Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

http://create.canterbury.ac.uk

The power to illuminate; auto/biographical narrative research into the good democratic educational group and its enemies

Linden West, Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom

An abstract

This paper focuses on the preconditions for what I term the good, inclusive, democratic educational group. It draws on auto/biographical narrative research in one distressed post-industrial city struggling with racism and pockets of Islamism, but also with a proud history of workers' education. The research sought to illuminate the dynamics of racism, fundamentalism, and of recognition, in Islamist groups, drawing on contemporary research; and to set this alongside historical studies of the cultural and pedagogic aspects of workers' education. The paper employs an interdisciplinary psychosocial as well as historical framing, to illuminate particular dynamics within both kinds of groups. The historic 'experiment in democratic education', among ordinary working class people, was the product of an unusual alliance, at least in a European context, between progressive elements in universities and working class organisations, at the beginning of the last century. Processes of self-recognition characterise both kinds of group, except in the Islamist ones there is narrative closure to the other and a retreat into stereotype. In particular forms of workers' education, there was, in contrast, relatively open engagement with symbolic diversity, and with others, and thus with the potential diversity of self. This provides a basis for thinking about hot to build new inclusive social solidarities, not least in multi-cultural societies struggling with fundamentalism and xenophobia.

1 Introduction

This paper focuses on the emotional interplay of the psychological world with the relationships and groups in which we are embedded. It draws on auto/biographical narrative research in one distressed post-industrial city struggling with racism and pockets of Islamism, but also with a proud history of workers' education that has now fractured (West, 2016). I wanted to understand the dynamics of racism, fundamentalism, and of hate, but also of love and recognition in the building of social solidarities, there and then, and in the present. I illuminate where resources of hope for more inclusive social solidarities might lie, at a time of a rampant individualism and growing antagonism between ethnic groups at national as well as international levels. I use an interdisciplinary psychosocial theoretical frame, drawing on psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, critical theorist Axel Honneth and educator John Dewey, to illuminate particular dynamics, including pedagogic, within Islamism, in contexts of growing Islamophobia. The interplay of these forces can draw alienated individuals into Islamism, which provides powerful forms of self recognition. These processes operate at a primitive emotional as well as a cognitive, narrative and group level. Recognition gives meaning and purpose to fractured lives but may also be impregnated with misrecognition of the other. There can be processes of collective psychic splitting in which unwanted parts of a self and culture are projected into the other, evoking alienation, ironically, from self as well as that other, in the name of purity.

These reductive dynamics are compared with what was called 'an experiment in democratic education' in the same city. This was the product of an unusual alliance, at least in a European context, between progressive elements in universities and working class organisations at the beginning of the last century to provide access to liberal and humane forms of university education – a kind of education of citizens, no less - at a local level (Rose, 2010; West, 1972). Drawing on personal testimonies and more recent research, such workers' education, I suggest, offered forms of recognition and structures of hope. Working class men and women became university students, in their own localities, in their industrial towns and cities, in what were called 'tutorial classes'. These were classes not lectures: 30 or so worker-students met weekly with a university tutor and 'all were teachers and learners' as they negotiated their own syllabus and worked dialogically. They became or were already leaders and activists in their communities and their educational experiences, they report, strengthened them in their involvement. Over time many worker-students also became confidently open to symbolic diversity and, in some cases, to their own bigotry. Processes of self-recognition operated here too, but alongside relatively open engagement with symbolic diversity, with others, and thus with the potential diversity of self. This provided the basis for more fulsome recognition of the other and for building inclusive social solidarities.

Problems about the past, present and potential role of education in strengthening democracy have becomes critical in present times. The problems of democracy are well documented: there is abundant evidence of concern in many quarters about the health of representative democracies, including in 'post-industrial' contexts (Biesta, 2011; Alexander, 2014). There are indicators of increased alienation and cynicism among people towards conventional politics, which can be especially strong in marginalized, multicultural communities (Auestad, 2012; 2014; Friedman, 2013). If widespread citizen distrust or disenchantment with formal democratic institutions, local and national, is well chronicled, so too are patterns of minimal engagement in voting, especially in local elections, in the districts where poor people live (Goodwin, 2011).

