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We still need to talk about 'community': The continued contestability of adopting community in criminal justice policy

Abstract

Adopting 'community' in policy making reflects a desire to generate a sense of belonging through increased citizen engagement with the state, despite the continuing contestability of the term and diverse experiences of 'community' (Mair, 1995; Hughes and Rowe, 2007). Definitions of 'community' include positive associations with attachment to place, activities and people (Wilmott, 1987), and 'belonging' stemming from shared experiences of adversity (Shapland, 2008). Communitarian theorists examine the relationship between citizens and the state, alongside broader structural conditions which impact policy implementation (Etzioni, 1995; Jordan, 1998; Hopkins-Burke, 2014). Policies focusing on 'community' embrace social cohesion and social capital theory as theoretical frameworks, as found with community justice initiatives, which claim to have a transformative effect through reducing crime, and therefore improving the quality of life for residents (Donoghue, 2014; Ward 2014). This paper uses secondary analysis and qualitative research to examine experiences of community and crime in Middlesbrough, through the lens of Layder's (2006) social domain theory. The findings reveal that differing accounts of community are affected by crime, anti-social behaviour and broader structural changes. It reiterates the need for policy makers to better understand how community is experienced, and to re-examine what is required for the effective implementation of policy.

Keywords: Community, crime, engagement, social domains, social policy.

Introduction

Examining the validity of 'community' as a basis for policy is nothing new, the contestability of this approach has been raised with reference to the implementation of community justice and community safety initiatives (Mair, 1995; Squires, 2006 and Hughes and Rowe, 2007). Hughes and Rowe (2007) state the adoption of 'community' in criminal justice policy appeals to governments, who value its 'normative and political effects' (p318). This approach is evident in social policies such as former Prime Minister David Cameron's 'Big Society' initiative (Alcock, 2012) and New Labour's 'Active Citizenship' and 'Neighbourhood Renewal' agendas (Rai, 2008). This enduring adoption of 'community' in policy requires us to revisit the concerns previously raised, especially given the stated aims of community justice initiatives. They explicitly promise to reduce crime and support victims, as would be expected. However, they make additional claims to have 'transformative' effects for local residents, through generating social cohesion or social capital and improving the overall quality of life for the whole community (Karp and Clear, 2000; Wolf, 2007; Donoghue, 2014). This assumes those living and working in any given place have the means, ability and will to build on or create social cohesion and social capital, and that they would do this in response to crime. The adoption of community in social policy needs to be re-examined in light of these assumptions, in order to establish a better understanding into the various experiences of community and the specific challenges faced when attempting to engage citizens to work with the state.

This paper aims to do this by examining a community justice case study in Middlesbrough. It draws on empirical qualitative data from practitioners, volunteers and residents, reporting on their perspectives on community and community engagement in response to: a community court pilot established in 2010; and the local neighbourhood policing teams and restorative practice initiatives that operated alongside the court. The fieldwork was undertaken in the wards of Gresham and North Ormesby in Middlesbrough, referred to by local residents as "Doggy".

The data was analysed using Layder's (2006) social domain theory as it offered a means by which to examine individual experiences as *psycho-biographies* of community and engagement in the context of the other three domains which comprise

Layder's theory. These are *situated activities* (regular, informal interactions), *social settings* (formal interactions with the state and third sector to address specific problems) and *contextual resources* (broader socio-economic conditions). Examining experiences of community and engagement through these domains enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the various factors which influence this, in the context of established definitions and theories associated with 'community'.

To examine the contestability of community in social policy, this article will review definitions of community and theories associated with this, in the context of the term as it is deployed in social policy. There is then a more detailed examination of social capital and social cohesion as frameworks for policy aiming to improve quality of life at a local level. As further important context for the discussions of findings, there is a brief overview of the community which forms the fieldwork site for this study. The findings are presented to reflect two clear themes of the experiences of community and how this is impacted by crime and anti-social behaviour. Finally, this is then discussed in the context of the theme of contestability and the assumptions made about community life, as represented by a sense of belonging and willingness to engage with the state in the implementation of community justice initiatives.

