn't have gone to university I guess I wouldn't have had an appreciation for, you know, other cultures and other people from other cultures really and, and diversity in that sense really. (Coventry, Sonya)

Despite these generational differences, socialisation into political values often takes place in discussion with parents and many respondents spoke about watching the news on TV together and talking about it. Friends and peers were also mentioned as those with whom political issues were discussed, as were school teachers and college tutors. Some voiced concerns that talking about politics can be divisive and lead to arguments (e.g. with brother) or violence (e.g. where counter demonstrations are arranged to show disagreement with protesters). This is often used as a reason to avoid debate or discussion of political or other sensitive issues with friends and family.

4.2.2 Local sites of memory

Many respondents were introduced to locally important sites of memory through school visits and by their parents or grandparents. Coventry cathedral was frequently mentioned as well as the Transport Museum and, to a lesser extent, the Herbert museum while, in Nuneaton, the Museum and Art Gallery in Riversley Park which has a strong military focus was visited. Museums and other commemorative sites are, of course, laden with a politics of identity construction embedded in historical narratives. Many of these sites provided a knowledge of local history through the display of 'things' (cultural artefacts) (Radley, 1990)

which was regarded as important, by respondents, as a source of identity and gave local residents something to be proud of. There was a difference in emphasis, though, between Coventry and Nuneaton because of the presence of a largely military museum in Nuneaton. And while Nuneaton respondents had visited the cathedral and the Transport museum in Coventry, none of the Coventry respondents talked of visiting sites of memory in Nuneaton. There was a particularly clearly articulated view in Nuneaton that it is important to learn about, respect and celebrate local history and that it should be taught in school more than it is now.

RES: It is really I mean it's your town's country, history, it's, 'cause obviously we're remembered for George Eliot as well and I think it's important to know about all that 'cause it's where you live.

INT: Yeah.

RES: And basically you want to respect where you live and that's not only the future the present but you need to know the past as well, you need to respect how this town got brought here.

(Nuneaton, Darrell)

There was also pride in coming from an area that had produced groups like the Specials and UB40.

But I am very proud from being from near where you had The Specials and UB40 are from round here as well and I mean it's very, I think it's, it's important to be proud of where you live's heritage. (Nuneaton, Cara)

4.2.3 Commemoration

As well as visiting sites of commemoration respondents talked about the sort of events that were commemorated. Most mentioned poppy day, November 11th, which commemorates armistice day marking the end of the First World War but has been widened to remember all the military and civilian service personnel who have died in past and ongoing military conflicts. This was discussed because poppy day fell during the interview period and also because it is one of the few annual commemorations that take place in Britain. Many respondents in Nuneaton expressed great support for poppy day and condemned the burning of poppies. There have been a number of infamous incidents when poppies have been burned by Muslim protest groups denouncing British military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan such as that by 'Muslims against Crusades' in London, on November 11 2010. Amongst Coventry respondents views were more mixed with criticisms being voiced of a one-sided West and military-centred commemorative tradition and others being sceptical of the idea of commemoration at all. There was scepticism in both sites about the proposals by David Cameron to spend large amounts of money on commemorating the First World War in 2014, the 100th anniversary of its beginning.

The London Olympics and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, both of which took place in the summer of 2012 just before interviewing started, were also mentioned as positive commemorative events which created a sense of British identity and were celebratory.

Positive views of the monarchy related not only to the Diamond Jubilee but also to the Royal Wedding (April 2011) and the subsequent announcement (early December 2012 part way through the interview process) that William and Kate were expecting a baby. These views were much more widespread amongst Nuneaton than Coventry respondents. Royalist views were not seen as in contradiction with support for the Labour party but were seen as important in terms of British heritage and tradition.

Such commemorative events are frequently associated with patriotism, particularly by Nuneaton respondents, where feelings of pride in Britain often focused on its historical role and the weight it retains, disproportionate to its small size, in international affairs. Respondents who said they felt patriotic or 'proud' to be from Britain outnumbered those who expressed concerns about patriotism slipping into negative forms of 'flag waving' or even racism.

4.2.4 Attitudes to the armed forces

There was a significant difference between Coventry and Nuneaton in terms of attitudes towards armed service personnel and the involvement of British troops in conflicts abroad. An obvious explanation for this is the presence of a British army barracks in Nuneaton which brings heightened sensitivity to issues concerning the armed forces. There was also an active cadet organisation in the town which some respondents had been members of when younger. Attitudes to the armed forces range from the very positive and supportive (including wearing of wrist bands, visiting military museums, arguing for prioritisation of the armed forces' budget in times of austerity) through the sceptical (fighting for one's country is proper and right but not fighting for the 'Queen' or 'government' or in wars that are actually about oil or drugs) through to the extremely negative (people should not go to war, joining the army is tantamount to suicide). One respondent recounted how he had wanted to join the army until he learned what the conflict was 'really' about from his cousin.

Well I, when I was a kid I wanted to be in the army, but then I basically got into drinking and having a laugh [...] And then I mean when they first come around I thought oh, I'd love to fight for this country and all this lark and go over there and then it turned out, turned out, like obviously found out about my cousin, what it was all about really and I thought it's ridiculous. I wanted to go and join something I thought was honest and basically protecting your country and all that like, and it's a farce, it's not, it's not real, they're there for drugs and oil.
(Nuneaton, Darrell)

These discussions arose in the context of debates about respect/disrespect for troops amidst widespread lack of support for British interventions overseas and because an image of a protest over the refusal of entry for uniformed service personnel to Browns, a Coventry city centre café bar, was used as an elicitation tool in the interview (see Appendix 2 for details). This was a widely publicised campaign in Coventry and many had heard about it beforehand. However, the prompt to talk about it clearly came from the visual image shown. Views expressed were mainly ones of disbelief or disgust that the soldiers (who had come from a funeral service for a colleague who had been killed in Afghanistan) were

turned away but respondents also expressed either support for the bar in its policy or ambivalence about the issue. There is a strong sense that current military interventions are 'not our wars' but part of a wider international game that does not merit British troops dying. Whether respondents think the wars are right or wrong, however, there is a sense, amongst Nuneaton respondents, that there is a need to provide better support for troops 'out there', those who are injured and the families who have lost members.

4.2.5 Equality and democracy

Respondents voiced strong views on equality; most supported gender equality and spoke about issues such as equal pay. There were a few who voiced more traditional views on gender roles and they tended to be young ethnic minority men. There were comments on the excessive pay received by certain groups of people, how those who have money think they are better than those who have not, and how money is essential for survival but happiness is more important. Respondents also expressed views that were critical of privilege, especially money privilege, voicing anger about the extremely high salaries earned by footballers as compared with those earned by soldiers. Others, however, thought that those who earned more generally deserved their higher incomes. The influence of family was also evident in the way respondents spoke about these issues.

Cos my Dad, my dad, like, obviously supports Labour, and obviously I'm just gon-gonna go, go with whatever my dad does, cos I'm, I'm no good with all that stuff. But I know they treat, they treat working class and rich people equally. D'you know what I mean, whereas David Cameron and that sort of separate us; from the working class, from the rich – y'know what I mean - from the upper class and that's wrong. We're all equal, we all bleed the same, we're all the same person – it doesn't matter about skin colour, looks or whatever, we're all the same people. (Coventry, Vincent)

Egalitarian views were not necessarily associated with a socialist political identity (only a few Coventry respondents identified as socialist), they were more often understood in terms of fairness. They were also associated with the idea that violence was not a legitimate means of bringing about political change and had no place in a democratic political system. There was, however, recognition that violence had worked to achieve political ends historically, the suffragettes being one of the examples given.

Respondents, particularly those from Coventry, talked about their own experiences of democratic participation at school, work or home. Most often this took the form of representing their class mates on a school council. They talked about this with pride and clearly valued the fact that representing their peers enabled them to have a voice. Democracy was often understood in terms of people having a say, a 'fair shout', having their voices heard, even where this meant allowing those you do not agree with the right to express their views. There were exceptions to this where respondents argued that some groups (e.g. EDL) should not be allowed to voice their opinions publicly. Some respondents had a more active definition of democracy, seeing it as the ability to change things if they affect you or seeing it as intrinsically connected to fairness and equality.

4.3 Civic and political engagement

The most recent, critical literature on young people's political participation is moving away from a vision of an 'apathetic' generation of young people to a rethinking of our understanding of political and civic activism based on the empirical evidence of what young people 'do' and, how they do it (see, for example, Brooks and Hodkinson 2008; Calenda and Meijer 2009). Rather than young people being disconnected from political culture, research evidence shows that they are engaged and active in ways that often pose a challenge to orthodox notions of what politics is (see for e.g. Roseneil 1995). More prosaically perhaps, 'young people in the UK appear to match their older peers in desire to communicate, research, debate, inform, suggest ideas, raise funds, protest and volunteer their time to particular causes and actions' (Banaji 2008:550). Furthermore young people engage in countercultures or subcultures which challenge the values of parent cultures or society more broadly and, in some cases, create alternative ways of living (see for e.g. Maffesoli 1996; McKay 1996; Roseneil 1995).

Respondents in the MYPLACE project were engaged in a very wide range of activities from raising money for charities through symbolic displays of beliefs and values to participating in demonstrations; they were involved in formal and informal political activities as well as a range of activities relating to local, national and international issues. They were not, however, involved in subcultures or countercultures. In addition there were different motives for involvement: social justice and the larger picture on the one hand and, on the other, simply acting to protect your own interests.

4.3.1 Sexual and gender politics

Some respondents were involved in sexual and gender politics. Three identified as feminist and one was active in LGBT politics. One of the students in Coventry had organised campaigns and set up a feminist society at her university, another was involved in feminist organisations in the locality and was working in an organisation supporting street workers and drug addicts. She had been involved in setting up Roller Derby in Coventry which is seen as a feminist sport because it challenges dominant images of women and enables women to engage in contact sport. A Nuneaton respondent, who declared herself a feminist, went on to say that Margaret Thatcher was a feminist role model for her. There is a feminist campaign in the UK, 'No more page 3', which is calling for an end to the depiction of topless women in the Sun (a leading tabloid newspaper), and several respondents, particularly in Nuneaton, mentioned that they were concerned with the way women were represented in the media and the pressure this created to conform to unrealistic body images that were either too thin or, more surprisingly, too 'curvy'. One talked about how she was challenging these images through her photography and one young man spoke about his concern about the effect of this media pressure on his girlfriend.

4.3.2 Voluntary work and supporting charities

Respondents referred to a wide range of voluntary and charitable activities which they did not think of as political. These included voluntary work in a local advice centre, building schools abroad and individual acts, such as spontaneously buying food for a homeless man they encountered on the street. In Nuneaton there were a number of local political issues with which respondents engaged. These ranged from campaigning against the closure of the children's ward in the local hospital to raising money for families of soldiers who had been killed or injured. Many Nuneaton respondents sported wrist bands advertising their support for these charities, one of which was 'Army of Angels'. They also reported campaigning for safer streets in the aftermath of a fatal accident involving a school friend and raising money for a cancer charity after the death of another school friend. They were raising money through selling and wearing wrist bands which was met with opposition from the head teacher who did not allow them to wear the wrist bands at school; they organised a protest against this decision. Respondents in Nuneaton also mentioned involvement in support groups for young carers and children who had been in foster care.