2 The city

In 2008, I was deeply troubled by the rise of racism and fundamentalism as well as the neglect of the city of my birth, Stoke-on-Trent, in the English Midlands. In 2008/9 the racist British National Party (BNP) was strengthening in the city; and a mosque was pipe-bombed. It seemed that racists would form the majority on the Municipal Council by 2010 (West, 2016). There were frequent incidents of racial violence and outbursts of Islamophobia. The economic base of the city had unravelled and its politics were in chronic crisis with low levels of engagement in voting. The traditional economic base of the city – coal mining, iron and steel production and pottery - had either disappeared or drastically declined. Long-term structural unemployment was endemic (West, 2016). The financial crisis, from 2008 onwards, and consequent austerity including cuts in local government funding added to feelings of despair. I visited a district of the city, called Etruria, where, in the eighteenth century, the famous pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood built his second factory, and he named the area after the region of Italy whose ancient pottery so inspired him. Wedgwood's house is still there, part of a hotel chain, and there was new development, including the expanding headquarters of the betting giant, Bet365. But dereliction met the eye at the abandoned railway station, framed by a disused, vandalized factory site. Historical geographer Matthew Rice (2010) has written that 'maybe Stoke-on-Trent', England's twelfth biggest city, 'is just one industrial city too many' (p. 17). Yet this city had once been home to vibrant pottery, mining, and iron and steel industries. Hundreds of thousands of plates, cups and saucers, all packed safely with straw in barrels or wooden baskets, were sent to food markets in India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Canada, Australia, New Zealand and America. In 1925, 100,000 workers were employed in the pottery industry. By 2009 the figure was about 9000. 'The Potteries', as Rice (2010) observed, 'no longer equip the tables of Empire; in fact, jobs have been exported instead. Factories in China and India are sending their cheap export ware to the city: Stoke is now the consumer' (p. 57). Malaysia and Indonesia became attractive to employers and shareholders as sources of cheap labour and manufacturing was outsourced in the endless search for competitive edge and profit. The pottery manufacturer Spode, for whom my own mother had worked, moved 80 per cent of its production to Indonesia, while Wedgwood turned to Malaysia. Rice notes that wages were never high in Stoke, and cheap labour came to the area from places like Kashmir and the Punjab in Southern Asia in the 1960s. Low wages in Stoke equated to relatively high sources of income for migrant families – and there had been a long history of migration into the city. But when outsourcing gathered pace, many of the people whose grandparents had earlier migrated were left in a jobless limbo. Having a job matters for cultural as well as economic reasons, particularly for young Asian men: to be the head of the family and support its members is a strong cultural as well as economic imperative.

I wanted to explore the psychosocial, cultural, political and economic roots of this decline and associated discontent. I conducted auto/biographical narrative research, some of it longitudinal, with over 50 people in the city, from different ethnic groups. I sought to connect larger historical forces (such as deindustrialisation) with the meso or intermediate levels of human interaction, of what was happening within institutions and groups as well as at an intimate relational level. I attempted to illuminate how and why xenophobia flourishes and to think seriously about it and its antidotes. On one white working class estate in the city – the place where I was born - there is a pattern of narratives of lost worlds and feelings of abandonment and disrespect by authority. In contrast stories are told of the BNP listening to local people and offering forceful as well as sensitive representation for ordinary people, of the kind that other parties failed to provide. In Muslim communities there were stories of Islamophobia, and of anxieties about pockets of Islamism among young people.

3 Recognition and the power to illuminate

Research of this kind is problematic when viewed through the lens of conventional quantitative research that often dominates the academic imagination. The stories people tell are always a reconstruction of events, afterthoughts, rather than the events themselves, while the powerful discourses of a culture and unconscious processes of wanting to please or appease circulate in stories. They can be seen as of little relevance to any bigger picture of, for instance,

democracy in crisis – 'fine meaningless detail', as one historian graphically framed it (Fieldhouse, 1996). Yet we can so much better understand the nuances of why particular people are attracted to the BNP, or radicalized, through the lifelong and life-wide lens of auto/biography. This is its especial power.