Defining 'community'

Wilmott (1987) categorises different experiences of community as geographical boundaries (*territorial communities),* shared political, religious or leisure interests (*interest communities)* and *attachment communities*, where citizens have a sense of 'belonging' based on shared space and activities. While definitions and types of community have evolved in the 21st century, to encompass virtual as well as physical worlds, the necessities of everyday life mean many of us connect with our community as a place that we live in, comprising a variety of interactions with others, represented as real and meaningful events.   However, as easily as these attachments may occur, for others, community may not be represented by belonging to a place or attachment through shared interests.   For some, community may be represented simply by proximity to others, without any reason to interact beyond what is necessary, i.e. without the emotional attachment required for a 'sense of belonging'.   It is clearly

important to acknowledge the assumptions which exist regarding the existence of these interactions, which are required for cohesive communities (Faulkner 2003).

White (2003) presented 'community' as a 'social utopia' in which a consensus of values, tolerance of differences and equality in accessing resources exists, therefore enabling citizens to solve problems and improve their quality of life. Hughes (2007) presents a very different experience, referring to those communities characterised by deprivation, meaning residents are 'socially and spatially trapped' (p.13).   This demonstrates the challenge for policy makers, with these very different assessments of community meaning at best it can be adopted as a broad categorisation, but at worst, it represents an 'unstable and contestable policy terrain' (Hughes and Rowe, 2007:317).

This contestability is clear when we examine the work of communitarian theorists, in relation to how it 'community' is defined and also the purpose of policy in this context (Etzioni, 1995; Jordan, 1998 and Hopkins-Burke, 2014). In the 1990s, these theorists offered two clear strands of debate - the conservative communitarian project (Etzioni, 1995) and radical communitarianism (Jordan, 1998).   The conservative communitarian project presented a need for the 'remoralisation' of society; the restoration of civic engagement, moral values and a sense of obligation, in order to recreate a cohesive community (Etzioni, 1995).   It is argued that Etzioni's notion of communitarianism is based on small town American ideal, and while there is an emphasis on co-operation, reciprocity and the common good, it also advocates a response to crime which focused on control (Nellis, 2000).   Radical communitarianism presents a perspective which moves us on from a nostalgic view of something which has been lost to a more inclusive assessment of community, as a place in which we accept a diversity of cultures and experiences (Jordan, 1998).   This perspective seems a better fit with the contemporary experiences of citizens in urban environments, where diversity is the norm, reflecting what Hughes (2007) refers to as the 'late modern realities of living together' (p.12).

In addition, Hopkins-Burke (2014) presents a 'radical moral communitarianism' perspective, which focuses on citizens' rights and responsibilities and their relationship with the state. These rights include having adequate income, affordable

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and good quality housing, access to good quality healthcare, education and prospects for employment, and to be protected from crime and anti-social behaviour. If these rights are met, then state organisations can reasonably expect that citizens adopt responsibilities, such as taking up employment and education opportunities, not engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour, treating others fairly and maintaining their health. However, given that investment is required to create opportunities to work, and provide services to maintain health and prevent crime, it would be difficult for this reciprocal relationship to work effectively where this is lacking or non-existent. Radical theorists present this as a need for more significant and structural change as the only way in which policy focusing on 'community' can have a positive impact on all citizens and therefore, engender a sense of obligation to assist the state in resolving local problems (Fraser, 1997; Young, 1999).

Social cohesion and social capital as frameworks for policy

Mead (1918) defines social cohesion as the 'ties at the local level that bind people together in a positive way' (cited in White, 2003:143). This is an important feature in the deployment of social policy which promises the creation of cohesion through partnerships and networks, utilising these 'ties' to solve problems and create consensus and trust. This aspirational notion of social cohesion was echoed in research by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2004), which examined the causes of the Oldham, Bradford and Burnley riots in 2001. Racial tensions between working class Asian minorities and white groups were found to be the underlying cause for the riots.   Following on from the response by the police and immediate aftermath, this study recommended that a long-term commitment to improving social cohesion was required, including better integration of different ethnic groups.   Social cohesion in this context was needed to 'break down barriers between different communities' (*ibid*, p.4) and was deemed a responsibility for local authorities to address. It is interesting here that 'community' refers to different ethnic groups, bonded by their shared identity as well as location (Wilmott, 1987). In addition, the recommendations reflected efforts by the state to tap into a determination to resolve the tensions, and the sense of community generated in response to the shared trauma of the riots (Shapland, 2008). Rai's (2008) work on Neighbourhood Renewal in Birmingham and Wolverhampton emphasises the need for clear leadership to improve

social cohesion and reiterates the recommendation of the ODPM (2004) report. However, it was clear from Rai's research that even with investment and a concerted effort to improve the quality of life for local people, there were still inequalities in decision making, participation, and a lack of consideration given to the diversity of experiences of 'community'.

