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Damned if they do, damned if they don't: negotiating the tricky context of anti-social behaviour and keeping safe in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods

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Young people's relationship with anti-social behaviour (ASB) is complicated. While their behaviours are often stereotyped as anti-social (e.g. 'hanging about'), they also experience ASB in their neighbourhood. In this study, we explore young people's own perspectives on ASB, comparing results from 'go-along' interviews and focus groups conducted in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Glasgow, Scotland. This article discusses how young people's everyday experience of ASB was contextualised by social factors such as cultural stereotyping of marginalised groups, poor social connectivity and spatial marginalisation within their neighbourhood. Furthermore, we found that these social factors were mutually reinforcing and interacted in a way that appeared to leave young people in a 'no-win' situation regarding their association with ASB. Participation in ASB and attempts to avoid such involvement were seen to involve negative consequences: participation could entail violence and spatial restrictions linked to territoriality, but avoidance could lead to being ostracised from their peer group. Regardless of involvement, young people felt that adults stereotyped them as anti-social. Our findings therefore provide support for policies and interventions aimed at reducing ASB (perpetrated by residents of all ages); in part by better ensuring that young people have a clear incentive for avoiding such behaviours.

Keywords: identity; risk; crime; attitudes; exclusion

Introduction

Young people's relationship with their neighbourhood is often complicated by the stereotypes that link young people's behaviours to anti-social behaviour (ASB) (Coles *et al.* 2000, Kelly 2003, Stephen and Squires 2004, Deuchar 2009, Millie 2009). In the UK, young people's ASB is a policy issue (The Scottish Government 2009, Mackenzie *et al.* 2010, Home Office 2011) that periodically dominates headlines and political agendas. For example, riots and disturbances that occurred across England in August 2011 (The Guardian 2011) renewed ideological debates about young people from deprived areas – who have been depicted as both lawless and culpable, and as alienated and marginalised. In response to these disturbances, the UK Government has announced that it is considering a range of proposals for tackling ASB, including approaches that specifically target young people, for example, curfews on under-16s (BBC 2011).

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In a related study (Egan *et al.* 2012) we explore the issue of ASB from the perspective of adults living in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. In the current study we use qualitative methods to explore how young people from deprived communities themselves perceive and experience ASB.

Anti-social behaviour

The term 'ASB' became a significant feature of UK Government policy during the 1990s (Cromby *et al.* 2010) and is still widely used today. The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act (1998) for England and Wales explicitly criminalised ASB, defining it as 'acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not in the same household as (the defendant)'. This definition specified that the ASB must relate to an action or speech, it must be directed at someone who is not related to the perpetrator and be likely to cause a negative response. Millie (2008) provided examples of the types of behaviour covered by the 1998 act and the UK Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003): misuse of public space (begging, illegal parking), environmental damage (graffiti, dropping litter), disregard for the community (noisy neighbours, drunken behaviour and uncontrolled animals), as well as acts directed at individuals (nuisance phone calls, bullying). The Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act (2004) used similar examples of problem behaviour and is seen to build upon the existing UK legislation (Brown 2004). The Scottish ASB act also stipulated that the action must occur on at least two occasions and could adversely affect witnesses as well as those directly affected by the behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour has been portrayed as a symptom, metaphor and scapegoat for neighbourhood decline (Mackenzie *et al.* 2010) although not all disadvantaged areas experience these problems to the same degree (Flint *et al.* 2007). De-industrialisation and declines in employment during the late twentieth century have co-occurred with increasing levels of relative deprivation in urban areas across the UK and elsewhere, which in turn have been linked to low social cohesion (Burney 2002, Halpern 2005). Low social cohesion in the neighbourhood has been linked to feelings of mistrust, anxiety and the belief of residents that social control in their area has broken down (Halpern 2005, Innes and Jones 2006). It has been theorised that this context of mutual mistrust encourages residents to interpret ambiguous or non-mainstream behaviours as potentially threatening (Burney 2002, Sampson 2009, Wikström 2009).