For one thing, the general – or bigger – picture is always in the particular, not least in the narrative resources people draw on to tell their stories. We are storied as well as storytellers. Stories may constrain as well as liberate, as a bigger picture – of neo-liberal assumptions, say – grips particular accounts. And people can internalize the negativities about 'people like us', whether emanating from the mouths and projections of politicians, policymakers or the mass media. Those targeted may be struggling on benefits or single parents, as chronicled in my earlier work in other marginalized locations (Merrill and West, 2009). People can feel themselves to be the objects of society's disdain, caught in the gaze of the judgemental other and constantly needing to justify themselves. Those on the margins easily internalize negative projections, or feel inadequate, despite their capacity to think about experience in new ways and build resilience and self-agency in the process, if given time, space and resources to do so (West, 2007; 2009). People are unused to being listened to or taken seriously, or of their stories being treated as significant evidence. Are you really interested in me and my story? they often ask. They may at first seek to impress researchers, largely unconsciously, by giving answers they imagine the researcher wants to hear. Over time, however, they can think about the stories they tell in the company of a sympathetic other in new and even liberating ways. But stories can also remain defensive and partial, as a white researcher, for instance, engages with British Asians who may feel their religion is under attack.

I suggest that stories offer complex material that encompasses a dynamic of here and now, there and then, self and other, psyche and society, power and powerlessness. Such material can offer a nuanced representation of what it means to be human, in conditions of distress, as well as the potential place of democratic education in transforming lives, or of how Islamic radicalization works. In these terms auto/biographical narrative research is a serious business. But it asks a great deal of the researcher – they have to think, for instance, about the interplay of their life and agenda in their encounter with the other. Thus to think about my place in relationships with others in the study becomes an interpretative and epistemological necessity.

The power of the methodology illuminated particular biographical experiences in ways that more conventional research would get nowhere near. Auto/biographical narrative enquiry sheds light, through the richness of storytelling, especially when done longitudinally, over cycles of interviews, on the seductions and insecurities fuelling fundamentalism, for instance; and how and why space once existed, and can be created again, for the never-complete experiment in democratic education. The distinct methodology has been finely tuned over many years and pays attention to how we as researchers shape responses 'auto/biographically', as already indicated. The research is conducted in a clinical style and is sensitive to and reflexive about how emotional, unconscious, intersubjective and power dynamics work between people; how we are present as researchers in the process, for better as well as worse. We seek to create the conditions for good, more inclusive and hopeful stories, through our presence, when we are respectful, listen seriously, and feedback ideas for reflection, in a digestible form. Donning the metaphorical mantle of the white-coated, emotionally distant scientist investigator, on the other hand, can silence the other: we need our humanity and creativity in making good, dialogical research (Merrill and West, 2009; West, 2016).

There were particular theoretical friends –Dewey, Winnicott and Honneth – who helped me make sense of the stories I heard. Using Dewey reminded me of our need to engage with the other precisely because of the limitations, despite our best efforts, of what we can ever know. The other, in short, has an actual importance for the quality of our own psychological and symbolic life; diversity matters in the groups of which we are a part, whether scientific or community-based, for the quality of our thinking and actions, for the cultivation of what we can call democratic subjectivity – or the cosmopolitan psyche – as a prerequisite for wider human well-being (West, 2016).

Such selves may also be more or less agentic and political in quite a basic sense: the nurturing of children – or adults for that matter – is a political as well as an emotional act. It is about cultivating relationships in which individuals feel legitimate and able to question the taken-for-granted without experiencing paralyzing anxiety. This can involve experiencing the world as a place for imaginative play, in Winnicott's terms, for the playfulness of ideas and the imagination, or – at an opposite end of a spectrum – to be overly defensive, to avoid difficulty because it is too threatening to self or a group. Such individuals can don false mantles, needing to please or appease others for fear of displeasure or abandonment. The intimately personal is deeply political and potentially democratic in these terms. Axel Honneth (2009) refers to Freud's anthropological idea of how we are born

prematurely in comparison with other mammals and depend absolutely on the other for survival and well-being; and on feelings of being loved as a fundamental basis for human flourishing (Honneth, 2009; Winnicott, 1971). The love on offer, however, may not be good enough, and survival can come at the price of self-annihilation, if the other, for instance, has constantly to be appeased. Honneth adds the sociocultural into these more intimate dynamics of self-recognition. This includes the role of groups in providing self-respect, in making people feeling accepted and that they belong, with rights and responsibilities. Self-esteem, Honneth's third category of self-recognition, can then be nurtured when individuals feel recognized as making important contributions to a group's well-being, which provides a potential to better recognize others (Honneth, 2007; 2009); a potential but not an inevitable one, as we observe below.

