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SLIDE 3

For over seven years I have worked with young people from the third-generation Pakistani/Punjabi diaspora in East Lancashire, communities – (quoting Michelle Fine) in the long shadow of exclusion and humiliation cast by national policies designed to protect ‘us’, and to ask who is (and is not) ‘us’.

In January 2012 I instigated an informal education youth work and community development process working with twenty 14-15 year-old young people from this diaspora community. Funded by the European Commission, the intention and plan was initially to facilitate six weekly global youth work sessions with an aim to raise public awareness within the diaspora community of the causes of poverty and conflict in their local communities and in Pakistan, and to mobilise public support for development processes through youth-led actions.

The young people took ownership of the process and wanted to explore issues of poverty and conflict personally, locally and globally further, wider and in more depth. They wanted to look at other issues of importance to them and their community and to take action. I have been working with eight iterations of the group ever since as the primary basis of global youth work is that of education for social change, working towards making change in individuals, nations and our global society.

Over the subsequent seven years some 140 young people have planned and delivered community-based events and actions on a variety of topics including Islamophobia; peacebuilding and Hate Speech. They have travelled to Pakistan to engage with young people, policy makers and the media; met with Foreign Office officials; and designed anti-Hate Speech apps at Google’s London Headquarters. Currently the eighth iteration of the youth group, will be sharing their stories and perspectives with you.

SLIDE 4

Grounded in this ongoing work, the intention for this presentation is to explore the potential for Youth Work processes to provide empathic spaces for young Muslim people to discuss radicalisation, religious ideology, identity and domestic and foreign policy safely.

As background, I have over sixteen years global youth work experience, working with some of the most marginalised young people in the UK and globally. This in turn builds on over 26 years community development and development management experience including working with Bradford Council for Mosques and managing a large inner-city community centre in Bradford.

In working with young people at the margins, the most pertinent issues are often those most problematic in relation to the state and law. Youth work informal education approaches provide opportunities to discuss, debate and challenge. The work requires an inherent understanding of young people's perspectives, and of their multiple identities and experiences.

SLIDE 5

The UK Government's dominant macro-discourses on terrorism have a micro-impact on young Muslim people. The 'political shibboleth' 'Radicalisation', is institutionalised at the heart of the government's 'official narrative on the causes of terrorism' and the UK's response, the Prevent strategy which is 'widely mistrusted', and criticised for its reliance upon the invention of radicalisation and related unstable knowledge about transitions to 'terrorism' – a racialised national policy 'designed 'to protect "us," and to ask who is (and is not) "us."'

As Michele Fine (2018) asserts in *Just Research in Contentious Times. Widening the Methodological Imagination*, 'there is a tragic irony in the belief that more discrimination against, and exclusion of, any Othered group keeps the rest of "us" safe. To the contrary, our evidence suggests that the more discrimination and exclusion young people experience, the more they feel alienated, disconnected, and disengaged. Then no one is "safe."' (p.23). An example of Fine's 'heavy footprints of policy' (Fine, 1994, 2006 in Fine 2018, p.80), Prevent's fixation on ideology has 'far-reaching consequences for issues of trust between young Muslims' (Zaman, 2014).

As Baroness Warsi asserts, 'Their Muslimness not their Britishness became their defining identity – perhaps the only identity they were going to be allowed'. New 'Folk Devils' (Cohen 1972), a young generation of British Muslims is developing that feels increasingly disaffected, alienated and bitter. In seeing themselves as defined en bloc as a risky suspect population (Mythen et al 2009), a young generation of Muslims is developing that feels increasingly disaffected,

alienated and bitter, frequently voicing their 'frustration, stigma and anger' (Mythen et al 2009, p.751) at this racialisation.

Human rights organisation Rights Watch (UK) found the Prevent strategy's 'effect on education and students' human rights raises serious concerns' (Rights Watch (UK) 2016, p.4). In 2016 they found 'a sixth-form student reported she was 'scared to speak out because the promotion of "British values" made her worry that she might say "something too extreme or someone might misunderstand ... and report you to Prevent"'.

An east London teacher reports young people, 'are scared to talk openly with adults now ... 'I have got no doubt that Prevent isolates Muslim students' substantiating Lister et al's 2015 warning of Prevent's 'chilling effect' on open debate and free speech.

SLIDE 7

Consequently, **Professor Arun Kundnani** calls for the enabling of 'spaces for wide-ranging discussions of religious ideology, identity and foreign policy, particularly among young people who feel excluded from mainstream politics' and this presentation will evaluate the extent to which youth work processes and approaches can create empathic spaces for young Muslim people to engage in such wide-ranging discussions. With a focus on change, a youth work approach will seek to 'liberate' participants to have a greater awareness of their situation in order to promote activism, turning 'frustration, stigma and anger' into peaceful and peaceable actions and a stake in society.

SLIDE 8

Drawing on Fine (2018) Chambers (1997), Freire (1972) and on a reflexive critical consciousness in Pakistani/Punjabi Sufic practice and tradition (Pratt Ewing 1997), how can we enable these spaces to facilitate the dialogue and practical solutions identified by young people?