A key criticism of the term ASB is that it often described in terms of individual behaviour focusing on the perpetrator rather than the broader problems that underpin the social patterning of crime and disorder (Squires 2006). While these behaviours often relate to wider social problems (such as disorder, neighbourhood decline or poor social relationships within the neighbourhood), the term ASB may sometimes be applied to behaviours which are, arguably, not problematic (MacDonald and Telford 2007). Furthermore, public perceptions of ASB (PASB) tend to focus on individuals belonging to population sub-groups that are already disempowered or disadvantaged, further stigmatising individuals belonging to that group (including, perhaps, individuals who do not personally engage in ASB) (Burney 2002).

Young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, might be considered to be a marginalised sub-group which is stigmatised by the perceived link

with ASB. The British Crime Survey and other studies have shown that, relative to other types of ASB, adults are particularly likely to consider teenagers ‘hanging around the street’ to be a serious neighbourhood problem (Walker *et al.* 2009). However the assumption that ‘hanging around’ can legitimately be regarded as anti-social has been challenged, with some authors arguing that ASB attributed to young people may often include harmless activities such as ‘free play’ (i.e. socialising and playing with friends in public spaces) (Crawford and Lister 2007, Waiton 2008, Deuchar 2010).

The interplay between social context and people’s perceptions is likely to be complex, but a number of authors have suggested ways in which this relationship may be mediated. These are concerned with social connectivity within the neighbourhood, stereotyping, and spatial marginalisation. In terms of social connectivity, it has been suggested that poor levels of social connectivity in some neighbourhoods may exacerbate PASB. In a review of the literature on PASB, the authors hypothesise that people are more likely to interpret potentially harmless behaviours (such as local teenagers hanging around) as threatening when the act involves people who are personally unknown to the observer (Mackenzie *et al.* 2010). It could be argued that in the absence of personal knowledge, these judgements are informed by social or visual cues.

Recent research in this area often draws on earlier work on labelling theory (Becker 1963) which focuses on the tendency of the majority to negatively label minorities as deviant from standard cultural norms. For young people in the neighbourhood, this may include being labelled as anti-social for misappropriating the street as a social gathering space rather than a walkway to get from A to B. This deviation from the norm may also lead to what Nixon and Hunter (2009) refer to as a demonising rhetoric about those who fail to adhere to cultural norms. The groups who fail to adhere are ‘othered’ from the society (Hall 1997), where the differences are explained through the projection of negative attributes. In the UK, one of the most well known ‘others’ are neds (commonly regarded in Glasgow as an acronym for ‘Non-Educated Delinquent’) and chavs (sometimes regarded in parts of England as an acronym for ‘Council Housed and Violent’) (Deuchar 2009, Jones 2011). One UK study has reported that a ‘ned’ or ‘chav’ is often identified by visual cues such as wearing sportswear, specific brands or gold jewellery (Galloway *et al.* 2007). Galloway *et al.* described how attitudes towards social class contributes to these negative stereotypes, with working-class young people (often males) being more likely to be labelled this way.

Evidence from young people

Although much of the literature on PASB focuses on adult perspectives, there is also a substantial literature that explores young people’s own accounts of their experiences. Much of this literature illustrates how young people actively develop strategies to negotiate and understand their community and therefore need to be considered as active participants rather than simply the passive subjects of intolerance (Cahill 2000). For example, young people may decide not to walk through certain parts of their neighbourhood at night (Morrow 2000, Elsley 2004, Deuchar 2009), using their locally constructed knowledge to avoid certain people or

keep a low profile when they are going through parts of the neighbourhood that are perceived to be risky (Turner *et al.* 2006)

These methods of staying safe also resonate with research relating to young people who are involved in territorial fighting, where one group claims ownership of a geographical area (e.g. their neighbourhood) and seeks to defend it against outsiders (Pickering *et al.* 2012). Young people involved in territorial disputes also discussed being unable to go to certain 'unsafe' places (where they were perceived to be the 'outsiders') as they believed they would be attacked. Some authors have argued that being from 'another neighbourhood' also affects young people who are not directly involved with territoriality, as the worry of being identified as an 'outsider', and therefore a member of a rival neighbourhood, restrains their perceived spatial mobility (Deuchar 2009). Therefore, similar to the discussion of adult stereotyping, the use of labelling and 'othering' can also occur within young people's social groups.

