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Riots and Reactions: Hypocrisy and Disaffiliation?

Abstract

The August 2011 riots in England occasioned widespread condemnation from government and the media. Here, we apply the concepts of hypocrisy and affiliation to explore reactions to these riots. Initially acknowledging that politics necessitates a degree of hypocrisy, we note that some forms of hypocrisy are indefensible: they compromise integrity. With rioters condemned as thugs and members of a feral underclass, some reactions exemplified forms of corrosive hypocrisy that deflected attention away from economic, social and cultural problems. Moreover, such reactions omitted to attend to the concept of [dis]affiliation amongst young rioters. Accordingly, we look to the role that education might play in re-affiliating those who do not feel they belong to, or have a sufficient stake in, society. Whilst our focus is on the riots in England, the exploration of hypocrisy and affiliation, and discussion of education for re-affiliation, transcends that national context.

Setting the Scene

In August 2011, there was rioting, looting and disorder in England.¹ Following a protest against the police handling of Mark Duggan's shooting in Tottenham, an incident 'sparked clashes which escalated to wide-scale rioting' (Morell et al. 2011, p.4), occasioning 'a massive "London's Burning" style media reaction'. The London Borough of Haringey, which includes Tottenham, is the 13th most deprived borough in England. In January 2011, its council had announced that the budget for youth services would be cut by 75%², eight of its thirteen youth centres would be closed with those remaining under threat (Reicher and Stott, 2011). Support for after school care and employment was also cut. The effect on young people was direct and negative: they felt they had

fewer places to go, they had greater visibility on the streets and they were often the targets of police stop and search. Some felt they did not belong and were not wanted, and local youths warned of riots.³ Those riots occurred and were described by David Cameron, the Prime Minister, as ‘criminality, pure and simple’.⁴ A few days later, talking of the ‘fightback after the riots’, Cameron was confident: the riots were not about race, government cuts or poverty.⁵

Focusing mainly on reactions to the young people involved in these riots, we seek here to understand what was occurring in the riots, asking if forms of hypocrisy inhibited the imperative to look to deeper causes. We are not condoning the violence or disorder: the 2011 riots violated the rights and disrupted the lives of many innocent victims⁶ and we are aware, following Cammaerts (2011), that we may be ‘condemned for making excuses’ for the rioters and deemed to be ‘with the looters’ rather than ‘with the establishment’ for ‘an intermediate position is excluded’. An intermediate position presents additional challenges. Žižek (2011) has condemned both conservative and liberal reactions to the unrest as ‘inadequate’, suggesting that the conflict is ‘at its most radical, the conflict between society and society, between those with everything, and those with nothing to lose; between those with no stake in their community and those whose stakes are the highest’. Our aim here is not to take sides but to put philosophy to work to show how some reactions failed to illuminate the conflict between ‘society and society’ by veiling the riots in a cloak of criminality perpetrated by an ‘underclass’. We outline reactions to the riots to illustrate ways in which these deflected attention away from discomfiting responsibilities, including the need to confront inequalities and attend to those without a ‘stake in their community’ (Žižek, 2011). Such reactions, we argue, served to further distance young people whose sense of belonging was already compromised. Highlighting affiliation as an important function, we propose a key role for education in re-affiliating, or differently affiliating, young people who feel marginalised from society. A focus on inculcating a sense of belonging would, we conclude, represent a less hypocritically corrosive response to the riots than we have seen to date from some commentators.

Initial Reactions

In the aftermath of the riots, there were scant references to inequality, quality of life or wellbeing in any speech by Cameron or like-minded thinkers. Instead, reasons for the riots lay in morally deteriorating families and morally bankrupt communities: the riots were about ‘a culture that glorifies violence, shows disrespect to authority, and says everything about riots but nothing about responsibilities’.⁷ Many politicians and media commentators agreed. These riots were not an expression of alienation or genuine grievance but were about ‘needless and opportunist theft and violence’⁸, not material poverty, but moral poverty and the poverty of ambition.⁹ The rioters came to be described as ‘outsiders’, thugs, hooligans, opportunists, terrorists, mindless jobs, anarchists, morons, idiots¹⁰ and, perhaps most disturbingly, as ‘feral rats’ and members of the ‘feral underclass’.¹¹ Dysfunctional parents, the collapse of marriage, single mothers, rampaging gangs, liberalism and a meritocratic education system, were all blamed for amoral activities.¹² Rioters and looters were symptomatic of a ‘broken society’ and of a ‘slow-motion moral collapse’.

