

# **'People Look at Us, the Way We Dress, and They Think We're Gangsters': Bonds, Bridges, Gangs and Refugees: A Qualitative Study of Inter-Cultural Social Capital in Glasgow**

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ROSS DEUCHAR

*School of Education, University of the West of Scotland, Ayr Campus, University Avenue, Ayr, KA8 0SX*  
ross.deuchar@uws.ac.uk

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It is widely recognized that refugee integration occurs most effectively within communities that are rich in inter-cultural social capital. This paper explores the dangers associated with intensely bonded and disconnected communities and the relationship between refugee marginalization and the presence of youth gangs. Drawing upon a small-scale qualitative study with young refugees in Glasgow, it seeks to explore the extent to and ways in which these young people experience social bonding and bridging and participate in gang culture. The findings suggest that excessive bonding social capital often limits opportunities for inter-cultural integration in Glasgow. Gang membership, although driven primarily by territorial issues, provides one site for ethnic solidarity and racial prejudice. The paper considers the potential for community initiatives to build inter-cultural cohesion, and ends by calling for changes to dispersal policy and for further research to explore the most effective vehicles for building social capital in multi-ethnic urban communities.

Keywords: refugees, social capital, gangs, ethnicity

## **Introduction**

Migration is stimulated by many forms of global pressures, and migrants may be political dissidents or war refugees (Clark 2010). According to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Accordingly, he/she is displaced from the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return.

Conversely, an asylum seeker is a person who wishes to be considered a refugee, but is waiting for a decision from the government of the country where he or she has fled to and claimed asylum (Whiteman 2005; Sandford and Lumley 2006). It has been estimated that there are currently over 40 million forcibly displaced people across the world, including over 15 million refugees and over 800,000 asylum seekers (UNHCR 2009).

Since 1999, new legislation within the Asylum and Immigration Act, amended by the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act, has led to high numbers of asylum seekers and refugees being dispersed in various parts of the UK. Since 2000, it has been estimated that over 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees have been settled in Glasgow (Scotland's largest city), with over 5,000 refugees currently residing there (Wren 2007; COSLA 2010; ICAR 2010). Wren (2007) highlights that the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees in Glasgow has brought about a 60 per cent increase in the black and minority ethnic population in the city, with the majority originating from Turkey, Pakistan, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Sim and Bowes 2007; Wren 2007). The housing allocation for these asylum seekers and refugees has been almost exclusively high-rise accommodation in areas of social deprivation, where a range of 'competing local interests have created perceived competition over resources', thus increasing the potential for racial prejudice (Wren 2007: 396).

It has been found that racism is one of the biggest problems faced by asylum seekers and refugees within the UK and that many feel there is little point in reporting verbal abuse, despite the emotional impact of such harassment (Essed 1991; Runnymede Trust 1997; Barclay *et al.*, 2003). In a wider sense, it has been found that the last 30 years have seen an increase in 'xenophobia, ethnic tension, racism and even ethnic violence' in most West European societies, with negative sentiments towards migrants being more pronounced in economically vulnerable populations (Semyonov *et al.* 2006). Accordingly, young people who have been forced to seek refuge or asylum have to cope with both a traumatic past and an uncertain future; they may be cut off culturally, socially and economically from their families, and may struggle to feel 'an equal among equals', as a result of their exposure to racist bullying (Zabaleta 2003: 20; Proctor 2005; Whiteman 2005; Watters 2008). Hence, their opportunities for experiencing inter-cultural dialogue and for acquiring social capital may be limited (European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research 2008).

### **Social Capital, Bonding and Community Integration**

Many believe that social capital provides the glue that holds communities together, and has at its heart the need for networking as a means of building trust and facilitating collective wellbeing (Coleman 1990; Putnam 2000; AERS 2004). A community which is rich in social capital is seen to be one

where local residents feel supported and integrated; where their socialization networks are characterized by depth and diversity; and where they experience feelings of social reciprocity (Ruston 2002; AERS 2004; Leonard and Onyx 2004). Putnam (2000) distinguished between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital; while bonding social capital is made up of the strong ties to people who are similar in terms of their demographic characteristics and reinforces ‘exclusive identities and homogeneous groups’, bridging social capital comprises the ties which exist between more distant acquaintances and gives rise to ‘broader identities and wider reciprocity’ (Morris 2007: 162).