There is, as noted, an important historical dimension to the paper. I re-engaged from 2008 onwards, in the light of the distress in the city, with the historical contribution of workers' education in Stoke and revisited my own writing from the 1970s. The late nineteenth century witnessed, in Britain, the foundation of many organizations devoted to educating men and women for active participation in political and, increasingly, social democracy (Tawney, 1964). However, some historians concluded that workers' education of a non-politically partisan kind, in alliance with progressive elements in universities, served to neuter and de-radicalize working-class students. From this perspective radical autodidactic passions were channelled into the calmer, more respectable waters of university learning and a hegemonic national culture. Workers' education, in such terms, served official state policy, and was correspondingly funded. Thus its role was about far more than the dispositions of individual teachers and students: it was functionally conservative in relation to the established order. This was powerful criticism and in diluted form I was a critic (West, 1972; 2016).

4 Islamism in the city

People of South Asian origin had settled in Stoke from the 1960s onwards. They mainly came from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and now make up about 50 per cent of the city's ethnic minority population. In 2011 they numbered just over 9000 (Burnett, 2011), at a time when the city's white population had been in decline. In one district in the north of the city, over 30 per cent of its residents are from ethnic minority communities (Burnett, 2011). Some people of South Asian origin talked in the research about disrespect and everyday experiences of Islamophobia: among taxi drivers, for instance, told too frequently to 'fuck off home' by their white clients. This sense of everyday disrespect was amplified by stories of actual physical violence: particular Asian people had been killed or injured and mosques damaged. Such a reality can produce insecurity, vulnerability and defensiveness – paranoia even – and reinforces the tendency for people to congregate in particular areas among their own.

Islamic fundamentalism has attracted certain young people in specific mosques. Small numbers, perhaps, but they do exist. The groups offer recognition but this is then followed by scapegoating narratives and the stereotyping of difference. The perception of others becomes a self-motivated distortion accompanied by an idealization of self and one's own culture. There is, as noted, a psychological splitting between 'good' and 'bad', in which unwanted parts of one's own personal and collective identity – the pursuit of material wealth or pleasure, for instance, or the sexualisation of women or a capacity for violence – are projected onto the other of, say, the white working class estate. Such groups, however, also provide meaning, purpose, identity and recognition in lives. They offer compelling, if warped, narratives of what the problem actually is: it is the other.

Culturally, as occupational structures have fractured, relationships between the generations suffer too, as male initiation rituals between fathers and sons, in the workplace, are lost. Narratives of the 'Christian' neglect of white Muslims in the Bosnian conflict, in contrast to the 'Christian' (that is Russian Orthodox) support for the 'Christian' Serbs, also filled some of this economic and intergenerational vacuum. In the 1990s actions by the West, standing back as Muslims were slaughtered, as at Srebrenica, were essentially seen as anti-Islamic rather than racist, given that the Muslims were white. Certain young people inwardly digested stories of Muslim humiliation, collective trauma and 'Christian' hostility, and a need to fight back. This was then fuelled by the toxicity of Islamophobia.

A community leader, who I call Aasif, (the names used are pseudonyms) talked about some of the above:

> … you had groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir taking advantage of the situation in Bosnia … with what's happening with the Muslims ... arms not being allowed to get to the Muslims to defend themselves where Russia is providing the Christian Serbs; it was a them-against-us kind of debate with groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir … talking about the male Muslim section of Muslim community at that time; the youth, low education achievement, low aspiration … no job opportunity… perfect audience… you can recruit easy

... It's nothing to do with the colour of your skin; this is not racism; this is a target on the Muslim community because these Muslims are white … I can remember some of these Hizb ut-Tahrir members who in the early '90s, pulling the youth away from the parents as well …

From this perspective, Bosnia was a trauma in which scales fell from the eyes: it led to increased politicization and provided a mythic rationale for fundamentalism (Varvin, 2012). A group like Hizb ut-Tahrir (or Liberation Party) – حزب التحرير, in the Arabic – could exploit such feelings. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international pan-Islamic political organization commonly associated with the goal of all Muslim countries unifying into one Islamic caliphate, ruled by sharia law. Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1952 as part of a movement to create a new elite among Muslim youth. The writings of the group's founder, Shaikh Taqi al-Dine al-Nabahani, lay down detailed descriptions for a restored caliphate (Ruthven, 2012).