Aim of this study

This study uses accounts from two related sources of qualitative data which were obtained from (1) interviews with 16 year olds, exploring how they described their everyday experience of the neighbourhood and discussed place attachment and (2) two focus groups (FGs; one with 8–12 year olds and one with 12–16 year olds), exploring how they perceived the issue of ASB. While the initial aims of the two original studies differed, the participants all lived in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods (Glasgow, UK) and it emerged that the two studies covered similar themes. Based on discussions between Joanne Neary (J.N.) and Matt Egan (M.E.), research questions were developed which the combined data from the interviews and FGs could address. Specifically, we used young people's accounts to explore:

- (1) How contextual factors relating to stereotyping, spatial marginalisation and poor social connectivity help explain young people's perceptions of neighbourhood ASB
- (2) How young people actively negotiate and help to shape their neighbourhood context
- (3) How contextual factors relating to stereotyping, spatial marginalisation and social connectivity help to explain young people's strategies for keeping safe in the neighbourhood

Methods

This research forms part of a wider research and learning programme called GoWell, looking at disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the UK city of Glasgow (Egan *et al.* 2010). The data presented in this study were drawn from two sources: (1) 'go-along' unstructured interviews, in which young people were given the opportunity to show the researcher around their local neighbourhood (i.e. as tour guides) while describing their experiences, place attachment and everyday life and (2) FGs asking direct questions about ASB and intolerance. This dual approach reflects an original intention to conduct two separate studies within the GoWell umbrella: a FG study that included researchers asking direct questions about ASB, and a go-along study

that gave young people an opportunity to describe their own experiences of living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with minimal direction from the researcher. When it became clear that the go-along participants often talked about ASB, even though they were not asked specifically to do so, we felt there was a compelling reason for analysing these data alongside the FG data.

Study design

Go-along

The go-along interview can be seen as a combination of a semi-structured interview and ethnography (Kusenbach 2003, Carpiano 2009) and uses the participant's natural environment as both the context and as visual prompts in the interview. The go-along was chosen for the study as it allowed the participants to take control of the interview; using their local knowledge to choose a route around their neighbourhood which they were comfortable with. As the participants gave the tour, they spoke about their everyday life and aspects of their neighbourhood they wished to change. As the structure of the go-along is shaped by the participant, questions asked by the interviewer are kept to a minimum so the interview can take on a more conversational tone (Clark 2009).

Focus group

The FG has been defined as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher who facilitates the interactive discussion (Morgan 1996, p. 130). As the participants are encouraged to discuss the issues with each other, often coming to an agreed conclusion, FGs can be seen as a collectivistic rather than an individualistic method (Bagnoli and Clark 2010). In the case of the current study, the FGs enabled participants to share their experiences and thoughts on the issue of ASB within their local neighbourhood. Also, as younger children were recruited (8–12 year olds), FGs allowed regular breaks and a comfortable atmosphere for the children (Gibson 2007). To ensure the younger group understood the FG questions, a flexible approach was taken which allowed the wording of questions to reflect the composition of the group (Morgan *et al.* 2002, p. 11). The FG facilitator also probed ambiguous answers provided by young people to ensure the young person's intended meaning was understood.

Neighbourhood selection and recruitment

Three neighbourhoods were selected for this study on the basis that previous research had found concerns about young people's ASB appeared to be high amongst local residents (GoWell 2010a). The names of the neighbourhoods have been changed to reflect their geographical location. The go-along interviews were recruited from Glasgow West and Glasgow North in 2010. Two young people's FGs were recruited in 2009: one was recruited from Glasgow South, the other from Glasgow West.

Recruitment procedures differed for the two parts of the study. Go-along participants were recruited from community youth groups using opportunistic sampling techniques, with consent granted from youth leaders as well as parents.

FG participants were recruited using information collected from a previous GoWell household survey, which identified households with young people within the chosen study areas. The households were randomly selected, and only for those whom we had consent to follow-up were contacted. Parents/guardians were required to provide consent prior to contact with the young people within the household.

Participants

Go-along interviews were conducted with 16 year olds from Glasgow North and Glasgow West. Mid-adolescent views were sought as it was anticipated they would be able to discuss memories of growing up in the neighbourhood, as well as their current experiences. One FG consisted of 8–12 year olds (Glasgow South) and the other consisted of 12–16 year olds (Glasgow West). These ages were chosen to gain insights into pre- and mid-adolescent views of ASB.