In their analysis of the principles underpinning effective refugee integration, Strang and Ager (2010) draw attention to the bonding that can emerge from refugees having access to support from co-ethnic groups. The building of such bonds can lead to feelings of emotional support and confidence. However, they also argue that genuine community integration depends on the complementary development of such social ‘bonds’ *and* ‘bridges’, in order to avoid the emergence of ‘separate, very bonded but disconnected communities’ (2010: 598). Drawing upon Berry’s (1991) analysis, Phillimore and Goodson (2008: 308) argue that integration occurs most successfully where individuals have an interest in engaging both in culturally distinctive activities and also in building inter-cultural reciprocity (Lewis 2010).

### **The Challenges of Building Bridges**

It has been argued that the UK Government policy of dispersing asylum seekers and refugees in various parts of the country has led to fewer opportunities for bridging social capital. Since isolated groups of asylum seekers and refugees are often placed in deprived social communities with scarce resources and limited experience of building multicultural communities, local people can begin to view them as a burden on the community (Morris 2007). Further, some argue that high levels of ‘bonding’ social capital among existing residents within such communities can create ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ (Cantle 2008: 116).

Indeed, Putnam (2000, 2007) argues that social capital is inversely related to the extent of diversity in urban localities, and that levels of social capital tend to decline as diversity increases. Further, Cantle (2008) refers to Baumann’s (1995: 221) distinction between ‘mixophobia’, in which in-group loyalty can lead to out-group antagonism, and ‘mixophilia’, which broadens identities and favours ‘bridging’ between communities. Some have argued that, in order to build ‘bridges’ between ‘bonded’ groups, there need to be opportunities for people to ‘meet and exchange resources in ways that are mutually beneficial’, thus generating reciprocal relationships and inter-cultural trust (Strang and Ager 2010: 599).

The absence of such opportunities can lead to greater hostility between different ethnic groups and lead some refugees to ‘band together’ and develop ‘bounded forms of solidarity’ (Morris 2007: 165). In turn, this intense level

of social bonding combined with the stigmatism that refugees face from outside groups can lead to reduced levels of trust and greater social withdrawal (Zetter *et al.*, 2005; Morrice 2007). Some refugees may separate themselves from the indigenous (*sic*) population altogether and become marginalized (Phillimore and Goodson 2008; Naidoo 2009).

Concerns about such marginalization have become increasingly common across the UK and Europe as a whole. At a time when unity in diversity, shared values and citizenship are issues high on the political agenda (Home Office 2002a; European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research 2008), there have been increasing reports about a rise in anti-foreigner sentiment and support for extremist right-wing politics (Semyonov *et al.* 2006). In Glasgow, there have also been reports about a rise in neo-Nazi skinhead youth gangs as well as black and Asian gangs within the city (Stewart 2008; BBC News 2007a; Deuchar 2009).

### **Gangs, Anti-Social Behaviour and Youth**

The current public concern about youth gangs has arisen alongside the recent political focus on anti-social behaviour (Squires 2008; Waiton 2008). In Scotland, there are currently thought to be around 300 active youth gangs, with 170 in Glasgow alone (GCSS 2009). It has been reported that the activity associated with the majority of the gangs is characterized by weapon carrying, anti-social behaviour and violence (Deuchar 2009). However, the word 'gang' is often used loosely, and young people living in deprived urban communities often feel that adults perceive all youth gatherings to be troublesome and that friendship groups are assumed to be 'gangs', when in fact they are not (Deuchar 2009). While some have attempted to create particular gang typologies (Thrasher 1927; Yablonsky, 1966; Klein 2001; Van Gemert and Fleisher 2005), others have argued that the specific characteristics associated with urban youth gatherings and gangs are determined by individual localities (Pitts 2008). In this paper, we will draw upon an operational definition of the word 'gang' based upon accumulated insights gathered from the author's own previous work and those accrued from earlier studies (Thrasher 1927; Patrick, 1973; Deuchar 2009). Thus, a 'gang' is conceptualized as a group of young people who engage in 'conflict' associated with 'attachment to local territories' or cultures and characterized by violence (Deuchar 2009: 56).