5 Raafe

I will use narrative material from individuals close to particular jihadists. I paint a portrait of someone I call Raafe, a quasi-fictional composite derived from multiple narratives. Raafe – which in Arabic means companion – was radicalized and sought to radicalize others. Particular mosques provided space for him, apparently without the elders or imams knowing. They became in effect, locations for pedagogy of a fundamentalist kind.

Another community leader, Aatif, told me about the weaknesses of mosque management and how this was exploited by Raafe and others. Raafe, I was told, was an individual 'who had a very troubled upbringing'. He along with other 'radicalizers', as they were called, targeted young people:

… Raafe didn't have a very good relationship with his father ended up in crime … was sent down to prison … Came out of prison and he was within a few weeks, he was, he had transformed into somebody who was a practising Muslim now to hear him … later on when we realized he was part of Hizb ut-Tahrir, but at that point to see somebody change so dramatically was wow, he made a real positive change ... you couldn't explain to your parents why you wanted to … your parents who came in the early '60s … came when they were young … so very little … religious… education … so they didn't have…opportunity to question the imams and learn something; so they couldn't pass that religious knowledge on to the youth, to their children; so the parents relied upon the mosques to offer that … so that's where the communication barrier helped groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir. We can offer you Islamic information in your language, that's what attracted a lot of people in Stoke-on-Trent on topical issues …

Radicalization transformed the lives of some individuals, providing meaning, purpose and self-recognition. Raafe's own transformation could well have depended on feeling understood, listened to and respected – recognised in short – by radical groups in prison

The pedagogy of radicalization seems to work by emotional, imaginative appeals to the past constructed in the light of the present. It involves stories and appeals to action, rather than textual hermeneutics. Narratives of twelfth-century victories supported a call for similar jihad now, one requiring toughness and heroism. Jihad, or struggle, becomes constructed as a heavy responsibility that requires toughness, even brutality. The victory of the Muslim armies, led by the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, against the Crusaders in the twelfth century's Battle of Hattin, is interpreted as the outcome of a long process of small-scale, hard hitting attacks in various locations. Past struggles get reinterpreted in the light of the present in the struggle against the new crusaders of the West and its client states; against the army of Rome, as it is described. Heroism and martyrdom are called for in what is a very different pedagogical process from rational, textual analysis of the Qur'an. Muslim clerics may speak in the language of theory; the jihadi groups act through stories and doing (Hassan and Weiss, 2015).

6 Workers' education

Workers education once thrived in the same city. The first ever university tutorial class, of the kind mentioned above, took place there in 1908, when 30 or so worker students met each Friday evening over a period of years with their tutor, R.H. Tawney, a subsequently distinguished economic historian, representing the University of Oxford. The classes were free from prescribed curricula, and its members could explore issues in their working lives from the perspectives of history, politics, economics and literature. Fortnightly essays were required, and the standard of some of these was high, although by no means all (West, 1972; Goldman, 1995). There were no formal examinations or qualifications due to a desire to eliminate competition and vocationalism from the classroom (West, 1972; Rose, 2010). The Marxist Social Democratic Federation made up the nucleus of students who were

potters, miners, clerks, shop assistants and school teachers. Many students were from non-conformist religious backgrounds, from families, in short, that encouraged them to think for themselves. The Marxist Social Democratic Federation made up the nucleus of the students. The Social Democratic Federation was formed in 1884 and was led by a businessman named Henry Hyndman. The Federation was strongly opposed to the British Liberal Party of the time, and its programme was progressive, calling for a 48-hour working week, the abolition of child labour, compulsory free secular education, equality for women and the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange by a democratic state.

Tawney himself thought the tutorial class 'movement' and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) a successful 'experiment in democratic education', which had a profound influence on the development of British social democracy. According to Tawney, the WEA was founded on three core principles. First, the opposition to revolutionary violence: 'one may not do evil that good should come', in Cobbett's dictum of a century before. Second, no institution, however perfect in conception, could be made to work effectively by individuals whose morality was inadequate. Third, where a sound morality was lacking, this could be forged in a community of scholars seeking truth and the common good (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). There was an Aristotelian ideal at work here, as well as Oxford idealism (Goldman, 1995), an ideal of the fully developed person living in communities, building and sustaining virtue – communities cultivating not self- but other-regardedness, collectively directing themselves to higher aims than the purely egotistic or narcissistic (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). The idealists at Oxford who influenced Tawney - opposed to individualism, utilitarianism and social atomism - drew on German philosophers, especially Kant and Hegel, and the notion that individuals can only be understood and realize their potential in the collective. Men and women were part of social and political communities from which they could not be divorced for analytic or practical purposes. They were linked together by values and institutions rather than simply webs of economic relationships.