Participation in the study was voluntary. All the young people were given full written and verbal explanations of the aims of the studies, provided written consent (and were required to have parental consent) and were compensated for their time with £20 gift vouchers. The young people involved in the studies consented for the FGs and go-along interviews being digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymised. No young person participated in both a FG and a go-along interview.

Data analysis

The researchers agreed that for the purposes of this study, the participants' location, gender, age range and type of interview would be used to identify them (e.g. Glasgow North, M, 16 years, go-along). The data were analysed using NVivo8 (qualitative data management software).

The interview and FG data were initially analysed separately, with J.N. analysing the interview data while M.E. and Peter J. Keenan (P.J.K.) analysed the FG data. The authors then individually compared both sets of data looking for concordant and discordant themes. Disagreement relating to themes was resolved through further discussions. For example, themes of inter-generational relationships (from M.E. and P.J.K.'s analysis) and intra-generational intolerances (J.N.'s analysis) were integrated into the theme of social connectivity. A consensus was reached about the emergent research questions and how the interview and FG data addressed those questions.

Findings

Five young people participated in the go-along interviews and 10 young people in the two FGs. The participants' ages ranged from 8 to 16 years. All participants were white Scottish, which broadly reflects the ethnic composition of Glasgow West and South, but less so for Glasgow North which contains a substantial minority of asylum seekers.¹ As participants from Glasgow North were recruited through a community youth group, the lack of representation of asylum seekers may reflect their lack of engagement with the services we contacted.

We found broadly similar themes in the FG and go-along interviews despite the different methods. Key themes related to (1) experience and perception of negative

stereotyping (2) spatial marginalisation and (3) social connectivity. These are discussed under their respective headings below.

Theme one: negative stereotypes

One of the main findings from this research was that young people hold negative stereotypes about other young people as well as about adults. In addition, they have an expectation that adults hold similarly negative views about young people.

Young people's accounts of ASB frequently made reference to the 'neds' stereotype. When asked to name the worst thing about living in their neighbourhood, young people from the Glasgow South FG discussed the presence of 'neds', with one young person describing being afraid to walk down a path in their neighbourhood because *'that's where all the neds are'*. They spoke about the 'neds' in their classes at school getting involved with gang fighting or getting drunk at the weekend. Although young people discussed 'neds' as including both adults and young people, they were clear that they were not part of this group. In the go-along interviews, young people appeared keen to emphasise that, although they shared several visual similarities to 'neds' (wearing tracksuits, having tattoos, hanging out in parks with groups of friends), they were not part of that group.

For example, one participant maintained that it was her aspirations (rather than her appearance) that distinguished her from local 'neds':

[Adults] look at you like and think like I'm one of the neds that hang about an' that, but . . . I said to them . . . I'm like not like that, I'm like . . . I want to get an education, I'm like I don't want to be one of those ones that'll still be hanging about the streets in like 20 year time or whatever, know what I mean? (Glasgow West, F, 16 years, go-along)

This girl discusses a number of social stereotypes associated with 'being a ned' including being un-educated, having no aspirations for the future, and poor social mobility. The discussion of *'hanging about the streets in like 20 years'* highlights that for the young person, neds were people who, regardless of age, were bound to their neighbourhood's public spaces.

Concern about adult assumptions (i.e. 'adults looking at you and thinking') permeated a number of young people's narratives, especially the older group of young people. They used their own knowledge of the stereotype of 'being a ned' and anticipated a negative reaction by adults:

But people think tattoos, jogging suits [points to himself] typical ned. Me? I'm no a ned, but . . . once you get an impression, that's the impression you get. No need to know me for me. (Glasgow North, M, 16 years, go-along)

This 16 year old was aware that his appearance fitted the 'ned' stereotype, but highlighted that if the adults were to know him, they may have a different view of who he is.

However, when young people were directly asked to describe the kind of adults who did not get on well with young people, FG members in Glasgow West characterised such adults as: *'long hair, wrinkly, and about ninety years old'*. While this answer was intended as a joke, it illustrates how young people could also use

visual cues to stereotype adults. On other occasions, participants from the Glasgow West FG stereotyped adults on the basis of perceived behaviours (e.g. *'people who are drunk that shout'*). The Glasgow South FG spoke about how their experience of some adults behaving anti-socially has made them wary of talking to people they do not know. In particular, they recalled being shouted at or chased by adults they did not know.