Research suggests that territorial issues in the west of Scotland tend to be principally associated with young people defending their housing estates (or housing 'schemes', as they are known in Glasgow) (Patrick 1973; Kintrea *et al.* 2008; Deuchar 2009). However, recent media reports also suggest that gang culture in Glasgow may be associated with racial prejudice in light of the growing black and ethnic minority population in the city (BBC News 2007a). They have also claimed that this association has been

strengthened in light of the terrorist attack on Glasgow International Airport in the summer of 2007 (BBC News 2007b, and see also Deuchar 2009).

### **Gangs, Marginalization and Community Integration**

International research suggests that there may be a relationship between experiences and perceptions of social exclusion and prejudice and the likelihood of gang involvement (Joe and Robinson, 1980; Van Gemert *et al.* 2008; Wortley and Tanner 2008). For instance, Fiori-Khayat (2008) highlights the way in which young refugees in France seek out youth gang membership as a means of responding to perceptions of racial discrimination. In Canada, Wortley and Tanner's research illustrates that young immigrants in Toronto who perceive racism against their own group are 'more likely to be involved in gangs' than others (Wortley and Tanner 2008: 194). They highlight that gang violence is sometimes seen as a 'cultural response to alienation and estrangement' (Wortley and Tanner 2008: 203). Thus, the presence of mixophobia among groups of local community residents, combined with the absence of opportunities for building inter-cultural reciprocity, may lead to enclosed and insular levels of solidarity generated by mono-ethnic youth gangs (Baumann 1995; Cante 2008; Morrice 2007).

There is a long history of ethnic minorities and migrant youth forming their own gangs in response to white racist violence in Chicago, USA (Thrasher 1927; Suttles 1968; Hagedorn 2007; Pitts 2008; Venkatesh 2008). Further, Joe and Robinson (1980) report that young immigrants from Hong Kong drift into gang culture in response to their perceived feelings of marginalization in Vancouver, Canada. Tertilt (1997) also draws attention to the Turkish street gangs in Frankfurt, Germany, where youths regularly project their feelings of marginalization into acts of gang violence. Finally, Toy's (1992) research in San Francisco, USA, highlights the adjustment problems experienced by Chinese Vietnamese youth immigrants and more recently those migrating from Southeast Asian countries such as Laos, Thailand and Cambodia. Toy documents how the city's failure to recognize the needs of these migrants has fuelled new generations of Asian gangs.

Conversely, there is also a common and mythical assumption that gang problems are largely imported from other countries and that young racial minorities tend to be involved in gang activity more than native-born whites (Esbensen and Winfree 1998; Chettleburgh 2007). Recent research in the UK suggests that 'gangs appear to be grounded more in territory than ethnicity', and that the degree to which gangs are mono-ethnic may be more to do with 'local resident demographics' rather than the 'deliberate congregation of individuals from the same ethnic group' who live in different areas (Marshall *et al.* 2005: 8). It seems, then, that there are conflicting accounts of young migrant involvement in gang culture, the influence that such gang culture may have on the complementary development of social bonds and

bridges and the ultimate impact on inter-cultural community integration (Strang and Ager 2010).