SLIDE 9

Rooted in a Pakistani/Punjabi context, Pratt Ewing (1997) introduces a reflexive critical consciousness in Pakistani/Punjabi Sufic practice and tradition, not unlike the reflexive critical consciousness found in Freirean conscientização/conscientisation. Within this theoretical space a 'triad of concepts' (ibid., p.4) from literature on the postcolonial subject are realigned:

‘hegemony, consciousness, and the subject’. At the intersection of these concepts people are shaped by discourses and ideologies arising from and in reaction to these (ibid., p.5).

Why work with young people?

Young people are ‘Feel-thinkers’ (sentipensantes) (Glassman and Erdem 2014, p.212), experts ‘exquisitely positioned analysts’ and ‘careful narrators of their own lives’ (Fine 2018, p.27) who live, feel and experience their ‘local, complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable’ (lccdu) personal realities within complex and diverse histories and experiences every day (Chambers, 1997 p.167). In asking ‘whose reality counts?’ (Chambers 1997), youth workers are ‘not afraid to meet the people or to enter dialogue with them’ (Freire 1996, p.21). Naming the world in dialogue with others is indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality (ibid., p.56).

In working with young people at the margins, the most pertinent issues are often those most problematic in relation to the state and law. Youth work informal education approaches provide opportunities to discuss, debate and challenge. The work requires an inherent understanding of young people’s perspectives, and of their multiple identities and experiences. Trust and the ability to communicate at street level is also fundamental, involving an inclusive approach that seeks to work with young people in their own spaces and environments.

SLIDE 10

Youth work is underpinned by a clear set of values. These include

- young people choosing to take part;
- starting with young people’s view of the world;
- treating young people with respect;
- seeking social commitment, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them;
- helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities;
- respecting and valuing differences; and,
- in young people’s personal, social and political development, it is concerned with facilitating and empowering the voice of young people,

encouraging and enabling them to influence the environment in which they live.

The NYA has set out 'ethical and practice principles' Youth workers have a commitment to

- 'contribute towards the promotion of social justice for young people and in society generally'.
- draw attention to unjust policies and practices and actively seek to change them;
- promote the participation of all young people, and particularly those who have traditionally been discriminated against, in youth work, in public structures and in society generally;
- and encourage young people and others to work together collectively on issues of common concern

SLIDE 11

the disparity between

curriculum and **conversation**

is a key distinction between formal and informal education.

As a form of problem-posing education and education for social change the most analogous theoretical foundations can be found in the writings of Paulo Freire (1972) and his central concept of 'conscientização'/conscientisation. Reality, praxis and conscientisation are all interconnected processes. Consciousness reflects upon reality – is reflexive – and acts upon it, sequentially being changed by it.

(Freire slides 13-20)

SLIDE 21

This means for young Muslim people creating a process and a space to tackle the effects of racialisation, to produce change through combined action and transformation at the group and individual levels. It will involve facilitating a process of meaning making, action and activity, of re-engaging and applying the young people's heritage to the present, as vital to sustain liberated identities (Fanon, 1967) - a nodal point where social and personal processes cognisant of broader socio-political processes and their impact on identities come together

(Malik, 2006, p.97) – with youth workers being ‘respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate’ bringing about step-by-step change (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p.130) - a therapeutic space, if you will (Malik 2006, p.97).

The challenges are paradigmatic, reversing the normal view, upending perspectives, seeing things the other way round – ‘with shift of orientation, activity and relationships away from past normal experience [...]

(Chambers slide 22-23)

The challenges are paradigmatic: to reverse the normal view, to upend perspectives, to see things the other way round (Chambers 1997, p.147) – from the formal rules and perspectives of society to the critical perspective of those who have paid the greatest price for ‘normalised injustice’ who live, feel and experience their lccdu realities every day. By explicitly collaborating with marginalised or ‘vulnerable’ others (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007:11), bell hooks (1990) Stuart Hall (1992), Tuhiwai Smith (2012), and others have found ‘meaningful, rich, diverse, interesting lives [...] lived in the margins.’ (ibid. p.205). From a practical perspective this means as an ‘outsider facilitator’ one’s behaviour and attitudes are crucial, including relaxing, not rushing, showing respect, ‘handing over the stick’, and being self-critically aware’. (Chambers 1992, p.1)

Youth work dialogical processes and approaches can enable young Muslim people to engage in these discussions of radicalisation and extremism, of religious ideology, identity and foreign policy – to ‘seek to understand and to theorise from their experiences of struggle against established powers, and to recognise and realise their true interests’ (Butters and Newell 1978, p.44) in a new ‘radical paradigm’ of ‘self-emancipation’ to bring about step-by-step change (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p.130), doing things ‘in new and different ways’ (Fransman et al., 2018, p.2), addressing ‘the end goal’ of helping communities make the world a ‘better place to live.’ (cited in ibid., p.9) - to promote activism, turning any sense of ‘frustration, stigma and anger’ into peaceful and peaceable actions and a stake in society.