4.3.3 Symbolising difference

Many respondents had signed petitions for various causes which they often had difficulty in recalling; these were frequently online petitions. They also talked about their use of social media. Some thought that it was a really good means of getting ideas across while others did not like technology at all. They spoke about symbolic displays of values and beliefs which, besides the wearing of wrist bands, few had engaged in for political motives. There was a view that nowadays, in comparison with their parents' generation, sartorial style was not linked to political allegiance. Alongside this, however, there were several accounts of experiencing abuse and bullying because of the clothes they were wearing; this was associated with the stigmatisation of young people wearing hoodies, dressing like goths or EMOs and having a Mohican hair style.

There's a lot of people who are racist, and then there's a lot of people who don't like people by their dress. I know that 'cause I used to have long hair and stuff, and there used to be a lot of people who'd start, 'Don't like people with long hair, part of [unclear] goths', and stuff. I think that's wrong. There's a lot of homophobic people still. (Nuneaton, Paul)

Processes of othering and stigmatisation were particularly evident in relation to styles which symbolised religious or ethnic difference.

Some respondents talked about bullying, both online and offline, both how they had experienced it and how they had stood up to bullies on behalf of someone else. This was seen as an important form of engagement and could be understood as a proto act of political 'voicing'. This form of action had an effect and made them feel that they could achieve something. One young woman recounted how she had stopped a young black boy being bullied on a bus.

I think, I'd take an example like people are like fighting on buses, things like that. There was one kid that was actually being bullied on the bus and I stood up for that little boy and I said 'stop, that's not right, you shouldn't do that', and they did stop but they carried on laughing but to me that's not I'm not bothered because I know, that probably that boy knows that I'll, that was really bad, and at least someone stands up because if you sit there and watch you don't know what... (Coventry, Isabel)

Some of the bullying was racist but, although individuals acted against it, there was little mention of 'anti-racism' as a form of political engagement; this was despite one of the visuals used in the interview which was of an anti-fascist protest.

4.3.4 Demonstrations and riots

At the time of interviewing, the riots that had taken place in the summer of 2011 were still in the news and at the forefront of many people's minds, especially early in the interviewing period.³ There was ambiguity surrounding the riots which began as a political protest about the police killing of a black man in London but ended in looting and the destruction of property in other parts of London and cities other than London. The line between political protest and riots was blurred and this blurring is reflected in how the respondents talked about political protest. The widespread student protests in 2010 against the increase in tuition fees being proposed by the coalition government were also clearly remembered (one of the images used depicted the student demonstration in Coventry). Students were particularly incensed by the fee increase because prior to the General Election, in 2010, the Liberal Democrats under Nick Clegg had promised not to raise tuition fees. Many students had voted Liberal Democrats and felt betrayed⁴, many were currently students and some wanted to go to university so they were directly affected by this issue. Their anger had been expressed in various street protests and demonstrations between November 2010 and November 2011 in London and other cities including Coventry. The largest of these protests,

³ The riots took place in a number of British cities (such as London, Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester), in August 2011, after armed police officers shot and killed Mark Duggan, a black man, in the Tottenham borough of London. They resulted in the destruction of businesses, shops and stores were looted, and properties were burned down. The police were criticised for not responding quickly and effectively. At the time, the media, politicians and academics drew a comparison between these events and the riots of Black (and Asian) youth against police violence in the 1980s. Both were sparked by the actions of police who were targeting allegedly criminal elements among Black youth in North London. Importantly, however, the racial aspect of the 2011 riots was almost never mentioned by our respondents. The government's reaction to these violent events – putting the blame on 'broken society' with its culture of criminality and anti-social behaviour - echoed, for some observers, Thatcher's speeches made after the race riots of Spring 1981. There were many accounts of rioters looting stores, selling expensive brands or technology and Stuart Hall has argued that the consumerism fostered during the Thatcher years was evident in the behaviour of looters in August 2011. He calls for a deeper analysis of the problems which society faces at the structural level rather than the coalition government's interpretation of events as a criminal outburst of a 'broken society' that does little more than blame working class families for bad parenting of their children (Hall, 2011). In our interviews the respondents see riots as both the opportunistic and foolishly criminal actions of some young people but also as a manifestation of young, working-class people's frustration with their lack of opportunities in the climate of an economic recession.

⁴ When the Liberal Democrats were brought into the Coalition government, they abandoned this policy and supported a Conservative-sponsored policy of raising tuition fees from £3000 to £9000 per annum.

took place in London in November 2010 and ended in violence and disorder. The other issue that directly affected them was the withdrawal of Education Maintenance Allowance.

Respondents expressed a wide range of views on political activities and those who engage in them and reflected on whether they would themselves engage in different forms of protest activity. Some had been on demonstrations. Coventry respondents mentioned going on the anti-Iraq war demonstration with their parents and several had experience of the student demonstrations, either directly or through friends. One referred to his brother's friend's mother who had been killed demonstrating when he was a small child: this appears to be a reference to the death of Jill Phipps who was demonstrating against the live export of calves at Coventry airport in 1995 and who was crushed to death by a lorry carrying calves (Ryder 1996).

Almost all linked demonstrations with violence, usually riots. Some students referred to their own or their friends' experiences of 'kettling', which is when the police contain demonstrators in confined spaces by means of physical or human barriers. This is used on demonstrations as part of police control and is highly controversial. They speculated about whether it would ever be legitimate to use violence and, while most thought that violence was not legitimate a few thought that if used in self-defence it could be acceptable. Most, however, condemned the small minority who provoked violent confrontations on otherwise peaceful demonstrations and did not regard violence as a legitimate means of political protest. They also reflected on whether the student protests had achieved anything with some voicing a feeling that politicians do not respond to pressure from young people. There was also reference to the lack of effect of the massive anti-Iraq war demonstrations and a questioning of the efficacy of this form of protest.

A recurrent theme in the interviews is the conflation of demonstrations and riots, with some respondents correcting themselves for talking about the student 'riots' when they were referring to the student tuition fees demonstration. Involvement in demonstrations and protests was seen as running the risk of violence and something to be avoided because of that; one or two thought that they would have found it difficult to resist participating in looting during the riots and for that reason would not get involved in political activity. There was a lot of condemnation of violence as a means of political protest with it being seen as counter-productive and as engaged in by a small minority. The riots though were seen in a different light as something that got out of hand and where young people were behaving in criminal ways rather than making a valid political protest. In Nuneaton there were some respondents who had friends or family members who had been involved in the EDL demonstration. They were all young men and respondents thought they had got involved because of the buzz of engaging in risky behaviour or in confrontations with the police. Many strongly disapproved of the EDL and one likened the men engaging in this violence to football hooligans.

So, fair play to these ones, you know, to say 'no' to the EDL, because, the EDL, they're just football hooligans, that's all they are. Evolved football hooligans, you know, they've kind of moved away from football and they've found a new cause to get aggressive and angry about. (Coventry, Nick)

Others, however, presented a different, more sympathetic explanation for the violence associated with the EDL in Nuneaton. Craig recounted how the media blamed the EDL for the violence when it had in fact been caused by others; this led him to distrust the media.

A load of my mates was in this, yeah... This was, this ain't as cut and dried as you think it is, right, 'cause basically this is about the troops, weren't it?... Happened the week after, two weeks after... what happened was the troops were doing a march through... And I don't know if they was Muslims or not, but I can only imagine it would have been Muslims, spat at the troops... And they were Ghurkhas, weren't they?... Right, well the EDL are right, very racist people... They are full of racist people but... There were Ghurkhas, know what I mean, they stood up for Ghurkhas, they were fighting for our country.... Yeah, but everything went against that, and I know people that were there, they ain't gonna lie to me about something... They ain't gonna lie to me, if they were going to kick off with the Muslims... I'm going to kick off or I'm gonna bang one out, do you know what I mean, they ain't gonna lie and they told me straight that they spat at the troops... The EDL got everything. The EDL's the one that got kicked into the crowd... It was all over the news that it was the EDL that did everything wrong... And that's how I found out that how bad our news is, do you know what I mean? (Nuneaton, Craig)

4.3.5 Comparing the two field sites

The political violence discussed by those in Coventry related mostly to the student demonstrations (which were conflated with riots) while, in Nuneaton, respondents also discussed the street violence during the EDL demonstration. Almost all respondents strongly condemned violence as a legitimate means of achieving political goals. There was a very marked contrast between young people who felt that they had a duty to vote and that voting was a right that had been hard won and those who thought there was no point and were not interested, that they would not be able to change things and that no one would listen. This coincided with the Coventry-Nuneaton distinction but is underpinned by class differences; those respondents who had left school at 16 and were already in the workforce or on benefits were more cynical about voting and had no sense that their votes would be taken into account.

4.4 Economic and material resources

Many of the respondents, especially those in Nuneaton, were dependent on benefits and had experienced unemployment directly through losing their own jobs or through seeing their parents lose theirs. Some were single parents struggling to bring up a child on benefits or trying to find a job that they could afford to take given the high cost of childcare. Others were students who, while not having a lot of money currently, were able to look forward to improved employment prospects on graduating or were anticipating going to university in the near future. There were a few respondents in graduate jobs in both field sites whose financial situation seemed relatively secure. Many respondents, however, talked about

personal and close family experiences of recession, money worries and unemployment. They spoke about how the recession was reducing employment opportunities and its impact on the wider environment (businesses, town centres etc). This was of concern particularly in Nuneaton as provincial towns have been hard hit by the collapse of key high street chains such as Woolworths (described by one respondent as an 'institution') and HMV.

4.4.1 Experiencing recession

The recession is having a disproportionate effect on young people with youth unemployment soaring and, at the same time, cuts to welfare benefits and educational allowances. Personal experiences of recession varied considerably but most respondents mentioned reduced employment opportunities and inadequate benefits. At the same time as benefits being cut and wages frozen, the cost of housing and food is rising which means people can no longer cover their bills. They said: 'Money worries now are awful' and we are just about 'scraping through'. Respondents spoke about losing jobs and about benefits that were not enough to live on being cut even further; for many it was a struggle to make ends meet. Sally, for example, described her life as 'a struggle, a daily struggle to get, to get by on what the government thinks is acceptable to live on' (Nuneaton, Sally).

The term 'poverty' was used to describe the situation of ordinary families and, in one case, respondents' own situations. This self-referencing as 'poor' is psychologically difficult as indicated by Craig's half-apologetic use of the term.

I'm more to Labour in one sense because they are, they want to help the poor. See I'm one of these yeah, I don't think that the poor, like, I class myself at the moment as a poor...Do you know what I mean, did, honest to God. I did have a lot, do you know what I mean? The only thing I've kept so far is my Play Station and my TV. A lot of it has been sold. (Nuneaton, Craig)

Some had experiences of losing educational allowances, such as the EMA, of finding it hard to afford the bus fare to go to college, and of incurring debt through student loans. One respondent described young people as being 'lost'; they are neither in employment nor education and just 'hang around the streets'.