### **The Research Study**

Building on recent research in the west of Scotland which focused mainly on issues of gang culture among white youth (Deuchar 2009; Deuchar 2010; Deuchar and Holligan 2010), this follow-up empirical study spanned 18 months, beginning in the summer of 2008 and concluding in the early part of 2010. It first sought to explore the extent to and ways in which young refugees in Glasgow experience bonding social capital and whether they experience the complementary development of social bridges. It sought to explore the refugees' involvement in gangs, and the influence this involvement may or may not have on the building of both bonding and bridging social capital and on generating inter-cultural community integration. Since recent reports suggest that gang culture is common in the west of Scotland and that there is a perceived rise in racially aggravated gang violence, Glasgow seemed to be a highly pertinent location to conduct the research (Barclay *et al.* 2003; Scottish Executive 2006; Stewart 2008; MacAskill 2008).

Drawing upon data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006 (SIMD) and the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR), the fieldwork was focused on one community in the north and one in the south side of Glasgow. Each selected community had high indicators of deprivation in terms of local income, employment, skills and training as well as large populations of asylum seekers and refugees, having been selected as major dispersal sites in 2000. The study drew on participant observation and had a particular focus on the 'observer-as-participant' role, while local gatekeepers facilitated access to young people and also become informants (Gold 1958; Bryman 2008). Thus, initial open-ended interviews with community leaders, teachers and operational police officers in each community were combined with informal interaction with young refugees and asylum seekers (aged 16–18) in community organizations and secondary schools, in order to establish trust and seek voluntary participation.

Recruitment from vulnerable youth groups raises particular ethical issues and informed consent to participate in interviews was obtained from all participants. A Participant Information Sheet (PIS) was designed, which provided full relevant details of the nature, object and duration of the study in a form that was easily understood. During initial visits to youth organizations and secondary schools, the researcher spent time engaging in a process of 'deep hanging out', where he engaged young people in relaxed conversation (Geertz 1973: 5–6). The young people were subsequently introduced to the PIS as a means of seeking their potential willingness to participate in interviews. In almost all cases, participants agreed to participate in interviews and the process of 'deep hanging out' appeared to build trust.

No incentives for participating in interviews were provided, and young people were simply informed that the outcomes from the research would have the potential to deepen public insights into issues of migration, ethnicity and gang culture.

In order to prevent the precipitation of a legal obligation to report possible criminal disclosures made during interviews, a statement was inserted into the PIS which reassured participants that the only time that the interviewer would ever have to pass on information to the authorities would be if a young person said something that showed that he/she or another young person was in immediate danger of serious harm, or where some very serious crime was *identifiable* but had either not been solved, or was about to be committed. Although it was essential for the researcher to place these declared limits on confidentiality as a means of ensuring that ethical standards were upheld, doing so inevitably placed restrictions upon the young refugees' ability to reveal the fine details of their own or other people's involvement with gang violence and related offending. Participants were also reassured that any outstanding asylum applications or current youth or criminal justice system involvement would not be affected by participating in the research and that their names or circumstances would not be divulged. Once the young people were aware of these issues, they were asked to indicate their consent orally and this was audiotaped.

Subsequent visits to each venue were focused on the implementation of semi-structured interviews with a sample of 22 young people (18 males, 4 females). The participants had a wide range of countries of origin, including South Africa, Iran, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the Congo and Kosovo. While some had been settled in the west of Scotland for just under a year, others had spent the majority of their childhood in Glasgow. Although many of the participants had initially come to Glasgow under asylum seeker status, almost all had had their refugee status confirmed by the time the interviews took place, and for simplicity are referred to subsequently as 'refugees'. Interviews were transcribed and, through a process of open and axial coding, theories were ultimately derived from the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Accordingly, coding of data centred around the key themes of *Bonding, Bridging and Intercultural Integration* and *Gangs, Culture and Violence*. In the sections that follow, the themes emerging from this analysis will be presented and key quotations that were seen as being representative of participants' views highlighted.

### **Bonding, Bridging and Inter-Cultural Integration**

The young refugees talked about the sense of isolation that emerged when they first settled in Glasgow. They often felt cut off from their own cultural groups and unsure of where to look for opportunities for social support due to the lack of youth facilities within their housing schemes. They sometimes

associated their sense of isolation with the style of accommodation offered to them and the lack of immediate opportunities to meet other young migrants:

It was actually quite hard for us because...we were almost isolated...asylum seekers are usually grouped in big housing flats for example, the big tall flat buildings but we're...in small closes you know, three floors up at the highest, so we are basically isolated (Participant G1: male).