Social capital theory has also been adopted as a framework for policy to create a 'sense of community' through the development of trust, consensus and equal access to resources and networks (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2001). This locates social capital as a pragmatic approach to solve social problems, particularly with Putnam's (2000) work which provides a clear theoretical framework for policy makers. However, there is a need to pay attention to Bourdieu's (1986) assertion that time and the necessary social structures are required to enable social capital to reach its potential. The various forms of social capital cannot be explored in detail here, but they warrant some discussion given the application of this to social policy. For example, the communitarian perspective of social capital emphasises the value of membership of associations, outside of family life, which can have obvious positive consequences for those involved (Portes and Landolt, 1996). There is a different emphasis for the 'networks' view which places more value on hierarchical connections with the state (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). This view also distinguishes between bridging and bonding forms of social capital, with the former presented as necessary for galvanising citizens into action, and the latter used to facilitate and sustain the networks in place to solve problems (Putnam, 2000). North (1990, cited in Putnam 2000), emphasises the need for bridging social capital as necessary to affect broader change, to include those institutions which can provide opportunities for economic growth (Rodrik, 1998). The synergistic perspective advocates the development of 'dynamic professional alliances and relationships between and within state bureaucracies and various civil society actors' (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 13). This demonstrates the complexity in managing the various 'alliances' involved, in the context of different power relationships, experiences, goals and expectations.

Reiterating more radical perspectives, Ledwith (2011) emphasises the clear contradiction of implementing policies to 'empower' citizens and encourage participation in local life, whilst also cutting state investment on services which support

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this. Since these services represent a form of social capital, their loss will impact on the experience of 'community' as a place to access support and interact with others. Amenities such as libraries, youth clubs, education venues and places for leisure activities are all examples of spaces which shore up social capital (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 2000; Leonard and Onyx, 2007) and social cohesion (e.g. White, 2003; ODPM, 2004; Rai, 2008). These are the very places which have borne the brunt of austerity policies (Ledwith, 2011), presenting a significant barrier to the aims of social policy to improve cohesion.

The adoption of social capital theory and social cohesion is clear when we examine the work of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). The SEU was formed in 1998, with a remit for neighbourhood renewal and regeneration for the poorest neighbourhoods, where residents faced social exclusion, a lack of social cohesion and social capital (Ledwith, 2011). The criteria for determining where various initiatives were implemented (e.g. Sure Start, Education Action Zones and New Deal for Communities) were high levels of worklessness, crime and anti-social behaviour (particularly vandalism and littering), poor health indicators, inadequate housing provision, and places where GP surgeries and schools were rated as poorly performing (Ledwith, 2011). However, despite these efforts it became clear the problems associated with these areas were not easily resolved. Burton (2003) argued this was because SEU initiatives represented tokenistic measures which were not adequately funded to effectively deal with problems arising from persistent inequalities, which had occurred over generations, emphasising the need for a more radical shift in policy and political ideology. Burton (*ibid*) suggested the limited scope of the SEU hampered community development and local activists' enthusiasm for their efforts, which were deemed to be failing, as opposed to being *failed by* structural inequalities.

'Life in Doggy': A Profile of Middlesbrough and the North East Region

The ward of North Ormesby is affectionately known as 'Doggy', with conflicting accounts as to how this term came about – some suggest it is due to the 'wet dog' smell of the local iron works others cite high number of dog owners in the community (Worthy and Gouldson 2010). Along with the rest of Middlesbrough and the North East, 'Doggy' has been affected by the loss of key industries, most recently in Redcar

with the closing of the SSI Steelworks, the takeover of the ICI chemical plant in 2007, and the closure of coal mines during the 1980s and 1990s (*ibid*). During the period of 1971 to 2008, nearly 100,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Teesside (Shildrick et al, 2010). While these losses have been mitigated to some degree with 92,000 replacement jobs in the service sector, secure employment in established industries has been replaced with precarious roles in these new sectors. In addition, it is important to note that in 2015, the North East region lagged behind the national trend of steadily increasing employment (ONS, 2011).