I'd say from my experience there's quite a lot of youth, you know, just not having a direction, quite a lot when I'm walking around there's like all those people that you know, they're like just out of work or they're out of education, they're just like lost and they turn to like drugs or other things like that, I see quite a lot of people just hanging round the streets, like, you know and it's just not, not right (Coventry, Susan)

These concerns need to be seen in the context of austerity policies involving fundamental reforms to the benefits system that came into effect in April 2013 and were being widely discussed at the time of fieldwork.

Respondents compared the current situation with the 1980s and pointed out that the difference between then and now is that at least Thatcher tried to do something - the current government is 'dancing around' the real issue which is the recession. The current recession was similar to the 1980s in terms of its impacts but the causes are seen as different.

I think the circumstances are very similar but when you look at them both, comparing them side by side, yes not everything Thatcher said or did was beneficial, sometimes it went vastly wrong, but at least she was doing something to try and help. At the minute if you look at parliament it seems like they're dancing around the edge of the main issue and yes, alright the things they're doing are dealing with issues but the main issue, the main thing that's wrong with the country at the minute is the recession. (Nuneaton, Cara)

Moreover there is no understanding on the part of government of how difficult it is to find a job and, for those who are parents, of combining paid work with childcare. As Susan notes, speaking about the government, 'they don't see like the family side of it, like they just expect everyone to just be able to get out to work, no, you know, the child care's really expensive' (Coventry, Susan).

There was also mention of the disproportionate effect of the recession on women as well as the role of recession in the rise of extremism.

Yeah, I think erm, I think economic factors play a massive part, I think, when people start suffering there's a trend to look for somebody to blame, and I think it becomes, they get that real, like, surface difference, them and us, deal. (Coventry, Pam)

4.4.2 Deserving and undeserving poor

Respondents talked about the government's reform of the benefit system which is seen as a major attack on the welfare state. They refer to changes in various benefits that have affected them such as housing benefit, the 'bedroom tax', child tax credit, working tax credit and disability allowance. The bedroom tax refers to changes in housing benefits (introduced with the Welfare Reform Act 2012) that require people who are in social housing and whose accommodation costs are subsidised by the state to pay an under-occupancy penalty for bedroom(s) which are in excess of their immediate need (hence the spare 'bedroom tax'). The government's critics argue that the introduction of the bedroom tax undermines the financial and social security of the most vulnerable recipients of housing benefits such as single parents and disabled people and there was evidence for this in our data.

Alongside reforms to the benefit system and public expenditure cuts there is ongoing public debate about 'scroungers' who are always contrasted with those who deserve to have benefits thereby making a distinction between deserving and undeserving poor. This distinction is reflected in respondents' accounts where there is a strong sense of 'us' and 'them'. 'We' are the ones who deserve benefits because we work hard, the 'others' are

people who come to the UK because the benefit system is more generous than elsewhere in the EU, who have children simply to access benefits, and who consciously manipulate and cheat the system while living a luxurious lifestyle; immigrants are among those who are identified as abusers of the system and are contemporary 'folk devils' (Cohen 1980; see also Jones 2013).

Alongside this, however, there is a strong theme in their accounts that the cuts are being targeted at the wrong people and that they are hitting those who are deserving rather than those who are undeserving.

And they keep taking all this money off my parents and we're struggling, and then there's people that sit on their arses all day, don't go to work, have got sixteen children, and just can't be bothered, and they're claiming every single benefit under that sun and then there's my parents, like there's people like my parents, they're struggling (Nuneaton, Jan)

A Nuneaton respondent spoke of her mother who had brought her up single handedly and who was hard working but was having her benefits cut and another recounted how she had challenged a school mate for asserting that single-mothers were undeserving.

I think there was a boy at my college who was really irritating and he always really did think that single parents – he always used to say, 'All these chavvy single mums who claim all...' Like, my mum is on benefit, but she's not on the dole. She has like, I don't know what benefits exactly, but she does get a lot of help, but I think she deserves it. She still goes to work, so she's not sitting on her arse all day. She does loads of things with my sister. She does loads of things with me and he very much like stereotyped the bad things about how mums are, so I did change his views, because I told him about how my mum had to do it all on her own after my dad left and my sister's dad left and he did like sort of say – in future if we spoke about it he said 'certain mums' instead of like the whole of it. So I don't mind that because there are situations where certain mums are like that. (Nuneaton, Chloe)

There are only a few references to benefits being a right that should not attract opprobrium.

Respondents also spoke about friends who were losing benefits to which they were entitled. One of the Coventry respondents described how a friend of hers had just lost her disability allowance.

I say the new government mainly, quite a few of my friends are having money troubles and since all it's changed they've been having quite a few issues, finding it hard, you know, some of, one of my friends, she's not actually buying weekly food for herself, just for her son and her partner like works over 40 hours to try and pay the rent and everything else and they're still ending up with no money... at the end of it so it's quite hard and you know, she, she, she has like a disability with her feet and her hands but she's just like been not allowed to have

disability anymore...because of the government changes, so now she's short of money, she might lose her car, you know (Coventry, Susan)

Another, however, spoke about neighbours who were claiming disability allowance but were able to build a patio and keep chickens; this was evidence (in his eyes) that they were abusing the system.

And our next door neighbours also, they were claiming disability benefits, but they've built a shed and they've built a patio, and they've got chickens and they've built a chicken run and stuff like that. And we sit here and mum and dad are working their, you know, to the absolute. Dad doesn't get in until late, or he has to work away, and then, you know, and he comes in with a salary that is probably less than what they're getting on benefits, and that's just not fair really. (Nuneaton, Duncan)

There has been a lot of opposition to the ways in which disabled people are being reassessed and many are being disqualified from claiming disability allowance and being compelled to go to work.

There is a strong sense among respondents, particularly those in Nuneaton, that politicians are failing to recognise and tackle the economic crisis and its effects on ordinary people. This is summed up by the phrase, 'nothing ever seems to get done'. They do not think that austerity is the answer as public expenditure cuts are likely to result in more poverty.

And my second issue is with benefits. I've never been like a benefit scrounger. I'm not going to say that everyone should be on benefits because it's wrong. If you have the strength to work as a 9 to 5 job like any other adult, you should go and do it, but there are some people that need benefits to help them, and I think him [George Osborne – Chancellor of the Exchequer] cutting it is just going to make them go into further poverty, and the poverty rates might increase and him doing this, the poverty rate is increasing. He's going to have to give more benefits to them again in order for them to live, so I just think that's just wrong. (Coventry, Tammy)

They had other ideas about what should be done to kick-start the economy. They suggest ensuring that banks lend money to keep businesses going; raising the minimum wage to encourage consumption (interestingly Ed Miliband, the leader of the opposition, has recently announced a policy of tax breaks for employers who pay their employees more); ending the poverty trap and providing more support to people to enable them to get back into work.

4.4.3 Comparing the two field sites

These issues were more resonant among respondents from Nuneaton than Coventry. In particular respondents from Nuneaton voiced concerns about the impact of economic recession, both in terms of their own, and others' 'money worries' and the impact that the

recession had had on businesses and the High Street. They were also more likely to suggest policies for coming out of recession, focusing on increasing consumption by helping the poorest and increasing wages as well as forcing the banks to lend again. There is also more discussion of benefits and the experience of being on benefits in Nuneaton than in Coventry. This relates to the nature of the sample and their experience of living on benefits. There are few in the Coventry sample who have this experience. The differences are particularly large in respondents' attitudes towards claimants and abuse of the system. There is much greater hardship amongst Nuneaton respondents, more of them are dependent on benefits and they have access to lower levels of economic capital, both now and in the future. There is a strong view that they are being treated unfairly. They distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor while at the same time recognising that cuts which have supposedly been brought in to eliminate abuses of the system are affecting people who they know are struggling and hard working, in other words those who deserve to be supported.

4.5 Managing difference

Despite the view that the younger generation is more tolerant and liberal than older generations (see for e.g. Inglehart 1990), the evidence from this research is that British society - as reflected in the two interview locations - has a long way to go before it reaches what many in the media like to call a 'post-racial' stage. Issues related to race remain present on the agendas of the main parties and politicians; this was certainly the case throughout 2012 and during the period of interviewing even though they may not have been explicitly addressed as race issues. They also figure in media discourses and influence public attitudes and behaviour. These issues are mainly immigration and Islam (its links with terrorism and its place in British society); both can act as proxies for race. There is a substantial literature on the link between immigration and race and on immigration as a means of controlling non-white populations both across British borders and within Britain (see Hall and Cohen 1999; Wrench and Solomos 1993; Zig Layton-Henry 1992). There is also an emerging literature on the racialisation of new white migrant communities and Muslims in Britain (Kundnani 2007; Fekete 2009; Anderson 2013). Both immigration and Islam were at the forefront of public and political debate at the time of interviewing.

A YouGov poll tracked (from May 2012 to May 2013) the most important issues that concerned people in Britain and found that immigration, that is of non-white people from developing countries and those (especially Roma) from new EU countries (Bulgaria and Romania) was seen to be the second most important issue after the economy. Whereas immigration was ranked among the top three issues by only 11% of Britons in May 2012, it came to be ranked a top-three issue by 57% of those polled in May 2013 (Jordan 2013).

In addition, numerous reports in the media emerged over early findings of the 2011 Census which indicated that Islam was the fastest growing religion in Britain; while the number of Christians had fallen by 4.1 million, the number of Muslims had increased by 1.2 million (ONS 2012).

The increase in concern over immigration and Islam which reflected concerns over 'race' and the managing of difference coincided, not surprisingly, with changes in welfare reform and benefit cuts that had already taken place in 2011 and 2012 or were about to take effect in April 2013. It also coincided with the unemployment rate for those aged 16+ standing at almost 8% or 2.56 million in February 2013 (ONS Quarterly Labour Force Survey, January – March 2013). The views and comments gathered on the subject of race, from interviews, indicate precisely concerns felt about the contextual factors outlined above i.e. unemployment, welfare reform/benefit cuts and the race-related issues of immigration and Islam.

The main findings that emerge from interviews are that 'race' and related issues, that is immigration, Islam and the presence of Muslim communities in Britain, remain an important concern particularly given the state of the British economy. A large proportion of respondents expressed negative views about the presence of immigrants, black and ethnic minorities and Muslims in Britain and felt that their own socio-economic situation could improve if these communities were either not present or reduced in number. There was also concern that British values and culture were being diluted as a result of immigration and the presence of immigrant, BME and Muslim communities. However, for some respondents, including those who expressed concern about immigration, there was a distinction to be made between 'putting Britain first' (curbing immigration while things are tough) and racism (prejudice or discrimination against other ethnic groups) which they said was wrong.