In time, the participants began to meet other young people in similar circumstances to themselves in formal institutions like school or through the local church, or in more informal contexts provided by youth, football or other sports clubs in neighbouring communities:

We meet through school, football or out in town. You see people and say 'hi' and it just goes on from there, really (Participant A2: male).

We had a church which is on the same street as us and we went to the church and the priest then told us about other Africans who were living in Glasgow, and me and my mum started going places and that's how we got to know them (Participant L1: male).

Sports—football and that, playing football with each other in youth clubs (Participant H1: male).

The young people clearly felt that making contact with members of their own culture or with refugees from other ethnic minority groups conjured up feelings of camaraderie, identity and acceptance:

We'll meet up in town...we meet up and we play football, hang around a bit, maybe get something to eat...sometimes people just want to be loved and accepted. You see a few guys there and if you hang around with them you feel loved, you feel accepted (Participant A1: male).

Clearly, the young refugees' involvement in recreational activities was generating bonding capital, characterized by strong ties within 'in-groups' (Cantle 2008: 116). They felt comfortable hanging around in culture-specific peer groups, as many of them had experienced prejudice from similar 'in groups' comprising young white people who were native to Glasgow. Several talked about the difficulties they had experienced when they first moved over to Scotland, and how they felt they had to work hard to become accepted as a result of perceived jealousy, resentment and racial intolerance:

I remember a little while ago it was a bit tough...obviously, people coming over from different countries and they haven't experienced these people (Participant A1: male).

People don't accept other people's achievements. People say, 'you're taking our women, our jobs' and that (Participant B1: male).

It comes down to jealousy... they attacked us if they saw us with a beautiful girl (Participant E1: male).

People might have quite a bad opinion about... people who are black (Participant A2: male).

The negative reactions the young people encountered towards their accents and colour made some young people question their sense of identity and belonging:

Sometimes you'd get slagged or whatever for your accent and you don't really feel like you want to belong in a way and even if you do you don't feel like you belong with the right people (Participant C2: female).

The nature of the racial abuse the young people encountered varied. While some talked about regularly being called 'black bastards' and told to 'go back to your own country', other young men had experienced physical attacks at the hands of racist white youths. The young people responded to the threat of racial bigotry and physical violence in various ways. For some, the best option seemed to be to retreat into their own cultural units; for instance, one young man had come to the conclusion that 'white people don't really like coloured people... so we stick to each other' (participant B1). Thus, bounded solidarity emerged and inter-cultural trust was minimized (Morrice 2007). Others came to the ultimate conclusion that it was better to seek out white friends, as a means of becoming accepted and preventing further racist reactions:

If you don't have a white friend they'll start annoying you... but you see if you've got a white friend, they'll like be nice to you (Participant J2: female).

The researcher's point of access to a substantial number of young refugees in the sample was through two community-reaching initiatives centred on recreational sport; while one initiative in the north of the city provided activity programmes centred on football, the other in the south of the city was focused on twilight basketball programmes. Some of the young people described the way in which they had recently got to know young people from other cultures, including young white people, through these initiatives. Accordingly, the sports clubs were beginning to enable them to transcend social and cultural identities and build more opportunities for generating bridging capital and intercultural integration:

You might see this guy and think, 'oh, he plays football—he's alright. He's a decent guy, a good player.' So you see each other in town and say 'hi, pal, how're you doing? Who are you playing against next week?'... so it's sort of brought everyone together (Participant A2: male).

Basketball has helped me to get to know a lot of different people, you know. Because I usually didn't hang about with the Scottish kids much but now I know a lot of them and I tend to talk to them as well (Participant G1: male).