Tawneyite ways of thinking became unfashionable after the Second World War. He himself had doubts about the tutorial classes, not least the intellectual and emotional effort required from the worker students. Tawney was also far from a naïve idealist and there were 'limits to his moralising', as Laurence Goldman notes (Goldman, 1995: 160). He was also aware that the same spirit of non-conformity that drove some of the worker students could also narrow viewpoints and bring a tendency to over-proselytize that made it difficult to take on board different perspectives.

Jonathan Rose's recent historical work has rescued Tawney and workers' education from the condescension of posterity (Rose, 2010). Rose, drawing on diverse forms of life writing, chronicled the importance of relationship and recognition in workers' education: between tutors and students, among students, but also in relation to the symbolic world, in challenging bigotry and fascism, for instance, and for cultivating agency at an individual and collective level. Such education offered working-class people avenues into leadership roles in local and national politics, and served to radicalize and motivate them in personal as well as political ways. Surveys of the students showed that most were taking part in trade union activity, cooperative societies, local authorities, religious and political bodies. They were building both a workers' education and also a broader social democratic movement.

7 Space to feel recognised

The classes themselves created space to question and challenge racism and other forms of bigotry in transformational ways. In one telling account, Nancy Dobrin, born in 1914, writes that the study of literature had revolutionary consequences for her. She grew up in a home where learning was not valued, where there was either 'a row or an order'. She read little but later joined a WEA class and read avidly, although she admitted that she went to the class partly in search of a man. Nancy became a writer herself. She described working for a German Jew during the Second World War, wondering what on earth he was doing here and why couldn't people like him go home. Later, in another class, she met her future husband, a German Jewish refugee who described himself as a Christian Communist. This was a relationship formed in the spaces of workers' education, where literature – from Lawrence, Tolstoy and James Joyce – enabled her to question her own bigotry. Such experiences duly shaped her relationships with her children and family, and impelled her to question aspects of their schooling. Agency can take many forms: in the everyday, in families and on the wider democratic stage.

In certain respects, Nancy's story resembles those of later adult students, such as Brenda, in my own research among non-traditional adult students at university in the 1990s (West, 1996). Brenda also found some recognition of self and experience in particular tutors and students as well as in literature. Brenda would relate to fictional characters, such as an abused but resilient woman in a novel by Maupassant. The character, so to speak, became

part of Brenda's internal world through processes of projective identification – finding aspects of self in the fictional or actual other – and imaginatively experiencing their lives and internalizing some of their strength and resilience. These dynamics can be incorporated into a more developed, nuanced theory of recognition, one embracing the imaginal and the symbolic, and which actively engages emotion as well as mind. It also suggests a developmental rather than fixed self, more open to recognition by teachers, as well as feeling recognised in the symbolic and imaginative domain. Like Nancy, Brenda learned to play with ideas and feel valued for it. She also learned, like many other adult students, a more democratic sensibility in the tutorial classes and later, which they describe in their own words (West, 1996; Rose, 2010: 274–5).

8 Dogmatism and its roots

But dogmatism existed in the tutorial classes too, rooted no doubt in human fragility. It is interesting that the worker students frequently admired tutors like Tawney, who remained steadfast as well as respectful even when harangued by a fundamentalist student. We can think of fundamentalism, like its variant Islamism, as ordinary – when we feel out of our depth we may grab at things that seem to offer narrative certainty, an answer to everything. Leftist fundamentalists sometimes from the Social Democratic Federation and later the Communist Party, though not exclusively so, would quote from texts like Das Capital with religious fervour. The other students admired how Tawney remained respectful in the face of agitation. One recalled a particular Marxist – the SDF could dominate the first tutorial classes – challenging point after point and referring to classic Marxist texts. Tawney took it in his stride but insisted that there were other points of view. The student accused the tutor of hopping around from twig to twig, like a bird, and a sense of bad temper pervaded the room. Tawney insisted that everyone, including his challenger, take tea together afterwards and tell stories, read poetry and sing songs. This enabled the group to re-establish some shared humanity and fraternity (Rose, 2010: 266).