What also became apparent though is that there exists a deep seam of tolerance towards immigrants, BME communities and Muslims whose rights to be in Britain and contributions to British society were defended. Moreover, among many respondents, including those from BME communities, there was certainty that things had changed for the better where racism and discrimination were concerned, since the early years of post-war immigration, and also optimism that change would continue to happen.

4.5.1 Tolerance and intolerance

There was a view that the media was largely responsible for the belief that immigration was a problem and that they set the anti-immigration agenda. A young Muslim woman said that British society was more tolerant than it had been when her parents were young but new groups, such as those from Eastern Europe, were being stigmatised by the media.

In 2013, twenty-first century, it's, people, people are a lot more tolerant, now the kind of stigma and the problems of, I guess, passed onto you know, the next people who are the Roma gypsies and the Latvians and the Bulgarians and anyone else that the media feels that you know they need to stereotype and put all that stigma and pressure on.

(Coventry, Sonya)

Another respondent, also Asian, suggested that it was the media that created the perception that immigration was a problem, it was not a view that necessarily emerged from people's own experiences.

Race, that kind of stuff, I think that's where the tension is at the moment because the big, see I think the media dictates what people feel or what's their agenda, you know, in society so if there's going to be various news articles and various news broadcasts, things on like, you know, oh, immigration the problem people will start saying oh, immigration is a problem, no matter what it is, people are going to start believing it. The people don't go out there themselves like you can be living in like a village full of white people and if you said oh there's an invasion of brown people, you're going to believe it because it's the media. So I think the media does play a big role in what, how society sees everything
(Coventry, Umair)

The co-existence of tolerance and intolerance became evident in discussions of symbolic displays of values and beliefs which revealed how important symbols are in facilitating processes of othering. There was a marked intolerance of the religious symbols of 'others' on the part of some respondents while others had experienced intolerance and abuse themselves. Symbolic displays included the wearing of religious symbols such as the Christian cross and the Muslim headscarf. Strong views were expressed that (Muslim) women should not be permitted to wear face coverings while respondents who themselves wore headscarves experienced a lack of tolerance. A Bulgarian student reported a racist incident in a Coventry street when his wearing of a cross had prevented an imminent attack; his attackers had identified him as Muslim but on seeing the cross realised their mistake. There was a strong feeling, particularly in Nuneaton, that the way 'others' were treated was better than the way they were themselves treated and this was felt to be 'unfair'. Respondents in Nuneaton pointed out that they were not allowed to wear hoodies if they wanted to go into shops but no such measures were being taken against the wearing of headscarves. At the time of interviewing there were debates in the media arising from legal cases concerning the right to wear religious symbols at work; one was going through the courts which related to an airline attendant's wish to wear a cross and there are ongoing debates about the wearing of headscarves (for example while giving evidence in a court of law).

Respondents' views of immigrants can be rather contradictory so that a 'good migrant'/'bad migrant' dichotomy emerges which is reminiscent of the deserving/undeserving poor distinction. 'Good migrants' are either those who bring skills and contribute to the development and success of the British economy or they are asylum seekers who are genuinely fleeing political instability or persecution in their country of origin or previous residence. These migrants are felt to deserve their place in British society. It should be noted that many of the respondents did not make much of a distinction between migrant and ethnic minority communities, it may therefore be the case that 'good migrants' also included those from long-established ethnic minorities who had proven themselves as useful to Britain. On the other hand, 'bad migrants' include three different categories: those

from East and Central Europe (including Roma) who are not fleeing situations of danger but who come to Britain purely to make money for themselves and to send any money they make back to their country of origin, thus undermining the British economy; illegal migrants; and 'benefit tourists' who hear of the health and welfare benefits available in Britain and therefore come over and exploit the British benefits system. None of the migrants in the latter three categories were seen as deserving to be in Britain.

In addition, pessimism is centred not only on the structural/material impacts of immigration which are seen fundamentally to affect the way people live (particularly in an era of economic downturn) but also on its cultural effects. Concerning the structural impacts, two issues surface repeatedly: that of (un)employment and that of limited resources in the form of social security benefits, housing, school places, health services and space (i.e. Britain is a small country). So, for example, respondents talked about first-hand experiences or reports of a shrinking job market in which immigrants are seen to price white British people out of the labour market. Some contended that it was unreasonable to allow entry to more immigrants at a time of swingeing benefit cuts and that many immigrants came to Britain to take advantage of its welfare system. Fear underlay these views and was exacerbated by austerity measures and the rhetoric surrounding them.

The, Camp Hill is made up of a lot of people who live off the welfare state and I think that immigration has got to the point that opinion among people on the welfare state is that if we let any more people in then their benefits are gonna start disappearing. Which I think is quite an accurate point, I'm not saying they're incorrect with that but I think that's what some of them think. Because now they're cutting child support and things I think a lot of people are scared that if we get any more people coming (Nuneaton, Cara)

Moreover, rebutting the contention that immigration brings economic benefits to Britain, a few respondents argued that immigrants sent the wages they earned back to their countries of origin thereby making their families back home 'insanely rich' and, by implication, Britain poorer. East Europeans were viewed as most responsible for these negative impacts on white Britons. This view must be read in the context of media reports (during the interview period) on the lifting of entry restrictions, in 2014, on Bulgarians and Romanians who will be granted freedom of movement to and from Britain, although they will still require work permits.

Having said this, a small proportion of respondents talked about the economic benefits of migration. A number of respondents referred to the vital role that immigrants played in the 1950s and 1960s in the reconstruction of Britain and its war-torn economy and defended the right of BME communities to settle in Britain as a result. Other economic benefits cited were: immigrants are hard-working and do jobs that white Britons refuse to do; immigrants have contributed heavily to key sectors such as the NHS and without them such sectors would not function; immigrants have helped maintain local life through running corner shops, restaurants/ take-aways, taxi services etc. One respondent talked about this as he was talking about the BNP's anti-immigration policies.

RES: They don't like, they don't like, I mean yeah, they want to get rid of foreigners, but I don't agree with how they want to get rid of them, they just want to chuck them out.

INT: Right.

RES: They are some, actually honest working foreign people in this country I mean, the bloke, bless him, he's just passed away like but the bloke that was running that post office across the road were, he was doing it for 30 years, one of the most amazing blokes you'd ever meet [...] He'd never hurt a soul, I mean he's donated stuff to the nursery and stuff like that, he's, I couldn't imagine him getting kicked out of the country, he wouldn't deserve it [...] I mean it's a lot of honest hard working Indians, and some Polish and that but there are, the ones that are taking advantage, yes, I would definitely say you abusing it, 'bye but [inaudible] any others then, yeah, I, they just want to get rid of them.
(Nuneaton, Darrell)

Many respondents distinguished between individual migrants who contributed to the life of the community (us) and a generic mass of immigrant others (them) who were problematic. It was also argued by a few that immigration was a legacy of colonialism which meant that Britain had to accept some moral responsibility and keep its doors open. One respondent felt that because Britain had, through history, exported its citizens to other parts of the world, it was fair that the citizens of other countries should be able to come to Britain.

As far as cultural impacts are concerned, immigration is seen by some respondents as a conveyor belt for undesirable practices ranging from honour crimes, to wearing the burkha, to adhering to principles of Shariah law and for yet others as a means to negate British culture in order to impose foreign cultures. Countering this pessimistic view of the cultural impacts of immigration, a number of respondents welcomed the growing multicultural nature of British towns and cities which had led to a greater open-mindedness and tolerance towards outsiders than was the case in their parents' and grandparents' time. Many also welcomed the fact that food had become more interesting since the arrival of migrants in Britain.

The most common solutions offered by respondents to reversing the negative economic and cultural impacts of immigration as they saw it were barring entry to immigrants, especially to those from new EU member states and repatriation of immigrants to their countries of origin – although repatriation was seen by some respondents as an unjust measure where asylum seekers were concerned and in the case of those who had been in Britain over a long period of time. In the latter case, it should be noted that some respondents appeared to make very little distinction between immigrants and long-established ethnic minorities and hence repatriation was a solution to be applied to all immigrants and non-white people.

RES: Why let them here. 'Cause now, we *are* overrun, I don't care what people say. If you look in the bloody Midlands, it might as well be bloody Birmingham 'cause there's just way too many and they're all just spreading out and spreading out and it winds me up to hell and they should all get put on a plane or blown back, blown up, I don't care.

INT: Is that, is that all immigrants, regardless of where they come from, 'cause you said like Birmingham, is it particular group of immigrants?

RES: No, no, no, in general, black, Paki, African, I don't care. (Nuneaton, Barry)

Only one respondent suggested that a policy of closed borders was not realistic if Britain wanted to compete in a global economy.

4.5.2 Islamophobia

As well as distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' migrants, respondents also talked about good and bad Muslims. They distinguish between pragmatic Islam and moderate Muslims on the one hand and radical Islam and extremist Muslims on the other hand. Radical Islam is that which advocates war on the West, disrespects its culture (e.g. honouring the war dead, Christmas) and undermines its values (e.g. democracy) while extremist Muslims are those who inflict terror and suffering on the innocent public (epitomised by the attackers of 9/11 and the London 7/7 bombers). Some talk about the effects of the London bombings on them and how they led to the Muslim community closing in on itself. Respondents from Muslim communities were careful to stress that extremist Muslims are in the minority and give Muslims a bad name, a view shared by many non-Muslim respondents. The expression of this dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims reflects much of the (tabloid) media and political discourse on Islam and Muslims (see Mamdani 2005). But also, at the time of the interviews, there had been much media discussion and news about the plight of schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai who had been flown to Birmingham, in October 2012, for an emergency operation after being shot by the Taliban, in the Swat province of Pakistan, and who remained in intensive care for a number of months. The Taliban had attacked Malala because she was an ardent campaigner for the right of girls to be educated. Malala therefore symbolised 'good' or pragmatic Islam which favoured the education of girls and women while her attackers represented 'bad' Islam and extremist Muslims.

4.5.3 Comparisons between the two sites

As far as attitudes to immigration are concerned, far more negative attitudes are expressed in Nuneaton than in Coventry and more Coventry respondents are critical of anti-immigration politics and policies. These differences can be explained by the fact that Coventry has a longer history of immigration (in particular labour migration) and therefore experience of immigrants and their cultures. In addition, a significant proportion of Coventry respondents were new migrants themselves (students, those from new EU countries) or were from established BME communities, i.e. had parents or grandparents who had immigrated to Britain.

There were also differences between Coventry and Nuneaton in relation to views of Islam and Muslims. In Nuneaton no reference was made to 'Islamic law' whereas in Coventry there were no references to Islam in relation to disrespect for troops. This reflects the different concerns of the two respondent cohorts. In Nuneaton, the presence of the army barracks explains the respect afforded to troops and respondents' condemnation of Muslims' lack of respect (as they see it). On the other hand, the reference made to Islamic

law by Coventry respondents is not surprising given that five of them were from Muslim communities. On the whole Islam and Muslims were viewed more favourably in Coventry than in Nuneaton and it may be argued that this is because there is a larger presence of Muslims in Coventry and because of the multicultural composition of the Coventry population. As a result, more is known about Islam and Muslims in Coventry than Nuneaton and this greater knowledge leads to more positive views of Islam and Muslim communities.