Therefore, local residents, now designated as jobseekers, were affected by the loss of *contextual resources* as represented by the loss of industry, which is very much part of the history of Middlesbrough and the North East. The replacement job opportunities could sustain residents' income and meet basic needs but given the sense of community attached to these industries (Wilmott, 1987), there is a loss of the distinct *social setting* and *situated activities* associated with this. These work opportunities did not offer the same level of job security, meaning local residents' *psycho-biographical* experiences and *situated activities* have transferred to different *social settings*, as a result of the significant changes in the local economy (Layder, 2006). The decline and disappearance of local industry as a primary employer also represents a removal of a form of social capital, as represented by networks in which residents could seek solidarity and belonging (Putnam, 2000).

In another example of wider disadvantage impacting experiences of community life, MacDonald et al (2014) demonstrate the impact of high levels of worklessness in Middlesbrough, which included young people who had never worked, leading to labels for the ward of 'East Kelby' (a pseudonym) of 'benefit ghetto' (p.6). However, they also reported that this perception was misleading and did not reflect reality, that in fact less than four out of ten people eligible for work were claiming benefits. This research arose in response to a television programme, called 'Benefits Street' (about James Turner Street in Birmingham), in which prominent politicians such as Ian Duncan Smith, MP cited problems with 'whole communities' containing residents who claimed 'benefits for life' (aired on Channel 4, January 2014). MacDonald et al (*ibid*) found that in the two wards chosen for their high levels of worklessness, most households had

residents who were employed or had been employed, and disputed claims of inter-generational cultures of worklessness and reliance on state benefits.

In addition to loss of industry and misleading perceptions of some communities, it is also important to consider the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour. Figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (2014) show crime against households and resident adults has decreased nationally by 14%. The levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in Middlesbrough are higher than the national average, per household. Given the disruptive effects of crime on residents' sense of safety in their community (Hope and Shaw, 1988; Hughes, & Rowe, 2007; Rai, 2008; Shapland, 2008; Webster & Kingston, 2014), it is clear that the residents of some parts of Middlesbrough face very real challenges, which need to be understood and acknowledged by those wishing to engage them in efforts to create social cohesion and improve quality of life.

Methodology

This study aimed to explore the adoption of 'community' in criminal justice policy, where the aims of such initiatives promise to improve the quality of life for residents, through dealing with crime and disorder. Using a case study of Middlesbrough, the research focused on community justice initiatives led by the police, courts and those working in restorative justice arrangements. As stated above, Layder's (2006) 'social domains' offer a framework for studying social life as four different units of analysis. For this research, *psycho-biographical* data enabled an examination of experiences of community and engagement, under the remit of community justice, in a distinct geographical location. Participants (community justice practitioners, volunteers and local residents) were recruited to provide these accounts, and to also examine the various *situated activities* they engaged in, along with relationships formed within *social settings*, in order to implement community justice. The case study approach enabled all of this to take into account *contextual resources* which influence the implementation of policy and the experience of both community and community justice.

A breadth of perspectives became an important aim, rather than any attempts to provide a representative sample of those living and working in Middlesbrough. To once again borrow from Layder (1998), the research 'scaffold' emerged and enabled decisions to be made about the sampling approach (incorporating selective and snowball sampling techniques), as well as the plans for the coding and analysis of the data. In total, 23 participants were interviewed, and the data was analysed using NVIVO to support the processes of coding and organising the data. The fieldwork took place over a 12 month period, with 3 visits to Middlesbrough during 2014-15, just after the community court at Teesside Magistrates' court was set up, and during a renewed focus on liaison between neighbourhood police teams and the new court.