It is worth noting that a wider reevaluation of Tawney's contribution to theorizing the role and practice of inclusive university education as a basis for more effective political democracy and building social solidarities is taking place (Holford, 2015; Goldman, 2013). Tawney emphasized the moral and spiritual in human betterment, and this could be embodied in the tutorial classes in ways that inspired wider communities and ideas of fellowship and service more generally. The aim of the tutorial classes was to make university education available to all people in their own localities: very different to today's assumptions about the purpose of higher education for individual social mobility. Tawney was committed to a liberal and humane view of education for everyone, where citizens could acquire civic qualities and understanding in the struggle to create forms of social cooperation and mutual understanding rather than conflict and violence. Holford suggests that Tawney offers a localist critique to the current emphasis on developing global skills and mobility. Communities should not be privileged or discounted because of their wealth or poverty and universities should be active agents in communities via, for instance, adult education. Moreover, Tawney represents a more constructivist view of knowledge: the classes were classes, not lectures, and ideas were explored and developed in discussion. The processes of education were democratic – students engaged in research and discovery by using original source material like historical documents, rather than being the passive recipients of received wisdom (Holford, 2015).

9 Conclusion: developing a theory of self-recognition

The research helps to develop Honneth's concept of recognition and to illuminate the role of the group as well as more intimate processes in creating what we might term loving, reciprocal relationships and, in certain cases, a spirit of openness and reciprocity towards the other. In the tutorial classes, people talked of feeling respected, listened to and understood as well as legitimate in the academic world; we could call this a process of self-recognition working at intimate emotional, relational as well as cognitive levels. Self-respect and self-esteem were generated which strengthened the capacity for recognising others and for building an ethos of rights and responsibilities and solidarity across difference. The classes provided emotional, narrative and intellectual resources for agency in both intimate space and a wider social world; not for everyone, but for significant numbers of participants. The dynamics of recognition and its democratizing spirit resonate across the narratives and speak to us at a time when representative democracy seems fragile and xenophobia gets stronger.

But recognition, and feeling cared for and understood, can lead to destructive ends. Raafe, it seems, felt cared for in prison, his struggles and troubles were recognised and new narrative resources made available. He was enabled to work among other alienated young Muslims, to care for them (he ran youth groups). They no doubt felt recognised in turn, by someone they admired, because he spoke to their concerns, with an apparent authority and he had also travelled abroad in the struggle against enemies of Islam. Other young Muslims undoubtedly found

self-recognition in the groups Raafe helped create and also in internalising new narratives that made connections over time, between their own anxieties and those of Muslims in the past. Narratives that explained suffering and the need for heroic struggle against crusaders, as earlier generations of brothers had done. Such dynamics, however perverted, provided potential existential meaning and the promise, even, of entry into Paradise. The Islamist groups nurtured self-respect and esteem too, but alongside hatred of the other, destroying the possibility of new forms of dialogue and inclusive social solidarity.

I suggest that a developed theory of recognition should include appreciation of our shared vulnerability and a common need for love, affirmation, respect, esteem and narrative connections. Dependency is hardwired into us in what the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein called memory in feeling: our effort to transcend the anxiety associated with separation processes requires loving but challenging relationships. Such primitive dimensions of recognition may play out in later life, in a struggle to make a point in a tutorial class, (many students talked of their struggles to feel accepted), or to feel accepted in a Jihadi group. Processes of recognition encompass largely unconscious, emotional as well as wider social dynamics and cognition. Workers' education once afforded ordinary people self-recognition, by being understood, and with the right to be heard and fully participate; and to be respected and listened to as mature and capable people. And because their wider contribution to the group and community were also recognised, self-esteem might flow. Recognition, to repeat, is more easily given when we ourselves feel recognized. Honneth's idea of recognition is not about having a good opinion of ourselves but rather emanates from the feeling of a shared dignity of persons who are morally responsible agents, capable of participating in public deliberation and action, for better as well as worse. John Dewey (1969) additionally offers a crucial insight into the good and less good group: the former is open to diversity and otherness, including narratively; the latter is ultimately closed and calcified in allusions of total truth and purity.