Attitudes to 'race', racism/discrimination, racist parties and movements, tolerance of difference and anti-racism were also different in Coventry and Nuneaton. Nuneaton respondents revealed a more unenthusiastic view of multicultural Britain, greater fear of being edged out of employment by immigrants and ethnic minorities, and of their values and culture being undermined by Islam and the ethnic cultures brought to Britain by those they consider 'outsiders', not British. Hence they tended to express greater support for extremist parties' views (though not actions) than their Coventry counterparts.

4.6 Formal politics

In this section respondents' everyday articulation of political engagement are set in the context of wider academic critiques of paradigms of democracy. In particular the question of whether the desire to 'be heard' or, more actively, to engage in politics in a 'loud and proud' way, confirms Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's rejection of hegemonic notions that a democracy that 'works' for 'the people' is one based on 'a universal rational consensus' managed through institutions apparently able to 'reconcile all conflicting interests and values' rather than one in which there is vibrant public sphere of political contestation (Mouffe 2005: 3). Mouffe (2005: 66) argues that right wing populism has made inroads precisely in those places where traditional democratic parties have lost their appeal to an electorate who can no longer distinguish between them in the 'stifling consensus' that has gripped the political system. Moreover, these new populisms may be constituted in social heterogeneity and a multiplicity of social demands rather than any simple 'will of the people' (Laclau 2005: 231).

Several themes emerge from the data that confirm that young people in the UK are at best ambivalent about the way in which the democratic system works today. They are also dissatisfied with politicians who are referred to as out of touch, privileged (rich, posh), out for themselves (corrupt, interested in their own wealth and career), hypocritical or not keeping their promises, and 'not listening' to people like us. The breakdown of communication is partially linguistic; as one respondent puts it:

The language of politics... can be damaging, I think it stops some people from getting involved, if they don't understand the terminology, I think it can make it quite difficult, for some people, to interact with it. (Coventry, Pam)

Young people's engagement in politics is affected by the inaccessibility of the political to them; they talked about the language and terminology of politics being off-putting and obfuscating rather than illuminating political process and debate and many were not interested and/or did not know enough about politics to have a view. Those who were 'not

interested' tended to be from Nuneaton. Below respondents' views of political parties and politicians, their understanding of political systems and processes and their views of fringe or extreme movements (primarily the EDL and the BNP) are discussed.

4.6.1 Political parties

The picture that emerges is one of deep disenchantment among young people with the three main political parties. There is also a significant gap in their knowledge about the parties, party ideology, party positioning in the Left-Right political spectrum and party policies. This is not entirely surprising given the UK political context during the period of the interviews. A Guardian/ICM poll conducted in mid-November 2012 found that support for the three main parties had dropped compared with previous months and that the chief beneficiaries of this drop in support was UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party), whose support rose to 7%, as well as a combined assortment of small parties whose support rose to 15% - a figure that had not been topped in 28 years of Guardian/ICM polling (Clark 2012). The party which lost out most, among the big three, was the Liberal Democratic Party which trailed behind UKIP not only in the Police and Crime Commissioner elections of October 31st 2012 but also in the Corby by-election of 15th November 2012. So Labour topped the poll with 40% of voters' support, followed by the Tories at 32% and the Lib Dems at 13%. The Guardian/ICM poll of November 2012 revealed high levels of voter disillusionment, fed by fear of unemployment, government policies to shrink the welfare state and immigration from new EU member countries. There is also evidence of high levels of Euro scepticism (a survey for the Observer during this period had found that 45% of voters considered Britain's membership of the EU a bad thing (Opinium Research 2012); this sentiment was not replicated in the MYPLACE survey data, however, which showed 54% of Coventry and 47% of Nuneaton respondents agreed or strongly agreed, with the statement that membership of the EU greatly benefits the UK..

This picture of widespread disillusionment with the main political parties is very close to the views of MYPLACE respondents who felt that all the main parties worked in their own self-interest and were not interested in the views and needs of working people. The Tories were perceived most negatively - as a party which cares little for ordinary people and as more interested in lining the pockets of the rich. Labour fares better (as is the tendency when in opposition) and is seen by a large number of respondents as the only party which represents the working class; working people of other intermediary/better off classes; the disadvantaged; and young people. While Labour's record in government is criticised, many respondents are fairly forgiving and point to various examples of support schemes for young people, single mothers etc. as proof that it still cares about its core constituency. The Liberal Democrats came in for a considerable amount of criticism for signing the coalition agreement with the Tories though much of the criticism also hinged on the U-turn that the party had performed on university tuition fees in 2010 (i.e. breaking its manifesto promise to phase out fees within six years). It should also be noted that for a number of respondents Nick Clegg exemplifies the Liberal Democrats and few respondents could say much about the party's other political figures or policies. This also explains why the Liberal Democrats did not figure highly in respondents' approval.

4.6.2 Politicians

The vast majority of attitudes expressed towards politicians, especially when the discussion is at the general or abstract level, are negative. These negative statements can be grouped as follows: deceit; distance; weakness; and self-presentation.

Respondents regard politicians as deceitful ('liars', 'hypocrites') in that they tell people what they want to hear in order to get elected but then 'go back on their promises'. These statements need to be read in the context of a number of 'scandals' that have taken centre stage in politics over the last few years and have been played out extensively in the media. These include the exposé of the systematic misuse of expenses by MPs and the prosecution of individual MPs for driving and other offences. The sense that politicians 'go back on promises' must also be read in the context of the current novelty of a coalition government in the UK. Traditionally UK politics (based on a first past the post system) provides the opportunity for the winning party to implement its manifesto to the best of its ability. A coalition government clearly requires compromise from constituent parties on manifesto policies and thus generates a sense that they have not fulfilled promises. This is evident particularly with regard to the Liberal Democrats' support for the rise in university tuition fees.

Respondents also suggested that politicians are 'out of touch' with ordinary people. Their statements both explicitly and implicitly suggest that politicians come from 'privileged' backgrounds and do not understand 'the average person'. They also suggest that politicians 'don't listen' to ordinary people and their wishes. Indeed one of the most frequent criticisms of politicians was that they were 'out for themselves'.

But our government don't listen to us, do you know what I mean? At the moment all they care about is giving the rich tax breaks and taking, hitting all the poor people. (Nuneaton, Craig)

The sense that politicians are a class apart has been strengthened recently due to widespread discussion of the coalition government being heavily dominated by those from top public schools (Eton) and elite universities (Oxbridge). This gives rise to a sense that politics needs 'somebody that's more for us'.

RES: Because I don't, I haven't got the right blood, my blood ain't blue, do you know what I mean? And that, that, I think that's something they need to sort out 'cause I reckon if you could get somebody in there who's been to a council estate.

INT: Yeah.

RES: That's lived with nothing, do you know what I mean? I reckon a party would go a long way, because they know what sort of things are really affect the poor, do you know what I mean? (Nuneaton, Craig)

This is suggestive of a wider emergent theme in the data concerning a sense of drift between an elite group of politicians and ordinary people and the loss of voice this entails. It

also explains some of the attraction of the BNP and EDL who are seen as understanding the experiences and fears of 'people like us'.

This sense of disengagement from politics is also evident in respondents' evaluations, often of individual politicians, along a spectrum of 'weak' to 'strong' or 'cowardly' to 'prepared to fight'. Particular criticism of 'cowardice' relates to the junior position within the coalition government of the Deputy Prime Minister which renders him helpless. Other politicians (e.g. Ed Miliband) are also criticised as weak leaders. In contrast positive characteristics (associated with both Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair) relate to the demonstration of strength, commitment to 'doing something', 'trying their best' and 'passion' even when the policies implemented are seen to be 'wrong'. This is indicated also in the fact that 'strong' politicians such as Margaret Thatcher are mentioned much more frequently even though they no longer participate in politics (the interviews were conducted before the death of Margaret Thatcher) than the current leader of the opposition. Indeed Thatcher is the most frequently mentioned politician after the current Prime Minister, David Cameron.

Most associations of corruption relate to politicians' misuse of expenses. This should be seen in the context of a series of high profile scandals and a fundamental reform of the system of expenses claims in the UK which have embedded the notion that politicians exploit the privilege of office. There is some suggestion that the whole political system is associated in respondents' minds with corruption, i.e. that which comes to mind immediately when they hear the word 'politics' or 'the political' is 'corruption'. There is also some discussion of corruption in other societies with whom the respondents have connections (post-socialist societies like Romania and Bulgaria, and Pakistan).

Finally, criticisms of politicians (both individually and generically) also indicate a deep scepticism among respondents about the role of the media in politics. The importance of the media to political success means that politicians recognise the 'importance of image' and learn to 'say what they think the electorate want to hear' (which is interpreted as manipulative and lacking in conviction).

There are some positive statements about politicians. These are mostly expressed in relation to individual politicians rather than generically applied. Local politicians come out best and this is linked to an ability to see a direct response to approaches made to them. Positive features include the ability to 'admit they are wrong', being strong or having 'passion' and being 'normal people' or being able to talk to ordinary people. There are also negative views of local politicians which are often related to knowing a particular individual and disapproving of their behaviour, in one case it was their sexually predatory behaviour and in another their ability to garner support through ownership of the local mosque.

4.6.3 Political system

Responses to interview questions about whether the current political system is democratic need to be read in the context of a widely accepted view that the UK is the oldest established democracy in the world and the absence of any direct or second-hand experience of alternative systems. At the same time recent media debate has included

discussion of the increasing professionalization of the political system and the emergence of a separate breed of 'career politician'. Coalition governments have been extremely rare in British political history and this is an important context for understanding debates about whether compromise and consensus produces better government than a majority government that has greater ability to enact policies included in the party's pre-election manifesto. It should also be borne in mind that if case studies had been conducted in either Scotland or Wales, the question of devolution would have figured much more prominently.

Views on the current coalition government and on general 'consensus' politics are split between those who think that in principle having more than one party in government broadens the range of opinions included and should produce better government, less dominated by conflict or less 'radical' in promoting their own policies, and those who believe that differences of opinion are essential to the political process and that differences between parties are essential to ensuring people have real democratic choice. Evaluations of the current Coalition government are almost universally negative, either because people feel that the junior partner has 'sold out' on its commitments or because the two parties' opinions and agendas are too far apart to produce real consensus. The conclusion drawn is that they continue to practise conflictual politics just papered over, aiming only to 'look like they don't disagree'.

Although no general question about opinions on the current UK government was included in the interview schedule, there were many spontaneous observations. The UK government is criticised because of its failure to listen which fuels the alienation from formal politics voiced by many respondents. They are generally sceptical about government responsiveness (with the exception of positive mention of one local politician) and concerned that there is no way to get rid of a government mid-term if they do fail to respond to the electorate's dissatisfaction. Respondents also talk about their loss of faith in politicians and government because of their failure to 'do anything' or because they 'just fight'. The effectiveness of other forms of politics is also mentioned (protests, boycotting products) with ambivalent evaluations.