The narratives of some of the participants lent credence to the theory that the negative perceptions and behaviours of adults contributed to young people's sense of alienation, encouraging the young people to respond with negative behaviour themselves. As one girl commented, *'I don't [get on well with adults]. I just argue with them if they are horrible to me'* (Glasgow South, F, 12–16 years, FG). This echoes concerns expressed elsewhere that adults low opinion of young people could become a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' if it provides a context within which young people feel disrespected and believe that ASB is expected of them (for example, see Innes and Jones 2006 and Sampson 2009).

Overall, the findings are suggestive of communities in which young people and adults draw on cultural stereotypes to respond to one another with reciprocated negativity: a cyclical process that damages social cohesion and leaves young people feeling alienated and socially marginalised.

Theme two: spatial marginalisation

In parallel with their experience of social marginalisation, the young people also spoke about their spatial marginalisation. The participants often stated that there were places in the neighbourhood they could not frequent. Reasons for this spatial marginalisation included keeping out of danger (from other people who may go there), territorial attachments and restrictions placed by parents. While these spatial restrictions enabled some young people to feel safer in their neighbourhood, it also led to many feeling left out of social groups.

For many participants, territoriality was an aspect of their everyday life. The younger FG (Glasgow West, 8–12 year olds) discussed some people in their school class becoming involved with gangs. When asked what these gangs do, they answered that the people in the gang drink alcohol, and *'fight other schemes [neighbourhoods]'*. This knowledge of territoriality informed some participants' attempts to avoid places where the fighting would take place. However, there were also several instances of young people claiming to have witnessed violent incidents from (or near to) their own home. A participant from Glasgow West spoke about witnessing a more serious event:

I can watch [gang fighting] from the window of where I stay, but like, I don't really watch them fight any more, because last year I saw a boy getting killed. He's from [nearby neighbourhood]. So I don't really like to watch it out my window because of the...eh... because of that happening. (Glasgow West, F, 16 years, go-along)

She spoke about having to file a police report based on her experiences, which had in turn negatively influenced how she perceived young people who hang around in these locations.

The connection between people and places was often discussed by young people in terms of their experience of ASB: parks were places where teenagers would hang out and get drunk, pubs were places where adults would shout and fight after closing time (Glasgow West, M, 8–12 years, FG), and local shopping centres contained community services where *'junkies hung out'* (Glasgow North, F, 16 years, go-along). All of the participants from the Glasgow North go-along interviews agreed that there was one high rise block of flats in particular which was known for ASB. The boys discussed that the hallways and communal areas were dirty because *'all the junkies stay there'*, whereas the girls associated the block with violence between gangs. While parks, the shopping centres and the high rise blocks were presumably not used exclusively by anti-social residents, the young people's statements illustrate how associations between specific locations and stereotyped sub-groups interacted to stigmatise both the place and the people who use it.

In order to keep safe, some young people would use their local knowledge to avoid these stigmatised localities. This was also a measure undertaken by the parents of the younger participants:

My dad doesn't allow us to go to the park because it is too dangerous because of the drunks. (Glasgow West, M, 8–12 years, FG)

Parental boundary setting is seen as one way of teaching children to avoid neighbourhood risks (Pinkster and Fortuijn 2009), but it may also provide a mechanism by which young people 'learn' some of the negative stereotypes that occur in adult discourse. However, by adhering to these boundaries, they risked being challenged by peers:

People say you're a wimp and stuff, because you don't go to the park. (Glasgow West, M, 8–12 years, FG)

Young people all identified the park as a place where gangs hang out, and if they were to go there, they felt they might become drawn into ASB. For the young people who did choose to go out at night, knowledge of the territorial disputes of their neighbourhood was crucial to helping them negotiate a safe passage through the area. When local knowledge was not enough to ensure the young people's safety, one participant discussed the other measures that could be taken:

Yeah, I got caught with a . . . blade. I had someone go threaten me with a bat an' all that, I ended up smashin' one of them. I ended up carrying a blade about. (Glasgow North, M, 16 years, go-along)

The young person quoted above had previously discussed knowing friends who participated in territorial fighting, but said he tried to stay away from this. However, he felt that he had to carry a knife in order to defend himself, and his presence in the public space of the neighbourhood, after being threatened. This was a course of action that risked escalating the situation and indeed it led to the young person being cautioned by the police. This is a theme discussed in the wider literature, especially in neighbourhoods that are well known for territorial gang fighting (Kintrea *et al.* 2008).