The participants in this study were placed into three categories, those working in the field of community justice, volunteers in the local community and local residents. The focus on these organisations reflect the variety of *social settings* in which community justice occurs, and for Layder (2006), this domain can consist of highly structured organisations with hierarchical relationships, or less formal networks of friends and neighbours. Again, given that community justice policies propose to create cohesion, this domain offers a means by which to assess citizens' commitment to working with others, and to engage in behaviour deemed socially acceptable. Holstein and Gubrium (1995:2) describe the interview as a 'search-and-discovery mission', while acknowledging the key epistemological question regarding where the information has come from and how the interaction between researcher and participant impacts what is presented. They also suggest that to receive data from participants free from distortion and bias, the questions asked need to create an atmosphere which enables this. It was also important to make use of semi-structured interviews for this study, to enable an examination of core themes, and to allow participants to present their experiences and interpretation of key terms.

The final list of participants included staff from the local police service (Inspector, Sergeant, Police Constable and PCSOs); the community court and local authority (magistrates and civil servants working on the initiative); probation officers; volunteers and paid staff from local charities and local residents (see Table 1 in Appendix A).

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The sampling approach was to select those deemed as engaged in their community, as reflected in participation in the third sector and also those who had engaged with local criminal justice agencies. However, it must be acknowledged that this study would certainly have benefitted from perspectives of the local community from those not directly engaged with these activities. This would have lent more robust analysis for the case study from the perspective of important *psycho-biographical* experiences as they are affected by broader social domains (Layder, 2006). The secondary analysis of existing statistics from research and the ONS provides important context for the qualitative data, and insight into the socio-economic conditions of Gresham and North Ormesby.

Findings

The assessment of community from participants' interviews generated several consistent themes which were used in this analysis as principal codes. These codes reflect the core experiences of community and the terms participants used when describing these experiences and their views on what community meant to them. For this paper, the focus is on the themes of community as a sense of belonging, and the impact of crime. The findings reveal the precarity associated with community as a place of safety and cohesion and therefore, the contestability of the term as a viable foundation for social policy. As Layder (2006) suggests, the *psycho-biographies* reveal that the 'experience of social life is as likely to be one of disappointment and anxiety as it is of security and trust' (p275), which is reflected in the accounts presented below.

Community as a sense of belonging

While the more prominent themes coming from the data reflect the latter aspect of this experience of social life, it must be noted participants were discussing what makes a 'good' or 'cohesive' community at this point, and so the accounts reflect the sense of belonging, having pride and feeling able to participate in various aspects of community life. The latter themes came from participants then developing their responses into their experiences of their community, and it is interesting to see here reference to the impact of crime, decline and deprivation and anti-social behaviour. This reflection of

'disappointment and anxiety' (*ibid*) reveals what undermines and disrupts cohesion in the community, which was discussed at the start of the interviews.

These experiences of Middlesbrough and North Ormesby reflect *psycho-biographical* accounts which have occurred in a range of *situated activities* and *social settings* in which positive interactions occurred to create a sense of belonging, trust and security. These accounts also emphasise the need to understand the differences in the capacity of individuals' resilience in coping with significant changes and life events (Layder, 2006). This resilience can be fleeting and dependent on ontological security, but also on individuals' ability to manage their own needs and that of others. The need for interaction between residents to create a cohesive community is clear:

> 'Cohesive means pull together, glue together rather than disparate individuals who do not know each other, do not care and get on with their own lives in total isolation' (Magistrate in Community Court 1).

There is specific reference here to the impact of the lack of interactions between residents changing the nature of community as a place where they belong. Others discussed this in the context of community in specific settings, along with the need for positive interactions:

> I grew up in a little pit village and to me that is what community is about – it is about looking after each other, having understanding of people's problems, having time to help, being part of a bigger group… (Police Inspector).

We can see in these accounts Wilmott's (1987) typologies, presenting community occurring in part through geographical proximity, but also manifest as regular interactions with others to reinforce a sense of belonging. This also aligns with the view of community cohesion as dependent on the presence of reciprocal relationships and shared identity (Faulkner, 2003). These positive interactions were also cited as important to residents, and this was clear when comparing experiences with those of others living in more prosperous areas in south east:

> My husband is from down south and he could not get over the fact that if we went to the market, it took us so long to get there because we kept talking to people, and people saying hello…..so when we got married he wanted to come to me up north, people talk to each other (Local Resident 1).