The journalist Peter Osborne (2011) took a different perspective, claiming the rioting could not be dissociated from the moral disintegration of the British governing elite who like the ‘feral youth of Tottenham ... have forgotten they have duties as well as rights’. Whilst moral and ethical standards were to apply to the rioters, businesses had been legally avoiding taxes, MPs had claimed unreasonable and unspent expenses, and the political elite had done nothing to control telephone hacking scandals.¹³ In Osborne’s view there was, after the riots, ‘something very phony and hypocritical about all the shock and outrage expressed in Parliament’. But if hypocrisy is, following Grant (1997, p.33) ‘a pre-eminently political phenomenon’ that cannot be eradicated from political life, can we usefully call the riot responses of our political elite hypocritical? To be called a hypocrite is damning. ‘Hypocrite’ is one of a list of words frowned upon, if not absolutely banned

from use, in the Westminster parliament.¹⁴ To be called a hypocrite is an accusation that speaks of deceit, of false virtue and selfish motives realised at another's expense, in our case at the expense of young rioters.¹⁵ There are, of course, many forms of hypocrisy (Kittay 1982, pp.3-4). Stepping out in a variety of guises, depending on the role to be adopted, or the context in which they find themselves, hypocrites may pretend to be what they are not, masking their true intent, and acting out parts to which they have only momentary allegiance (Szabados and Soifer, 2004). The reactions to the riots that we outline here may well indicate hypocrisy, but the key questions pertain to the consequences of some forms of hypocrisy as a moral issue.

The Necessity of Hypocrisy?

Contra hypocrisy as an absolute negative, Grant (1997, p.180) argues that 'when people act and speak hypocritically ... it is not always such a bad thing' and it is 'possible, after all, to be too good' (p.2). Hypocrisy may also be a necessary political ethic, a necessary and inevitable by-product of equality, respect for autonomy, and claims to respect our common humanity that are required for and enhanced by liberalism (Shklar, 1984; Grant, 1997). Liberalism's diverse conceptions of the good requires tolerance that imposes high demands, rendering politicians prone to more hypocrisy than might pertain in an authoritarian regime in which they could be explicit about difference and what should be done about it. So hypocrisy and insincerity are necessary for liberalism's smooth functioning, allowing us to create and share a public space in which diversity can exist (Runciman, 2008). Moreover, politicians necessarily compromise when conflicts of interest arise amongst people whose assistance and cooperation they require, as governments in times of 'austerity' repeatedly remind us. But to what extent should politicians hold to their moral principles and when is hypocrisy unnecessary and indefensible? Inflexibility, a refusal to compromise, can become a vice, resulting in moral righteousness and censoriousness, rather than in informed critical judgement. In order to gain the electorate's support, politicians must employ rhetoric, flattery and deception (Grant, 1997). In an arena where force and friendship cannot be

relied upon to secure partisan interest, the art of political persuasion will require some deceit. So hypocrisy will be inevitable with politics favouring partisanship over commitment with interests shaping evidence to further the interests of the party: the cause (Hassan, 2006). In our daily dealings with people we must also pretend that social standings are a matter of indifference (Shklar, 1984). We tolerate things of which we disapprove to avoid harsh judgements in public speech, tempering what we say of those for whom we feel disapproval or distrust. On this view, it is salutary that the language of intolerance rushed to the fore after the 2011 riots in epithets such as: ‘feral rats’, ‘scum’ and ‘thugs’.

So, too, education in formal civilities is important: we do not need to correct every injustice or to avenge every insult, preferring instead kindness and stability even when those might lead to a charge of complacent hypocrisy. Of course, prejudice lurks amongst moral efforts at civility and smooth political functioning, and our dependence on people with diverse beliefs and interests guarantees hypocrisy (Grant 1997, p.27). We may conceal our shortcomings, expressing opinions that chime with prevailing norms, while these may not accord with our private beliefs. But an absolutely frank society would be intolerable: if public virtue ceded to private sincerity, we would have to relinquish fundamental tenets of liberalism’s tradition. A diverse conception of the good, and our attempts to believe in that as a good end in itself, would diminish, and those not tolerated by the majority or the political elite might well be harmed. So hypocrisy is an important and a necessary political and social strategy for safeguarding against cruelty and indignity, but it can become an issue of moral concern.