Theme three: social connectivity

The young man quoted above claimed to have carried a knife because he believed that other young people had a personal vendetta against him. This case reminds us that while improving social connectivity in disadvantaged communities has been recommended as a means of allaying residents' concerns about ASB (Mackenzie *et al.* 2010), social connections can also take on much more negative characteristics. Some young participants worried about being drawn into local gangs. Others had negative experiences with people they knew, and even described places they could not go to for fear of being recognised. On the other hand, it was clear that peer friendships were highly important to the participants, providing social support and a feeling of safety within the context of neighbourhoods that were frequently depicted as violent and hostile.

With regard to inter-generational connectivity, young people were broadly in agreement that positive relationships with adults were hindered by mutual mistrust. As discussed above, young people took the view that adults tended to see them in stereotypical terms without getting to know them personally: '*see when people were walking in [to the flat], they could see you sitting in a gang*' (Glasgow North, F, 16 years, go-along). More often, however, the participants depicted adults as people to be wary of. Hence, when asked if they got on well with adults in the area, several FG participants said 'no' and one replied that it depended on whether she had a personal connection with the adult in question: '*depends if you know them, then yes. But sometimes no if you don't know them*' (Glasgow South, F, 12–16 years, FG).

Interacting social contexts

From the findings summarised above, we have constructed a matrix framework which highlights the dynamic ways in which the three themes outlined above interconnect. The rows in Table 1 outline how each of the three contextual factors (stereotyping, connectivity and spatial marginalisation) help shape the other factors in the matrix.

Taking the example of stereotyping, the table illustrates how the act of stereotyping *can influence* the young people's negotiation of public space and attitudes to social connectivity: young people may avoid places thought to be frequented by negatively stereotyped groups, and they may avoid contact with adults who they perceive might stereotype them as neds. However, the table also shows that stereotyping may be *influenced by* issues relating to spatial marginalisation and poor social connectivity: young people might be labelled as 'neds' because of how they dress (stereotyping), but also because of where they go (spatial marginalisation) or who their friends are (social connectivity).

Similarly, social connectivity and spatial marginalisation can each be seen to be issues that *can influence* and also be *influenced by* interconnecting contextual factors. For some young people, locations such as the local park were places where they could socialise with friends, but they felt that other members of the community stereotyped them as 'neds' or 'gang members' for doing so. On the other hand, some participants described the parks as places they would not go because neds and gang members hung out there. In both cases the location was stigmatised by its association with

Table 1. Framework of the dynamic relationships within social context and ASB.

	Stereotyping	Spatial marginalisation	Social connectivity
Stereotyping	Young people can hold stereotypes about other young people as well as adults.	Stereotypes can inform the spatial negotiation of the neighbourhood: the knowledge that teenagers drink in public parks at night may cause others to avoid these areas.	Young people's expectation that adults hold negative views and stereotypes about them lead to poorer social relationships with adults.
Spatial marginalisation	The understanding that a place is dangerous can also lead to a stereotyping of people who choose to go there (e.g. people who go to the park at night are more likely to be neds/dangerous).	All young people spoke about feeling there were places they cannot go in the neighbourhood, either through territoriality, parental restrictions or the belief that they are not welcome there.	Young people reported that by trying to avoid the ASB in the neighbourhood, they often stayed at home. This could lead to peers labelling the young people as 'wimps' for not going out at night.
Social connectivity	Older young people discussed that by hanging around in larger friendship groups, many were mislabelled as being gang members by adults in the neighbourhood.	Socialising with friends who were involved in territory disputes often led young people to avoid areas, or to carry weapons in case they were 'recognised'.	Young people discussed both positive and negative relationships with different age groups within the neighbourhood. They felt that when they know adults, the relationship would be more positive.

ASB, anti-social behaviour.

stereotyped social groups, while people who may not necessarily be behaving anti-socially feared being stigmatised for using that space.