It is examples like this which reinforce ideals about a 'sense of belonging', through naturally occurring interactions and a feeling of safety which enables this. These narratives provide us with *psycho-biographical* accounts as they occur in the context of *situated activities* – the domain in which the majority of individual experiences of community occur, predominantly as informal interactions with each other (Layder, 2006). Others have referred to this as a sense of obligation required on the part of residents to help to create a community, which is a safe and secure place to live (White, 2003; Hughes, 2007; Hopkins-Burke, 2014). There is also suggestion that 'responsive communitarianism' can occur through individuals taking responsibility for their quality of life, including their immediate environment (Etzioni, 2003; Hopkins-Burke, 2014). This is perhaps manifest for many as pride and a 'love' for their community, this obligation felt by residents as long as it is embraced and shared:

> Having those shared values, wanting the place to be nice and safe, wanting everything to look nice, knowing your neighbour, having pride in what you do and looking after those people (Police Inspector).

This resonates with Faulkner's (2003) view that community needs more than just proximity of residents in any given location, it needs shared values, and 'mutual obligation and respect' (p.291). There was clear reference to the difficulties faced in Middlesbrough, and the resilience of residents in the face of persistent problems:

> Even in tough areas you can see the community spirit, they are all involved with what is going on, they are tight knit, they all know each other and each other's issues, sometimes they deal with problems themselves – in tough areas some of these communities are fabulous, better than the nicer areas, to be honest (Magistrate in Community Court 2).

Indeed, this narrative of community is not just presented in the context of cohesion existing despite the economic problems, but actually that a better sense of community and 'spirit' exists because residents in more deprived areas value interaction and being accessible to each other:

> I think community spirit is better in the not so affluent areas, not the best dressed, their vocabulary might not be good, but they know each other and they are approachable (Magistrate in Community Court 2).

It may be the case that deprivation, industrial decline and lack of secure employment becomes the pervasive 'trauma', which unites residents where 'community' is created as a response to adversity (Mead,1918 cited in White, 2003; Shapland, 2008).

The impact of crime on community life

Persistent deprivation may trap residents 'socially and spatially' in economic terms and also in relation to the prospects for improving quality of life (Hughes, 2007:13). However, it was apparent from participants that crime and anti-social behaviour had a significant effect on their experience of community, even in those wards which have faced persistent poverty and deprivation (Worthy and Gouldson, 2010). Indeed, for some residents the historical and current levels of deprivation had not eroded 'community spirit', as this was maintained by those families who were 'born and bred' in the area. However, it was also clear this 'community spirit' could be disrupted by new families coming to the area, who did not subscribe to established norms of behaviour:

> 'That's where the community is, the people who are born and bred….but if you want that sort of community, you want to live a normal life, this has just been my experience lately, just a couple of families causing problems, but they think it is a normal way to live (Local Resident 1).

Hughes (2007) has suggested that crime and anti-social behaviour exacerbate problems for local residents already experiencing unemployment, poverty and tensions associated with the influx of immigrant groups. Court staff echoed the views of residents in relation to the sense of pride *despite* high levels of unemployment, and a lack of prospects for younger generations, in that these were problems which residents were willing to try and overcome:

> This has the highest level of NEETs [not in employment, education or training] in the country, high level of unemployment and people on benefits, so huge deprivation, lots of shops closing down, lots of people without work, lots of single parents lot of aspects you might say would contribute to a deprived community but a huge love and care for their community (Magistrate in Community Court 1).

There appears to be a tolerance of the broader contextual issues, which impact on residents' quality of life, and an acceptance of the struggles for subsequent generations, manifest as continuing pride in their community.

The importance of a focal point for residents to interact and to access services was emphasised by some participants, representing the relationship between *situated activities* and *social settings*, to reinforce residents' sense of belonging and safety. In addition, accessing *contextual resources* was important from a practical point of view, due to the limited finances of residents, especially for local services and amenities:

> In east Middlesbrough, they do rely on public transport. So if they do just want to go to the shops they do want to go down the road, not get on a bus and carry all the bags or paying for a taxi. So the corner shop is very important, if this closes down because of vandalism or repeated anti-social behaviour its impacts hugely, it really does on that community (Magistrate in Community Court 1).