## **Gangs, Culture and Violence**

The majority of the participants (16 of the total sample) rejected the idea that they were, or ever had been, part of a 'gang' (as we have defined it). However, many felt that they were often accused of being members of gangs and involved in the violence that is associated with them. They attributed this to prejudiced reactions towards their choice of clothes and their tendency to hang around on the street in large social groupings:

People look at us, the way we dress, and they think we're gangsters...it's just that we dress like different, not wearing only 'trackies' (tracksuits) (Participant E1: male).

The police sometimes...they don't always use the word 'gang', but it's suggested – like, 'why are so many of you hanging around here?'...but sometimes we might seem like a gang...I can see where they're coming from, because there's maybe ten, eleven, twelve of us sometimes (Participant A1: male).

If you're walking together in a group, people think it's a bit dodgy (Participant E1: male).

Around one quarter of the young refugees (six of the total sample) did admit that they had been involved in gangs, and talked about participating in street fighting as a means of gaining an adrenalin rush and a sense of respect. In some cases, the young people attributed their participation in gang culture to their sense of isolation and the lack of facilities and opportunities they experienced when they first settled into their adopted communities. In other cases, there was evidence to suggest a correlation between the young refugees' experience of trauma in their home countries, and their gang membership and participation in violence. For instance, one youth participant referred to the violent culture he had become used to in the Congo:

There was violence over there...there was knife violence as well but it wasn't so much about the tools you used, it was more hand-on-hand fights (Participant L1: male).

Although other young refugees did not talk specifically about their experiences in their home countries, local gatekeepers provided some anonymous insights into some young people's traumatic prior circumstances. Data emerging from interviews with two secondary teachers was particularly revealing:

(Participant x)...needs it, you know, needs to be in a gang to defend himself...he worked in a factory...obviously exploitation in a way...he's so nervous, you put your hand on his shoulder and he jumps (Teacher 1).

(Participant z)...was 11 or 12 when his mother and father sent him over here with an uncle from Afghanistan because soldiers had threatened him on the way

home and he would have had to join up and probably have been killed... rather than have that chance, the parents sacrificed him (Teacher 2).

There are families where... the father has been killed... shot in front of them... soldiers have come and abused the mother and the children have been there (Teachers 1/2).

Hence, for some young refugees the challenges associated with political unrest, violence and the need to flee from traumatic circumstances in their home countries combined with the further trauma of exile in socially deprived communities where racism was common led to an attraction to gang culture (Jaji 2009). In some cases, the enemy was characterized as being exclusively white: several young people talked about carrying weapons or drawing upon physical strength as a means of protection from the threat of violence from white youth. Indeed, some admitted that they would have no hesitation about engaging in violence against these young people:

I really had to carry a knife because I'd been threatened, like saying 'if we see you next time we'll stab you'. Every single night I go training and when I come back they definitely see me so one day when I went training I took a knife with me and put it in my bag for protection... it kind of made me feel safer 'cos when I confronted the guy he pulled a knife and I stepped back and I pulled out mine so I was as guilty as he was. If he stabbed me, I was going to stab him as well (Participant E3: male).

I used to... take someone's golf stick and just run (Participant B1: male).

Others talked about becoming integrated into mixed racial groups who participated in fighting. One young man who had arrived in Glasgow from the Congo described the way in which peer pressure had led him to become involved in fighting alongside young white boys. He regarded himself as an extravert and a good fighter with a physical presence, and felt that this enabled him to command respect from white youth. He described his involvement in gang violence and the way in which this was fuelled by territorial issues rather than racial ones:

There would be times when you'll be up fighting and the whole street would just be full of people... literally every gang we fought with was all just white people and I was the only black person there... it's not so much racially driven, it's all about competition... it's about who rules the town as opposed to 'we want to fight you because you're different' (Participant L1: male).

Other participants corroborated this evidence. For instance, one of the young female refugees explained that street fighting was 'not usually about race or colour... just about hating' (participant J2) (echoing Marshall *et al.*, 2005). This participant was the only female in the sample who identified with being a member of a gang. She highlighted that, although she had come across

gangs with black-only members, they tended to fight against her own gang, which also had an exclusively black membership:

They (the local gangs) are both black but they don't like each other...they've got a gang and...if we never had a gang they would still be bullying us...kind of it's like backup for us (Participant J2: female).