Respondents were prompted by the interview schedule to reflect on whether 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' retained meaning in the contemporary political sphere. Those who think they do retain relevance are usually non-UK citizens or well educated politically and were more likely to be found amongst the Coventry respondents. They suggest that the left-right distinction is still useful but also that the political spectrum might be thought of more productively in some form of circular rather than linear shape. A larger number of respondents found the terms no longer useful, or even confusing, or they might have heard the terms but did not really know what they mean. Respondents also commented on how these terms related to political parties in the UK. Here respondents are divided between those who refer to the standard Left/Labour, Right/Tory distinction; those who are aware of this standard classification but like to make it clear that most parties occupy a centre ground at the moment; those who confuse and often reverse the association (saying for example Labour is socialist but also 'right wing'); and those who are unable to say which party belonged where. Few respondents pin their colours to any left/right mast and where they do, they are more likely to say they are broadly left-wing. Few respondents clarify what left

wing or right wing actually denotes substantively, but, where they do, they often do so by talking about the 'extremes' of the spectrum (communism and fascism), although others link it to differences in the degree to which the individual is held responsible for their wellbeing.

As well as struggling to describe the political spectrum (in terms of left/right, socialism/conservatism) respondents also found it hard to position themselves within it. They saw political parties as 'all the same' and 'out of touch' and the most frequent statements of their own political identity was that of 'non-political'.

INT: If I ask about your political views, ideals or values, how would you describe them?

RES: I don't really abide politics that much. I don't really know. I think it should favour working class over the rich 'cause we struggle more. (Nuneaton, Paul)

It is important to note that many of the people explicitly saying they are non-political actually declare at the same time that they would definitely vote, have strong opinions about the government, or consciously avoid talking about politics because it is divisive (not because they are not interested in it). This position would appear, therefore, to be an active identity rather than necessarily reflecting a lack of knowledge or interest.

It is possible that this sense of dissociation leads respondents, even those explicitly disagreeing with fringe 'far right' parties such as the British National Party, to support the proliferation and diversification of political parties and the political agenda:

As much as I disagree with the BNP and some of the other small parties, somebody obviously agrees with them so if you've got them represented then there's more people's views represented as far as I'm concerned. (Nuneaton, Cara)

Among some respondents such fringe parties are also perceived to show a passion and fighting spirit that are found to be missing from mainstream politics (exceptions being Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher to whom these characteristics were attributed). We return to this below.

Unsurprisingly, in light of the above, many of respondents had no fixed party loyalty and their choice of who to support in elections was shaped by how their parents vote, by policies and manifestos and by what is 'good for me' rather than political ideology or identity.

Financial institutions are identified as part of the ruling elite, having too much power over lending and being too easily able to avoid tax, although there is little evidence of a wider critique of capitalism or the relationship between government and financial institutions. Regarding 'class interests', most frequent expressions relate to the Labour Party being 'for the working class' or wanting to help 'the poor' and the Conservatives being 'for the rich'. Some respondents, however, either suggest that this may only be a 'label' or that these

normal lines can be crossed (one example given is of a respondent's father who votes Conservative despite being working class). The BNP is associated with the 'lower class' or those 'living on benefits'. For many of our respondents class remained a salient political identity.

4.6.4 Local politics

Coventry respondents spoke less about local political issues than those in Nuneaton which could reflect the high proportion of students who are not local and, as a result, may have limited knowledge of local political issues. Several students were still registered for voting at their parents' address. Local issues that were mentioned in Nuneaton included the lack of parking for cars; the local park being unfit for young children because it had been taken over by 'yobbos'; the dangers of letting children out to play; council policy on street lighting at night and the consequences of this for young people coming home from clubbing, especially in 'rough' areas.

There was also anger at the local councillors in Nuneaton who refused to work with BNP councillors who had been elected in one of the wards located within the field site. There was a strong articulation of the opinion that by doing this they are ignoring the views of the people who elected the BNP councillors and making a mockery of local democracy; this was something that put one respondent off voting again in local elections and made him feel that working-class voices were not listened to. It reinforces the point made earlier about critiques of democracy and the silencing experienced by young, working-class people.

RES: No one would work with them [BNP councillors].

INT: And they, didn't one stand down, didn't he stop being BNP?

RES: Yeah, 'cause no one would work with them. I don't know if they stood down like, I could ask my grandma about that. [...]

RES: They wouldn't work with them, the Conservatives...[...]Labour, wouldn't work with them which I think is, that really annoyed me, that, not 'cause it were BNP so much...[...] But because they were elected, we had chose for that person to be elected and to stand for our and they decided not to work, that really infuriated me. [...] It's for us, us to put in there to say like well this is who we believe in, do you know what I mean? Not for them to say well we don't, we don't really like them. (Nuneaton, Craig)

He made it clear that he had voted BNP because he wanted Britain to withdraw from the EU not because he was racist and there were others who said that they would support UKIP because of its commitment to leaving the EU. Despite experiences such as this, respondents felt that they can make a difference at local level and that it matters which individual (as opposed to party) is voted in. There were different opinions about whether local or national politics are more engaging: one person thought only local politics was meaningful, another that local politicians were more likely to do what they said, while a third said they only followed national politics. Where respondents commented on what they voted, they agreed that they might well vote differently at local and national levels; this would depend on manifestos and the individuals standing.

4.6.5 Fringe or extreme movements

One of the central aims of the research is to determine receptivity to populist or extreme ideologies the most visible of which are 'far-right' movements in the UK today - the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL). It is important to note here that the high number of references to the EDL in interview narratives is at least partially a result of the use of a visual stimulus during the interview depicting an EDL march in one of the two fieldwork sites (Nuneaton). This proved to be a highly useful prompt for discussion as it provoked direct memories of being present at or witnessing the demonstration or talk of its impact on the town and responses to it. An image showing an anti-fascist counter demonstration was also shown although this did not evoke such frequent response; while all respondents knew of the EDL march, few remembered the anti-fascist counter demonstration. While the use of this prompt might make the role of the EDL appear more important than it actually was at the time of interview, since May 2013, the movement has had significantly more visibility and coverage following a surge of activity, and growth in support, following the murder of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich. There is more discussion of the BNP and EDL by Nuneaton than Coventry respondents which is not surprising given the greater direct experience of these two movements in Nuneaton than in Coventry.

There are two themes to emerge from these discussions: one is the passion which is missing from most formal politics and the attraction of fringe parties because of their passion; the other is dissociation from the violence and racism that many respondents associate with the extreme right.

4.6.6 Attraction

Respondents talked about their attraction to extreme right movements in terms of their passion, their willingness to 'do something' and their concern with 'real' issues. Craig claimed he would support the English Defence League if they could rid themselves of 'the racist horrible like vindictive bit' in the movement. He is attracted to them:

Cause the EDL, they will go out there, they will fight... Do you know what I mean, they ain't scared to go out there and do like a full on fight... We do need a party like to go out there, go on the streets... Protest against real things. (Nuneaton, Craig)

Here Craig is also hinting at another important theme which is that protest about 'real things' needs to take place on the streets because such issues are excluded from mainstream political discourse. In Cara's view, this exclusion takes place because of the class division in politics; those issues that do not affect the privileged elite occupying the political space are not given air time.

RES: I think a lot of the population would agree that we shouldn't let as many people in from the EU as we do...there's a lot of people who say, 'oh, it's a working class issue that', because they're not stealing the doctors' jobs... the civil

engineer jobs... the upper class jobs... so I think... it's seen quite as an issue that working class people care about and not really anybody else.

INT: Do you think that's why it's not discussed enough?

RES: I think to an extent that's why it's kind of ignored, because although there is quite a lot of people who are working class, I think there's more people in, involved in politics, like your MPs, your Lords, and things like that who are middle and upper class ...It just seems to be questions that affect MPs and things and people of the class of politics as it were that seem to get discussed rather than the things that generally affect the working person. (Nuneaton, Cara)

Chloe's experience leads her to a different conclusion, one which is closer to positions within the BNP or EDL, that ethnic minority rights are unjustly privileged over ethnic majority rights in the current democratic system and that this is unfair.

I know a friend at school who actually had BNP writ on their hand once and we had a black American teacher and she expelled him and excluded him because of it... Well, no I don't think he personally should get excluded because I don't think he personally writ it on his arm and was like, 'Right, it's for that teacher there...It's a party at the end of the day. You know, it's open to views...You see, I think we should have parties like that because things like Polish people and that coming into the country, it can't get a job sort of thing... things like that are affecting me and the people who are around me and the place that I live. So of course I'd join a party like that. (Nuneaton, Chloe)

There was a view that it was possible to vote for the BNP without identifying with their racism and some had done this because they agreed with their anti-EU position.

INT: Can I ask who you voted for? You don't have to tell me if you don't want to but...

RES: I can't [remember]. I think it might have BNP myself, like, do you know what I mean? I ain't racist in any way. His [indicates small son] granddad's Indian. I ain't racist at all. I've got loads of black mates, do you know what I mean? Race don't make a, I'm not, I don't like Muslims that are radicals and that, do you know what I mean? But other than that I ain't racist. I ain't fussed.

INT: So why would you vote for the BNP then?

RES: 'Cause they were going on about the EU, do you know what I mean? That's my main one. I want out of the EU as soon as possible like. (Nuneaton, Craig)

Craig employs a common narrative trope that refutes any potential accusation that he is 'racist' by pointing to having friends or family from minority ethnic groups. One respondent who explicitly identified himself as racist (and this was rare amongst respondents) supported the BNP because of its anti-immigration policy. His view was that there would be more jobs for 'us' if there were fewer 'foreign people' in Britain.

INT: Have you ever voted?

RES: No, I don't see the point. I really don't see the point, they're all the bloody same to me, they're all wankers. If I could vote, I'd vote BNP like I said, but that's the only people I'd vote for.

INT: And do you think they would change, do you think that would change something, if you did, if BNP..?

RES: Make Britain, make Britain a lot better I reckon, know what I mean? There'd be a lot less violence, I personally think, for the way I perceive things, fair enough, it's not all foreign people that commit crime but if it weren't for all the foreign people being here more people would have jobs, be more money for us and blah, blah, blah, more hours of work and all that type of stuff so that's how I see it.' (Nuneaton, Barry)

However, even this respondent spoke of a friend of his in the army who was black thereby distinguishing between known individuals who can be friends and the 'group' who are othered.

4.6.7 Criticism

Most respondents in both sites, whether or not they sympathised with some of their policies, condemned the violence at EDL protests and argued that countering extremism with extremism is not a good thing. They were critical of the way in which parties and movements such as the BNP and EDL challenged 'bad' Islam, namely through street violence and/or tactics such as dumping pigs' heads in mosque premises. Some respondents condemned the violence and racism of the EDL but agreed to a lesser or greater extent with the main message of these groups that Islam would take over Britain if it was not countered.

RES: I think the EDL was a bit violent because they were really racist, but some things he said I think was right.

INT: OK, that's interesting. What do you think was right?