Overall, we argue that stereotyping, social connectivity and spatial marginalisation are each dimensions of the neighbourhood context that interact in circular or mutually reinforcing relationships with one another.

Discussion

This study has highlighted the different ways in which young people's relationship with ASB is complicated by interacting contextual factors: stereotyping, social connectivity and spatial marginalisation. We have provided a matrix to highlight these interactions and show how they can complicate young people's everyday lives,

presenting problems to young people irrespective of whether or not they are personally involved in ASB. This issue is reflected in the title of this article, suggesting that young people are damned if they do engage in ASB, but also damned if they do not. We will now return to the aims of the study (how contextual factors help explain young people's PASB; how young people actively negotiate their neighbourhood; how contextual factors help explain young people's strategies of keeping safe) and highlight the ways that the three contextual factors can be used to explore how participants discussed PASB and constructed strategies to keep safe within the neighbourhood.

Perceptions of ASB

Young people from the FGs and the go-along interviews were aware of, and discussed, different elements of ASB which they either experienced in their everyday lives, or were aware of from different sources of information (such as family members, friends or other people within the neighbourhood). Environmental ASB was often discussed as problematic within the neighbourhood, and included aspects such as vandalism, graffiti and broken glass (which young people linked to people drinking alcohol in public spaces). Often, environmental ASB was linked with the presence of the anti-social 'other'. Participants discussed the presence of 'neds' or 'junkies', while younger participants also discussed the presence of teenagers as problematic. Young people often relied on stereotype information when describing anti-social groups, but the older participants were also aware that they could be described in terms of these stereotypes.

While some participants wore tracksuits and socialised with friends in the public spaces of the neighbourhood, they distanced themselves from the label of 'ned' – claiming that if people knew them, they would understand they were not 'neds'. The awareness and use of stereotypes such as 'neds' may also reflect their understanding of poor social connectivity in the neighbourhood. They are aware of the labelling behaviour behind the 'ned' stereotype and due to poor relationships with the wider neighbourhood, they know that by dressing a certain way, or hanging out in certain areas, adults would be likely to incorrectly attribute their actions and appearances to being 'neds'.

Keeping safe

All participants discussed ways in which they negotiated their neighbourhood. For younger FG participants, we found there were often parental boundaries in place both in terms of curfew times and spatial boundaries. These participants discussed their spatial marginalisation in terms of the stereotypes held by the parents. For example, a Glasgow West participant discussed not being able to go to the park because of their father's PASB (i.e. people drinking in the park). Using their parents own knowledge of the neighbourhood had two consequences, it enabled young people to stay safe, but it could also lead to them being labelled as 'wimps' for not challenging these boundaries (reducing social connectivity with same age peers who challenged parental boundaries).

For older participants, their understanding of the neighbourhood is based more on their experience and everyday use. Some young people spoke about hanging about

with friends in the neighbourhood (social connectivity) only for adults to mislabel their actions as anti-social (stereotyping) often leading to them being 'moved on' or displaced from their social area (spatial marginalisation). Other young people discussed having to avoid certain places (spatial marginalisation) due to their friendships with those who participated in gang fighting (social connectivity). They were concerned that they would be misidentified as a gang member (stereotype). These examples highlight the complicated nature of the neighbourhood, while the older participants are given more freedom in the neighbourhood, their increased experience of the neighbourhood may lead to spatial marginalisation.

A final comment on young people's discussions of keeping safe within the neighbourhood concerns the temporal nature of ASB. Many participants discussed that while they felt it was safe to walk around their neighbourhood during daylight hours, they were afraid to go out at night. These spatial and temporal restrictions represent a key disadvantage experienced by young people, even among young people who, in their own view, consciously sought to avoid trouble related to ASB.

Links with policy and implications for practice

Our study supports the conclusions put forward by the independent 'Riot Communities and Victims' Panel', that is: 'when people don't feel they have a reason to stay out of trouble, the consequences for communities can be devastating' (2012, p. 6). We believe our findings suggest that action should be taken to make avoiding ASB a beneficial and attainable goal for young people, rather than something which is difficult to attain and which makes little difference, or has a derogatory effect, on their experiences within the neighbourhood.