### **Discussion: Refugees, Gangs and Inter-Cultural Social Capital**

At a time when issues of social and community cohesion and the celebration of diversity and citizenship are high on the political agenda (Walters 2004), there have been increasing reports about the lack of inter-cultural integration and accompanying increase in racially-driven gang violence in the west of Scotland. In this paper, we have outlined the data emerging from empirical research which sought to explore the extent to and ways in which young refugees in Glasgow experience bonding and bridging social capital and the ways in which this relates to the presence of gang culture in two local communities.

The data illustrates that, following an initial period of social isolation during their settlement in Glasgow, the young refugees in our study developed strong social bonds with members of their own and other ethnic minority groups. These bonds were developed within formal institutional contexts and through more informal activities arranged in community-reaching youth organizations.

The data illustrates that the young people experienced a great deal of racial prejudice and mixophobia from young whites, which led to the strengthening of ethnic minority 'in-groups' (Cantle 2008: 201). Morrice (2007: 165) highlights that the higher the levels of perceived discrimination and hostility within a host community, the more likely the immigrant community is to band together and develop 'bounded forms of solidarity'. Many of the refugees in our sample had clearly suffered from perceived social exclusion as a result of prejudice. Their perceptions about local neighbourhood support were negative and they clearly suffered from perceived lack of safety, identity and integration (Ruston 2002; AERS 2004; Leonard and Onyx 2004). The prejudice experienced by these youngsters was expressed in terms of discrimination, harassment and verbal abuse, or sometimes more serious harassment in the form of random physical attacks and bullying (confirming evidence in Essed 1991; Netto *et al.*, 2001; Shashkin 2008).

While some responded to the racial prejudice by forming allegiances with white allies as a means of protection, others retreated further into their own cultural units, thus creating further mixophobia (Baumann, 1995; Leonard and Onyx 2004; Cantle 2008). Participation in organized recreational sport gradually provided opportunities for some youngsters to deepen mono-ethnic bonds and also to experience the complementary development of social

bridges with other ethnic minorities and young white people (Strang and Ager 2010).

In spite of the tendency for some to seek out insular social bonds within homogeneous groups, most did not regard themselves as being part of a gang nor did they participate in violence. However, they often found themselves stigmatized and accused of being gang members because of their tendency towards street-oriented activity and large social groupings (echoing the biased perceptions identified by Esbensen and Winfree 1998; Wortley and Tanner 2008). Van Gemert *et al.* (2008: 8) argue that 'exotic appearance and new cultural aspects catch the eye' and that this can lead to ethnic minority migrants and refugees becoming scapegoats for the problems associated with gangs and territoriality. In spite of the fact that our research was conducted with young people living in housing schemes with high concentrations of asylum seekers and refugees, it seems that they still felt that they stood out and attracted negative attention from authority figures such as the police. This gives weight to previous research in England, which illustrates that police accounts of gangs often emphasize the ethnic dimension of membership (Marshall *et al.*, 2005; Wortley and Tanner 2008). The resulting stigma and perceived victimization clearly reduced opportunities for building inter-cultural trust and reciprocity among our participants in Glasgow (Ruston 2002; AERS 2004).

Conversely, our data also suggests that a minority of young refugees had been heavily involved in gang-oriented activity at some point or another during the period of their residence in Glasgow. At times, this activity was seen as a means of responding to feelings of discrimination, oppression and the threat of racial violence (echoing Joe and Robinson 1980; Toy 1992; Tertilt 1997; Van Gemert *et al.*, 2008; Wortley and Tanner 2008). In such cases, young refugees were proactive at drawing upon their ethnicity and perceptions of social exclusion to justify their gang involvement, which included weapon carrying and participation in violence (Fiori-Khayat 2008). However, it seemed that the most predominant characteristic of gang culture in Glasgow's housing schemes was territoriality, where a strong attachment to place was accompanied by the desire to protect and defend it.