This account emphasises the practical needs of residents which can be disrupted by anti-social behaviour and feeling unsafe in the areas where important services are located. These shared experiences and interactions are clearly important for residents, and there is a concern that social withdrawal will occur, if such places become inaccessible (Young, 1999). This withdrawal it seems can be directly linked to the loss of safety and security, manifest as fear of crime:

> Because it is a self-fulfilling prophecy in some respects, because people will not go out, they are afraid, and no-one will stand up to the criminals. They get more crime, so people are more scared, so the community element gets kind of eaten away by the processes of crime activity and it is really difficult to break that cycle (PCSO).

Again, crime here is presented as having a significant impact on residents' quality of life, with specific reference to the 'community element' being eaten away by the activities of criminals and the fear this generates. It is interesting here to see in this account reference to the destabilising effect of crime as a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and a sense that the problems have become insurmountable.

It was clear tactics beyond public meetings, talks at community centres were needed to attract more people, aside from the 'usual suspects'.

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I think what we have got to be really careful of is community meetings – if you based your perceptions on community meetings, you tend to have the same people going and they have an agenda. The issues they raise might be their issues, it is valuable forum, but you need to get out and speak to different people to really understand the issues; sometimes you have to be mindful if those at community meetings are really representative of the wider community (Police Inspector).

While this raises the obvious issue of concern about exclusion in the consultation processes, it also emphasises the problem with assuming the existence of residents' willingness to engage. In addition to the concerns about excluding groups through their lack of engagement, practitioners working in the police service and the community court reported that among those who did engage, there was a specific motivation behind this:

We did a lot of talks in the community and at council meetings but you cannot sustain that, you are talking about people who are already volunteers so you are asking them to be in court and then in meetings, but then even at council meetings attendance can be poor. It is the same people, who are there to complain (Police/Community Justice Liaison).

The poor attendance and use of such forums solely as a means of complaint limit the scope of such initiatives. This may also reflect an absence of responsibility among residents to solving the problem of crime. There was reference to recent policy ideas which had been introduced, to promote volunteering, participating in the local community and taking responsibility:

So like with the Big Society, people just do not naturally want to get involved so unless we go out to them and promote what we do, as a service, it is not something people are tuned into to. It is a difficult one. I think the issue with the Big Society idea, the reality is that it exists, yes people volunteer, but there is not a culture of giving, but that's the cynic in me! (Victim Support Team Manager).

The direct reference to expectations of obligation and duty (e.g. Faulkner, 2003; Putnam 2001) using the brand of 'Big Society' as a means to promote a 'culture of giving' reflects the political strategy to place responsibility for cohesion and resolving local issues onto citizens (Alcock, 2012). The cynicism expressed above is shared by those who see such initiatives as compensating for cuts in public spending (*ibid*; Ledwith, 2011) and

absolving the state of their own responsibilities to ensure the needs of citizens are met (Hopkins-Burke, 2014).

The participants' accounts presented here reiterate the challenges associated with implementing policy to improve quality of life at a local level, as represented by their sense of pride and belonging being disrupted by external factors such as job losses and crime. The reference to the changing experiences of community life in Gresham and North Ormesby is largely due to this broader social and economic changes, and yet it seems the impact of crime and anti-social behaviour is more keenly felt. The varying accounts of the success or otherwise of initiatives such as outreach, public meetings and other attempts to engage residents demonstrate the need to examine these issues in the context of these different and changing experiences of community.

Discussion

The adoption of community in social and criminal justice policy reflects its 'normative and political effects', along with its 'governmental appeal' (Hughes and Rowe, 2007:318). The various definitions of community present us with focus on place, interest and attachment (Wilmott, 1987), as a response to harm (Mead, 1918 cited in White 2003; Shapland, 2008), consensus and tolerance of diversity (Faulkner, 2003; White, 2003; Rai, 2008) and as requiring reciprocal relationships between citizens and the state (Hopkins-Burke, 2014). These definitions arguably present aspirational ideals and a manifestation of what policy makers and governments seek to create. Social capital theory and social cohesion both offer a framework to aid the implementation of social policies created to generate better communities, through equal access to amenities, opportunities for participation in local life, social interaction and links with state agencies (Coleman, 1990; Rai, 2008; Putnam, 2000). However, the contestability about the adoption of community in social and criminal justice policy remains. This is reflected in the accounts from participants who refer to how their sense of community is disrupted by crime and disorder and changing economic conditions.