RES: Like where they Muslims come in. They manage to get a house straight away and get money straight away and get loads of jobs. (Nuneaton, Carly)

Others denounced the EDL and BNP without qualification for spreading fear through racist and Islamophobic messages and for engaging in gratuitous violence.

They might have been some racist people that I happened to talk to but they were saying like we need to get the Pakis out, we need to get the, I was like that's so unnecessary, you know, they're just people and a lot of them do a lot of good work for the country and for every waste of space black person there's probably a waste of space white person so I don't think skin colour has any reflection on anything. (Nuneaton, Barney)

Most respondents condemned the perceived racism of the EDL with one likening them to Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan.

They are sort of like...they are sort of like the Ku Klux Klan without the white sheets or the Nazis without the swastika, do you know what I mean, like...? They're severely racist really...They wouldn't say it like openly like, 'Oh yeah this is not...'. They've got their policies and from what you can see from their policies they don't like Asians or black people. They like English men and women, don't they? (Nuneaton, Ed)

A second thought that they were an aspect of gang culture.

I think the EDL, the English Defence League, are far too, like, like, radical, I think they're quite angry people and I think the violence doesn't, just doesn't help anything. I think they're thugs and they are, they all, you know, walk round and they've got things like, you know, tattoos, it's kind of like gang culture in a way, that's how I see it (Nuneaton, Melanie)

And a third thought that they were verging on being terrorists.

They're inciting hatred which, which is, which is what I think terrorism does, I mean obviously it's not extreme but then if they, if they went and blew up a mosque then it's terrorism, isn't it? How far away, how far are, how far are they away from doing that? (Nuneaton, David)

These public perceptions of the EDL, and the awareness of them by EDL members, are confirmed by case study research on youth activism within the EDL conducted for the MYPLACE project within the framework of WP7.

Even though there was opposition to what was seen as the racism of the EDL, however, there was a feeling that staging counter-demonstrations was counter-productive.

INT: You're obviously very strongly against racism, is that a movement that you would ever think of joining, or have ever been part of or?

RES: [Sighs] Well. In a way, yes, but then in a way no, because why, why go and rub them up the wrong way? It's just, it's just adding fuel to the fire and it's just, you know, like you say, it all escalated because they were being told 'You're wrong'. 'No you're wrong', 'you're wrong'. And it got people's backs up, and then they starting punching and fighting and I do sometimes wonder if people go to these things looking for a fight, and looking, you know, 'Oh I've been arrested because I've been in a demonstration for what I believe in' and, well yeah, but that, in my opinion, that makes you look like a bit of a mug. Do it in a different way, have a sit down with them, one to one, and discuss it as an adult, as a grown up that you're meant to be. You know, rather than thinking with your fists and not, I don't know. It really riles me, that does, it really does, I just think, leave them to it, if they're going to do that, let them do that on that day, and tomorrow you go along and do your bit. Don't get the two muddled up. (Nuneaton, Emily)

Many linked the increase in support for the far right to the recession, the increasing scarcity of resources, and the fear that more people coming into the country would mean that the resources that were available would be spread even more thinly than they were already.

I think there's too many people that are against BNP for them to, for the, for people not, for different cultures and things, not to be welcome. But I suppose it gets harder with the recession because that's the first place people look is for someone to blame. And it will be people that aren't from Britain. (Coventry, Taminder)

Judgments on government responses to extreme right parties generally express an understanding of how difficult and sensitive an issue it is and that banning parties might lead to them becoming more popular, or more extreme, and thus that education is the only way to tackle issues in the long run. Similarly, those who supported the ideal of a multicultural society felt that education (particularly of children and young people) rather than counter-violence was the best way to achieve it. Respondents also thought that while terrible atrocities have been inflicted on Britain and the world by extremist Islam, the response to the atrocities on the part of governments and movements of the radical right has made the world a worse place for most of us.

It is important to note that since the interviews were conducted there has been a growth of support for and media coverage of UKIP, particularly with reference to the racist and sexist statements of Godfrey Bloom, a UKIP member and MEP. Were the interviews to be repeated now, this party would be likely to feature much more strongly in interviews, not least because the discussion of these statements raised issues around colourful figures in politics, 'political correctness' and what one is allowed to 'joke' about that were of interest to respondents. Parties or movements of the far left, even where they have had electoral success (e.g. Respect) were much less frequently discussed by respondents as were religious (Muslim and Sikh) extremists (although there was a lot of reference to the bombings of 7/7 in London and to 'bad' Muslims). Christian extremist groups were not mentioned at all.

As well as being xenophobic, extreme right parties are usually homophobic and opposed to women's reproductive rights. There were various shades of these views (and their opposite) amongst our respondents but this aspect of far right politics was only mentioned by one respondent.

The BNP are a bunch of racist douche bags, there's no doubt about that. The entire, oh, at the very least almost the entire of the party, it's dying now because it's running out of money, but the entire of the party just had a massive history of violence. I mean their main, I mean, you've got people in that party who've been convicted of putting car bombs, putting actually nail bombs to cars, violence against the LGBT community, violence against women, and, they've just got a list of horrendous crimes frankly. And they can talk about, they can talk about immigration failing all they want, and yes, the parties have failed a lot on immigration, but just randomly shutting the borders isn't going to help matters at all, especially not for an economy that runs so much on help from outside.

Not to mention, not to mention the fact that, [sighs], they go on a lot about Islam and how Islam is the fault of all the terrorist attacks, I'd agree with them, but the way that they deal with, the way that they deal with it is just frankly horrific, just, just the general attitude that they have towards these people. They can, they can give as much of the impression as they want of them having some sort of, er, collaborative plan with other moderate Muslims and things like that, but people, these people are also known for incredibly racist attacks against, er, middle East, people of middle East ethnic origin. And also extremely, I don't know what the proper term is, religionophobic or something like that. (Coventry, Krys)

The practical effects of such policies were alluded to by one of the young ethnic minority women who spoke about opposition from Sikh extremists to her aunt marrying a white man.

RES: my auntie has just married a white man and...

INT: this the auntie who's a teacher?

RES: yeah, this the auntie who's a teacher and they've, and it got to the point where the temple had extremists turned up and then we had to cancel the wedding

INT: Sikh extremists?

RES: yeah and it's, it's almost as if the country's diverse but there's a point like I've, I've got like, he's, my partner, he's white and he's Spanish but I wouldn't say anything to my family because I know that they'd go mad. (Coventry, Taminder)

4.6.8 Comparing the two sites

There is a sense of dislocation and alienation from formal politics which is also understood in terms of us and them, politicians being 'them' and not understanding or listening to 'us'. In contrast, the far right understands because they are like us, they speak the same language and walk the same streets. Views on race and immigration are often contradictory; at the same time as opposing racism, or not wanting to be seen as racist, and having friends from different ethnic groups, respondents subscribe to the idea that there are too many immigrants being allowed in (especially from Eastern Europe) and that this is reducing the limited resources available for 'us'. These views were more widespread in Nuneaton than in Coventry where there was more engagement with formal politics, voting was seen as a duty and a meaningful form of political participation, and there was less sympathy for the policies of the far right. These differences, it is proposed here, relate to the class differences between the two respondent sets and their access to social and cultural capital.

4.7 The experience of being young

A strong theme to emerge from the interviews is that young people feel they are regarded negatively, they experience a lack of respect and a lack of voice. There is concern that

government policies are reducing the options available to them: increases in university tuition fees and the abolition of the EMA are putting education out of the reach of those with little income; after-school facilities are being closed down because of the cuts which means that young people have to create their own entertainment on the streets; and there are no jobs. Youth unemployment was increasing at the time of the interviews and this is reflected in what respondents say about the difficulties of finding work. One respondent talked about the lack of facilities for young people and the consequences not only for them but also for their carers.

RES: I think there needs to be more youth activities because when I was like seven, eight I used to do a lot. I used to go karate, I used to do ballet classes, I used to do tap, I used to do swimming. I used to go to after school clubs. Now it's just like, it's all gone. That's why there's all like obesity with kids, that's why you find more kids even younger than me on the streets and it just needs to stop, everything needs to stop, I think.

INT: So has it gone because it's been withdrawn and places have closed down or is it because you are older now and there isn't so much for you at your age?

RES: I think most things have closed down because even in my brother's school they've cancelled the after school clubs and if they didn't cancel it maybe my mom could've found a job because she'd have left him at the after school club and at the time that that's finished my mom's finished work, she'd pick him up, go home. But now they've just closed down, even in my generation the only thing I do now is like ballet, tap and street dance. That's it, and it's just like now with the weather I can't do anything. I'm stuck at home and if I'm stuck at home it means either I'm bored or I'm gone, I'm out on the streets, and it'll be late out on the streets and then you find that most people are smoking, they are drinking. They are doing things that they shouldn't be doing at that age. So I think that needs to come back again. (Coventry, Isabel)

Another spoke of the lack of a voice for young people which had been provided previously by participation in organisations which have now been closed.

I remember we used to do things like Connexions and all these opportunities at school and things like that, more for young people, there was a voice for young people but I don't think there is one now. (Coventry, Sonya).

There was a strong view that young people were judged negatively, stigmatised and not respected, especially by older people who were the ones making the decisions; older people did not 'give young people a chance'.

I don't know, I just think, I think when people look at, [pause], not look down on me, but sort of judge me because I'm young. I don't like that, that really winds me. (Nuneaton, Emily)

As a teenager I'm not respected at all, you know, I have to

INT: do you think you're not?

RES: no, not at all, I really think, especially the older generation, they completely look down your nose at you, you know, we are made out to be the rude people.
(Nuneaton, Jan)

The solutions to this are not seen to be raising the school leaving age which is understood as another way of reducing the choices available; it would be better to provide employment and training through apprenticeships which one of the young women was engaged in. There is a view that young people should be involved in shaping their own future, that politicians are from an older generation, and that the government could do more to help. Policies emanating from the EU to raise the retirement age and keep older people in the workforce for longer were seen as problematic.

Fourth voice: Conflict on the employment side, though, isn't there? Between young and old?

RES: Oh yeah, because it's the, thinking the, old people because they work longer, which means then, because they're not leaving work, there's not going to make new jobs. Which is stupid, you know, come on, what are you ... Like my mum's a cleaner, right? Obviously she wants out of where she is, but they want us to work longer, because obviously we're living longer, so they think that we should be able to work longer, so they've upped the retirement age. (Coventry, Vivienne)

It is striking that respondents tended not to identify themselves with particular subcultures based on music and style and few were engaged in 'alternative' cultural practices or countercultures. One respondent spoke about her involvement in DIY culture, strongly linked to punk, and of how she rejected consumerism and was attempting to subsist outside mainstream culture. She also spoke of her experience of squats and raves and another respondent mentioned attending festivals; these two respondents were exceptions to the rule, however. This suggests a lack of 'alternative' cultural and political activity amongst respondents. There were, however, several who were involved in making their own music by playing in bands (this was mostly young men) and one young woman wrote rap lyrics and performed them to her mother's music. One respondent talked about her brother being political and playing in a band, another spoke about her father playing in a band and a third had entered the TV talent show 'X Factor' and sings at weddings.