Interventions which focus on promoting young people's self esteem and enabling community participation have been found to reduce residents' reports of ASB, have reduced territorial behaviour among young people and raised young people's self esteem (Frondigoun *et al.* 2008). However, there are challenges in running such programmes, especially in engaging both males and females. For example, a recent evaluation of community/youth participation programmes in Glasgow found that the majority of the programmes for young people were predominantly sports-based and male orientated, limiting their appeal to girls (GoWell 2010b). These limitations for youth programmes were also discussed by the young people in the Glasgow West and South FGs and the Glasgow North go-along interviews. They suggested that as well as offering organised activities with youth workers, they would also like to be able to attend youth clubs which were better furnished. The younger participants suggested that better supervision of youth clubs may ensure ASB does not occur outside the clubs. Addressing these issues, and enabling young people to have a more positive neighbourhood experience may enable young people to feel more involved in the community and reduce feelings of marginality within the neighbourhood.

Study limitations and strengths

A key strength of this study was the linkage of ASB to young people's everyday life. While most research relating to ASB focuses on adult experience, this study has sought not only to describe young people's own PASB but also to locate these perceptions within the spatial and social experience of their everyday lives. Another

key strength of this study is its use of mixed qualitative methods. Using multiple methods in this study has enabled us to understand the different ways young people discuss their neighbourhood. During go-along interviews, it was clear that the geographic spaces which were being walked through often had both positive and negative significance for the participants. Places of significance included community spaces (schools, youth clubs), family homes and places which were associated with ASB. Conversely, the FGs were conducted in a community centre and had a greater focus on examples of ASB within the neighbourhood; therefore incidental discussion of the neighbourhood was less likely. Hence, while the different approaches produced broadly similar data, the accounts of ASB provided by go-along participants are particularly interesting as these participants were not asked directly about this topic: they were asked to describe their life in the neighbourhood, and ASB was a salient aspect of their everyday lives.

However, the methods also had certain limitations. In one of the FGs, the participants became distracted by asking questions about the facilitator's own neighbourhood and childhood. In addition, the FG participants would talk over each other, leading to loss of audio quality for transcriptions. On a related note, as the go-along was conducted within the neighbourhood, audio quality was often compromised by passing traffic or passers-by. During the go-alongs, the interviewer was sometimes questioned about her presence in the neighbourhood, with some young people initially assuming she was a police officer or social worker. Another weakness of the study is that it is limited to a small number of young people from disadvantaged Glasgow neighbourhoods, raising questions of generalisability and representativeness. Recruiting participants from this demographic group was not easy. Particular problems included arranging a meeting place (several participants who had arranged to meet a researcher at a community centre reported to have been moved on by centre staff for 'loitering' before the researcher arrived), poor weather deterring participation in go-along interviews, and suspicion from young people about the value of research.

Scope for further work

We believe the current study sits well within similar studies of how young people perceive their neighbourhood and negotiate ways of staying safe (Backett-Milburn and Harden 2004, Turner *et al.* 2006). This study has added to this discussion by emphasising the disadvantages young people experience when seeking to avoid ASB and by highlighting the circular nature of the contexts of stereotyping, spatial marginality and social connectivity as they relate to ASB. The current study found that age appeared to be an important aspect when studying young people's PASB and strategies of keeping safe. In addition, we were able to draw limited findings relating to gender differences and older young people's reaction to the threat of violence within the neighbourhood (carrying weapons, being involved in fights vs. staying home after dark); but believe this is an aspect which requires further study. In addition, our findings regarding how young people perceive ASB from other same age peers may feed into a wider discussion of policy interventions directed at young people. While our current study focused on young people's experiences of ASB and the neighbourhood, follow-up work linking their experiences and neighbourhoods interventions would be an interesting direction.

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Note

1. The term 'asylum seeker' refers to a person who has left her/his country of origin because of persecution and who apply to be recognised formally as a refugee in a different country, for example the UK (Hopkins and Hill 2008). Since 1999, the city of Glasgow has had a contractual agreement with the UK Home Office dispersal programme, which relocates asylum seekers of all ethnicities to accommodation outside of London and the South East (Refugee Council 2012). By 2005, around 12,000 asylum seekers had been accommodated in Glasgow, initially in neighbourhoods of mass housing estates and high rise flats (GoWell 2009).

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