The analysis of the experiences of 'community' and engagement examined through the lens of social domain theory enabled a more comprehensive assessment of social

life. Previous studies have highlighted the experiences of Middlesbrough as dominated by persistent inequality, lack of investment and loss of key industries (Shildrick et al, 2010; Webster et al 2014). This shows the influence *contextual resources* on individual experiences of community, where lack of security in work and personal safety is acknowledged, but also where resilience and pride continue to be a feature of life in 'Doggy', despite the problems that local residents face. While there were efforts made to replace the steel and coal mining jobs, it was clear these new industries represented less secure employment and required re-training for those who had relied on manufacturing jobs. This not only changed the prospects for individuals, but also affected the places in which *situated activities* attached to the workplace could occur, and therefore limited the opportunities to generate a sense of belonging associated with work and related networks (Putnam, 2001).

Participants in this study referred to community as a place where citizens 'pull together' and look out for each other, with a tolerance and understanding of each other's needs. For some, there was a real affection for where they lived, expressed as a genuine desire to remain and retain what was often referred as 'community spirit'. In addition, deprivation and social problems did not seem to be as disruptive to their sense of community, compared to crime and anti-social behaviour. Even with the efforts of outreach by the community courts and others to promote the aims of community justice, participants expressed cynicism about such initiatives, referring to a general lack of engagement with the state to deal with crime. The different assessments of the success of various initiatives intended to engage citizens reiterate the limited scope of these 'tokenistic' measures (Burton, 2003), adopted to mask broader inequalities created through austerity policies and absolution of responsibility by the state (Ledwith, 2011; Hopkins-Burke, 2014). Therefore, participants may not directly attribute changes they observe and their own feelings of safety and security to broader structural changes, but this is perhaps manifest in their lack of engagement to assist the state when they are asked to. It seems then the relationship of reciprocity (Faulkner, 2003; Hopkins-Burke 2014) is a key component of 'community' which is eroded by the loss of *contextual resources*, showing the influence of this on individuals and their interactions with the state (Layder, 2006).

Clearly, there remains a need to understand what constitutes a cohesive and safe community for various groups, along with a clearer assessment of what disrupts this and therefore, potentially disengages citizens from their obligations to each other. This disruption to the sense of belonging, consensus, trust and reciprocity needs to be examined further, given the stated aims of community justice to improve the overall quality of life for local residents. The neglect of the broader structural changes required to achieve this means that community focused initiatives remain limited in their scope, despite the initial appeal through the use of language to reflect 'belonging' and resolution of local problems. While community justice initiatives can provide local success stories, the promise of significant change and reform in the delivery of justice is something which remains out of reach. The contestability of community as a foundation for policy reflects the need for a meaningful acknowledgment of the impact of inequalities and the loss of safety and security on community life, which impact the engagement of residents with the state and others to improve quality of life.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1: Community Justice Study – Interview Participants

NUMBER	IDENTIFICATION CODE	ROLE
1.	MCC1	Magistrate in Community Court 1
2.	MCC2	Magistrate in Community Court 2
3.	MCC3	Magistrate in Community Court 3
4.	PINPT	Police Inspector – lead on Neighbourhood Policing
5.	PSGTNPT	Police Sergeant – Neighbourhood Policing team leader
6.	POLCJ	Police/Community Justice Liaison
7.	PROB1	Probation Officer
8.	PROB2	Probation Manager
9.	PC1	Police NPT 1
10.	PCSO1	PCSO NPT 2
11.	PCSO2	PCSO NPT 3
12.	VSTM	Victim Support Team Manager
13.	VSV1	Victim Support Volunteer 1
14.	VSV2	Victim Support Volunteer 2
15.	VSV3	Victim support Volunteer 3
16.	VSV4	Victim support Volunteer 4
17.	VSV5	Victim support Volunteer 5
18.	VSV6	Victim support Volunteer 6
19.	RJ1	Restorative Justice Mediator
20.	CCMGR	Community Centre Manager

21.	LR1	Local Resident 1
22.	LR2	Local Resident 2
23.	LR3	Local Resident 3