Respondents were asked whether they listened to music that had a political message. In response they talked about the sort of music they listen to and sometimes what family members listen to and how it has influenced them. There was a view that music is for chilling out rather than listening to the words though some spoke of songs with anti-racist or other political messages and others took exception to misogynistic rap lyrics. As noted above, there was pride in coming from an area which produced the Specials with their association with anti-racism. Some respondents found contemporary music bleaker than earlier music and linked this to the lack of jobs and the effects of the recession more generally.

There is more pessimism amongst the Nuneaton interviewees, where most respondents are working class, either in employment or unemployed, with few prospects of their situation improving. In these circumstances, rather than talking about the dire economic situation, even those who are graduates and have jobs go to the pub 'on a Friday night...to drink a few beers, have a bit of a laugh and you know, just lighten up a little bit' (Nuneaton, David), a practice reminiscent of Willis's 'lads' whose cultural strategies only succeeded in reinforcing their subordinate socio-economic position (Willis 1977).

4.9 Conclusions

In this concluding section key themes are drawn out in relation to the assumptions outlined at the beginning of the report about likely susceptibility to populism amongst young people. Before reflecting on whether these assumptions were correct, however, there is a need to return to the differences between the two respondent sets which may be significant in explaining different susceptibilities to populism of the far right variety.

There are differences in levels of social and cultural capital between respondents in the two sites (and difference in earnings potential as well which can be understood in terms of economic capital). These are due to differences in educational and employment situations: in Coventry 24 of the respondents are in full-time education, 18 of them at university, while in Nuneaton only 9 are in full-time education with 1 at university. This suggests that although respondents in the two areas may be the same age, they are at a different stage in the life course with more in Nuneaton having adult responsibilities including responsibility for children. In Coventry there are few respondents who are unemployed or in working-class jobs, in Nuneaton they are in the majority. The data suggest that the experience of living precariously, either on benefits or in low paid employment, creates a situation where there is little hope for a better future and, given public expenditure cuts, the recession and the disappearance of major employers, this results in a scarcity of resources which has a direct impact on people's ability to live from day to day. In addition to this, respondents feel stigmatised because they are poor, because they are young and because they are working class; they feel the government and society in general looks down on them rather than valuing them. This is reinforced by the elite composition of government, their remoteness and their perceived lack of understanding of how ordinary people live. It is difficult to engage politically when the main political parties are so removed from them in terms of life experiences. This is the space that the BNP, EDL and UKIP move into – they talk the same language and appear to understand the problems faced by ordinary people.

In Coventry, in contrast, most respondents were not yet in the labour market and were living in a multicultural environment rather than the mainly white, working-class environment of Nuneaton. They appeared to have a stake in society, they were committed to voting seeing it as a right that has been hard won, and those who were still in education were looking forward to getting a job that would provide them with a secure income. They regarded British society as increasingly tolerant and felt that this was a good aspect of society. There were some respondents in Coventry whose experience was similar to those in Nuneaton, but they were in a minority and the environment in which they were living was different in terms of ethnic composition.

Despite the alienation from formal political processes, especially at national level, there were high levels of engagement with civic activities such as raising money for charities, voluntary work to help disadvantaged groups and self-help groups. Respondents also engaged in less formal and/or local political activities. This suggests that young people are acting as responsible citizens and that their disengagement from formal politics is based on sound reasons, amongst them being the view that young people do not have a voice and are not listened to. There is also an association of the whole political system with corruption and a perception that political leaders are weak; strong political leaders like Thatcher or even Blair are looked up to and a politics fired by passion is an attractive proposition. Local politicians are nearer the people and it is more possible that approaches to them will bear some fruit. Government's failure to listen fuels the alienation from formal politics voiced by many respondents.

In a situation of scarce resources it is easy to blame 'other' groups for taking too much. These groups were benefit scroungers, benefit tourists, and immigrants. The policies of far right movements speak to these experiences and seem to offer a solution – their policies promise the cessation of immigration and withdrawal from the EU, solving at one stroke the problem of immigrants and benefit tourists living off scarce resources to which they have a questionable entitlement. Processes of othering and stereotyping are fundamental to these policies, movements and parties and were very evident amongst respondents who engaged in processes of othering and, at the same time, resented being labelled and stigmatised themselves. This was contradictory. At the same time as wanting to reduce immigration, there was an appreciation of the contribution that individual migrants had made to the local community and economy; and, while agreeing that scroungers should have their benefits cut, it was their mothers and their friends who were being targeted. This resulted not in a rejection of the policies, although many were critical of them, but an assertion that the wrong people were being targeted. Throughout there is a strong feeling that they deserve fair treatment, but that they were being treated unfairly as young people and also as members of the white working class. Others were being given preferential treatment. These othering processes were more apparent in Nuneaton than in Coventry and it is likely that this is explained by the difference between the two respondent sets, their differential access to social, cultural and (potentially) economic capital, and the multicultural environment of Coventry which meant a greater familiarity with difference.

The attitudes of respondents towards violence and their experiences of it are important. With regard to political violence there was almost universal condemnation of it as a means of bringing about change. However, some of the young men were undoubtedly attracted by the idea of engaging in activities which ran the risk of violence because of the 'buzz' this created. Amongst the Coventry sample there was discussion of violence and street harassment, and two of the young women were organising against violence against women in the form of a Reclaim the Night march, but it was in Nuneaton that violence was much more apparent. It was talked about in the form of domestic violence, street violence, gang violence as well as the political violence associated with the EDL. So although political violence is frowned upon, there appeared to be a relatively high level of violence in the daily lives, particularly of Nuneaton respondents, which added to feelings of insecurity and

vulnerability. In Coventry, several respondents had experienced racist abuse and violence in public places and some had stood up against homophobic, racist and sexist bullying which they thought was wrong.

The media is important in contributing to the creation of folk devils, whether these be benefit scroungers, immigrants, Muslims or, in other contexts, the white working class (Jones 2013); this was recognised by respondents. It is also important to recognise the role of the media in generating populist slogans and creating stereotypes (folk devils) that feed into processes of othering. For democracy to work you need a population who will not be swayed by populist slogans but will make educated decisions based on informed opinions. The findings of this research show that there was a significant gap in respondents' knowledge about political parties, the differences between them, and the detail of their policies. On the other hand, respondents in both field sites showed a relatively sophisticated understanding of political and economic issues despite some taking no interest at all in formal politics. Most of them opposed the austerity measures as a way out of recession and instead favoured the creation of jobs, something that would engender a greater sense of security among young people and reduce the fear that leads to processes of othering on the basis of difference, whether real or perceived.

5. Future directions

This final section considers how analysis can be developed further and how these research findings can be compared with those of other country teams and integrated with other work packages in the project.

5.1 Themes for cross-case analysis

- Generational **transmission of political values** – this theme emerges from the interview data and could be explored in relation to other country case studies, exploring not only how political values are transmitted but also how they are contested in different country contexts.
- The theme of **gender and sexual politics** has emerged as important for many respondents and has a strong generational element. It would be interesting to explore how this compares with other country cases particularly those where the politics of reproduction are highly contested.
- Greater **tolerance** amongst younger than older generations (in terms of gender, race and sexual orientation particularly) has emerged as an important theme and it seems important to explore how tolerance/intolerance play out in other country cases.
- The **gender, race and class dynamics** of attraction to the far right – this could fruitfully be compared across cases to explore links between gender identities and far right politics and how this varies cross-culturally and in relation to material circumstances.
- There are complexities and contradictions in the way respondents understand the relationship between **race and immigration** – this is clearly a significant issue for cross country consideration as stricter immigration policies are attractive to many respondents.
- **Violence and its relation to political activism** emerged as an important theme from interviews and is lived by many respondents on a daily basis. There are several dimensions to this: violence within the home can predispose to political activism; violent engagement on the street is attractive; but violence is not seen as a legitimate form of political expression. A cross-country comparison might produce some interesting findings especially if it includes inter-personal violence in the private and public domains (including the internet) as well as street violence and political violence.
- **Processes of othering** – this has emerged as a strong theme which could fruitfully be examined across cases to include othering as subject and object.
- The extent to which dislocation from the political system is related to **lack of social and cultural capital** is an emergent theme from the data gathered in the UK and it would be fruitful to explore it across cases.
- The theme **denial of the political** is something that can be studied across different country cases given that the interview schedule comprises a clear block of questions on it. It would be of interest to compare how respondents' primary association of 'politics' with institutions and professional politicians leads to: the notion that

political institutional spaces are not open to them and the denial of the 'political' nature of the activities in which they are actually involved.

- The twin themes of **respect and lack of respect** emerge in relation to young people -- not being respected by older people, politicians; government and politicians not deserving respect; 'others' being disrespectful of British traditions (honouring of soldiers killed in war) and so on. These themes cut across different political positions, and can be used in both multiculturalist and chauvinist arguments. This could be compared across different country cases.
- The impact of **recession** (e.g. personal experiences of recession; lack of action by government etc.) is a strong theme and is used to explain many negative aspects of society. This could be further explored through comparison with other countries' WP5 data.

5.2 Issues for analysis through triangulation

- The **gender, race and class dynamics** of attraction to the far right – triangulation with the survey data and the ethnographic studies would develop a deeper understanding of how and whether these movements are gendered, how they relate to race/ethnicity and to economic circumstances.
- **Violence**, attitudes towards it, how these vary by gender, race and class and by the two sites, and how it is engaged in or contested could be explored through triangulation across WP4 and WP7. A continuum of violence from private to public has emerged from data gathered in the UK and other data sets could be analysed to explore this more fully along with its relation to political activism.
- The differences between the two sites in terms of **access to social and cultural capital** suggest further analysis of the WP4 data to discern whether these differences are correlated with different forms of civic and political engagement/disengagement. This could also be pursued in relation to the WP7 case studies which are significantly different along these axes with UK Feminista participants being largely middle class (and female) in contrast to Occupy and the EDL who are working-class and largely male.
- This suggests further analysis of how **class and gender** influence political values, attitudes and participation, an analysis that should also be extended to **ethnicity**.
- **Transmission of political values** – this issue would benefit from analysis of WP4 data and WP7 data in order to explore more fully the extent to which parents/grandparents are influential and how family circumstances (WP7) predispose young people to involvement in political activism.
- **Tolerance/intolerance** – analysis of levels of tolerance/intolerance and the factors with which they are associated in the survey would broaden the picture that is emerging from WP5 and also link to these issues as they appear in WP7 (EDL, Occupy, UK Feminista).
- **Participation in far right movements** – the research found that the far right is visible in Nuneaton and its policies are attractive to some. It is important to triangulate

these findings with WP4 data and with an exploration of levels of participation in these movements in Coventry/West Midlands more generally via the WP7 EDL study.

- **The impact of recession** (e.g. personal experiences of recession; lack of action by government etc.) is a strong theme and is used to explain many negative aspects of society. This could be further explored through triangulation with WP7 data.

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