Dewey also observed that the good citizen requires democratic association so as to realize what she might be: she finds herself by participating in family life, the economy and various artistic, cultural and political activities, in which there is free give and take. This fosters feelings of being understood and creating meaning and purpose in the company of others. Dewey suggests that good and intelligent solutions for society as a whole stem from open, inclusive and democratic types of association. In scientific research, for instance, the more scientists can freely introduce their own hypotheses, beliefs and intuitions, the better the eventual outcome. Dewey applied this idea to social learning as a whole: intelligent solutions are the result of the degree to which all those involved in groups participate fully without constraint and with equal rights. It is only when openly publicly debating issues, in inclusive ways, that societies really thrive (Honneth, 2007: 218–39). When groups close themselves off to the other and otherness, as in the fundamentalist or racist group, social fragmentation increases and prospects for learning democracy shrivel.

References
Alexander, T. (2014) The Pedagogy of Power: Learning for democracy. Online. www.citized.info/pdf/commarticles/Pedagogy of Power-IoE-v2.2.pdf.
Auestad, L. (ed.) (2012) Psychoanalysis and Politics: Exclusion and the politics of representation. London: Karnac.
Austed, L (2014) Nationalism and the Body Politic. London: Karnac.
Biesta, G. (2011) Learning Democracy in School and Society: Education, lifelong learning and the politics of citizenship. Boston: Sense.
Burnett, J. (2011) The New Geographies of Racism: Stoke-on-Trent. London: Institute of Race Relations.
Dennis, A. and Halsey, A.H. (1988) English Ethical Socialism: Thomas More to R.H. Tawney. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Dewey, J. (1969) 'The ethics of democracy'. In Boydston, J.A. The Early Years of John Dewey. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
Fieldhouse, R. (1996a) 'Mythmaking and Mortmain: A response'. Studies in the Education of Adults, 28 (1).
Flemmen, H. (2014) 'Fundamentalism, Nazism and inferiority'. In Auestad, L. (ed.) Nationalism and the Body Politic. London: Karnac.
Freidman, B. (2013) Democracy Ltd: How money and donations corrupted British politics. London: Oneworld Publications.
Goldman, L. (1995) Dons and Workers: Oxford and adult education since 1850. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Goldman, L. (2013) The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and history. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
Goodwin, M.J. (2011) New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party. London: Routledge.
Hassan, H. and Weiss, M. (2015) ISIS: Inside the army of terror. New York: Regan Arts.

Holford, J. (2015) 'Adult and higher education in the early work of R.H. Tawney'. In Standing Conference of University Teachers and Researchers in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) *It's all Adult Education.* Paper presented at a conference held at the University of Leeds, 7–9 July.

Honneth, A. ((2007) Disrespect: The normative foundations of critical theory. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Honneth, A. (2009) Pathologies of Reason: On the legacy of critical theory. New York: Columbia University Press.

Merrill B. and West, L. (2009) Using Biographical Methods in Social Research. London: Sage.

Rice, M. (2010) The Lost City of Stoke-on-Trent. London: Frances Lincoln.

Rose, J. (2010) The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes. 2nd ed. New York: Yale University Press.

Ruthven, M. (2012) Islam: A very short introduction. Oxford: University Press.

Tawney, R. (1964) The Radical Tradition. London: Penguin.

Varvin, S. (2012) 'Islamism and xenophobia'. In Auestad, L. (ed.) Nationalism and the Body Politic. London: Karnac.

West, L. (1972) 'The Tawney legend re-examined'. Studies in Adult Education, 4, (2): 105–119.

West, L. (1996) Beyond Fragments: Adults, motivation and higher education. A biographical analysis. London: Taylor and Francis.

West, L. (2007) 'An auto/biographical imagination: The radical challenge of families and their learning'. In

West, L., Merrill, B., Alheit, P. and Siig Andersen, A. (eds) Using Biographies and Life History Approaches in the Study of Adult and Lifelong Learning. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang.

West, L. 2009) 'Families and their learning: An auto/biographical imagination' In Jarvis, P. (ed.) The Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning. New York: Routledge.

West, L. (2016) Distress in the city; racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education. London Trentham/UCL Books.

Winnicott, D. (1971) Playing and Reality. London: Routledge.