Our data affirms previous findings by Marshall *et al.* (2005), which suggests that the presence of mono-ethnic gangs in urban settings may not always be a reflection of conflict based around ethnicity. The spatial concentration of refugees in Glasgow around socially deprived areas in the north and south of the city has clearly led to the presence of both mono-ethnic and mixed-ethnic territorial gangs within their housing schemes. Our data suggests that, although mono-ethnic gangs found themselves in combat with white youth, they equally found themselves fighting against other ethnic minorities. The normative but narrowly defined views of the values and behaviour patterns associated with masculinity, set within the context of the social and structural disadvantage dominating Glasgow's housing

schemes, were focused on the need to participate in street fighting and violence (Patrick 1973; Deuchar 2009). Thus, it may be that for some refugees, attempts to conform to these cultural definitions of masculinity combined with previous experience of violence and trauma in their home countries led them to become recruited to fight alongside white youth (Jaji 2009). They subsequently found themselves pitted against other territorial gangs of all ethnic and cultural types, thus increasing the growth of intense and insular social capital and disconnected communities (Marshall *et al.*, 2004; Cattle 2008; Morrice 2007; Strang and Ager 2010).

## **Conclusions**

In the UK, the last decade has seen an increasing political emphasis by New Labour on creating unity from diversity, and on increasing the focus on citizenship and civic identity (Giddens 1998; Fairclough 2000; Deuchar 2007). McGhee (2003) highlights that the political discourse surrounding the need to strengthen communities has been consistently linked to communitarianism, with social capital at its heart. Accordingly, the popularity of Putnam's (2000) view of social capital has continued to grow, with the emphasis on encouraging social networks and reciprocal relationships as a means of enabling community cohesion. Recent policy discourse across the UK has emphasized the need for creating common values and celebrating diversity as a means of enhancing such social capital (Home Office 2001, 2002b; Scottish Executive 2007).

In Glasgow, although there has been a stronger sense of inter-cultural community cohesion in recent years, there is still racial and cultural factionalism. Although there are some opportunities for building bridges between different ethnic groups, excessive bonding social capital often reinforces exclusive identities and homogeneous groups and limits opportunities for mixophilia (Putnam 2000; McGhee 2003; Cattle 2008). Membership of youth gangs is one channel for this. Although gang membership is driven more by issues of territoriality and masculinity in Glasgow than it is by race, racism is sometimes used as a stimulus for aggression and refugees become scapegoats for problems associated with territoriality (McGhee 2003). In some cases young refugees' previous experience of trauma in their home countries combines with their experience of being placed in high rise housing within socially deprived communities with little history of providing culturally-sensitive support services and where local people themselves have scarce resources (Wren 2007). As a result, young refugees often become marginalized and, in some cases, drift into gang membership as a source of bounded solidarity (Morrice 2007).

Our data suggests that formal and informal community-based institutions alongside recreational opportunities provided by sport can help to build some inter-cultural social cohesion and reciprocity. However, it is unlikely that such initiatives will transform cities like Glasgow into inclusive societies

lubricated by bridging social capital overnight, without a deeper analysis of and response to the structural issues that cause division (McGhee 2003). The policy of housing asylum seekers and refugees in already fractured communities that suffer from deprivation and are largely mono-ethnic in character needs to be re-examined, as does the current public culture of fear associated with the congregation of groups of ethnic minority young people in public places (Wren 2007; Deuchar 2009).

Most of all, we need more research which examines whether ethnicity has a significant influence on the formation and maintenance of gang culture amongst young people and which explores the most effective vehicles for building inter-cultural social capital in urban communities. More specifically, future research needs to be focused on three main themes:

- the relationship between how gangs are conceptualized and issues of racism, ethnicity, territoriality and violence;
- the impact of gang culture on inter-cultural social cohesion; and
- the responses that local communities can make as a means of building trust and cohesion between native and migrant youth.

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