The preferable alternative to an inflexible intolerance of hypocrisy and a rigid adherence to moral principles, following Grant (1997:36) is to behave with integrity. On her account, integrity might well necessitate ‘deception, or ethical posturing’ and whilst hypocrisy, in some forms, may be acceptable and even admirable, she pushes us to question, ‘which kinds of deception, hypocrisy and

compromise are defensible and which are not' (1997, p.2). With some hypocrisy a 'strange homage to virtue' (Rochefoucauld, 1981), all moral acts require a certain literacy to execute them well and this is no less true for hypocrisy. Used illiberally or cruelly, hypocrisy corrodes public morality (Kittay, 1982, p.286).¹⁶ So the imperative becomes not to deny hypocrisy but to ask when it fortifies and when it corrodes. Thus we ask if the reactions to the 2011 riots reveal forms of necessary, judicious hypocrisy, or if they reflect corrosive hypocrisy that compromises integrity and limits the opportunity to map a moral trajectory accepts responsibility and seeks amelioration.

The harm of an action lies only its being known; sins committed by elites are no sins at all.¹⁷

Sincerity is, perhaps, the most prevalent form of modern political hypocrisy. The sincere hypocrite 'adjusts his conscience by ascribing noble, disinterested, and altruistic intentions to all his behaviour' (Shklar, 1984, p.58) and we are familiar with politicians fine tuning sincerity to meet the context. Following the riots, Cameron was keen to assure us of his sincerity: 'I want to make something very clear: I get it. This stuff matters'. Sincerity may be the central 'virtue' of both politics and hypocrisy. Sincere acts, even those resulting in bad outcomes, can, apparently, be redeemed by good intentions but the ethical content of both motive and outcome require scrutiny. If the motive for action is sincere but adjusted to circumstance, this is surely a form of potentially corrosive post-hoc rationalization (Shklar, 1984, p.66) that could be used to purify any conduct or cause. As long as the cause can be claimed as 'moral', can politicians do whatever they choose to serve that cause including, say, supporting stop and search methods which disproportionately affect ethnic minority groups contributing to their sense of disaffection and alienation?¹⁸

There is, additionally, a certain 'glamour' in acting for 'good ends' (Shklar, 1984, p.66). The current budget cuts and welfare reforms in the name of economic recovery and a 'better Britain'¹⁹, are emblematic of the promise of good ends. For Cameron, in the wake of the riots, 'one of the biggest parts of this social fight-back is fixing the welfare system' and he proclaims that his

government can do more by 'toughening up the conditions for those who are out of work and receiving benefits'. Apparently convinced that his reforms will bring good ends, Cameron may be exemplifying a form of sincere hypocrisy in which self-deception plays a role, blinding us to our own faults while condemning those of others (Szabados and Soifer, 2004, p.30). Revealing an absence of doubt with regard to moral character and behaviour, one's own or that of the class or elite to which one belongs, such hypocrites may be so fixated on their own interests that they will miss the 'plainest and most obvious things on the other side' (Butler, 2006, p.429). A concern with self-justification and the palliation of their actions, coupled with their partiality and selfishness, allows sincere hypocrites to behave oppressively or punitively in the name of good ends. A form of 'inward hypocrisy' (Szabados and Soifer, 2004) has come to dominate the modern concept of hypocrisy and is revealed in Cameron's call to confront 'slow-motion moral collapse'.

Exemplifying a positive benefit of hypocrisy, its indication of a public moral standard to which the hypocrite aspires, the reforms Cameron lauds are decidedly not moral for some, rather they are oppressive and punitive, symptomatic of 'a period characterised by a virulent and comprehensive assault not on poverty, but on people experiencing poverty ... constructing them as among the central 'problematic' populations in the contemporary UK' (Mooney, 2011, p.4).

Hypocrisy also lies in the belief that whatever is in the interest of the hypocrite is in the interests of everyone. Such hypocrisy can reflect an assortment of attitudes which, taken together, may amount to insincerity and inauthenticity (Shklar, 1984, p.47). In his post-riot speech, Cameron sought to persuade us that there 'is no "them" and "us" - there is us' but his speech is replete with 'us' and 'them'. We have: 'This is a great country of good people', meaning, one assumes, that 'we', the non-rioters are good and to be contrasted with: 'Those thugs we saw last week do not represent us, nor do they represent our young people - and they will not drag us down'. The speech is peppered with inclusive pronominals, 'we', 'us' and 'our', amplifying the distinction between 'them', 'they' and 'their', and 'we' are the solution. Apparently, too, we also agree on the causes of the riots and

looting: 'what we know for sure is that in large parts of the country this was just pure criminality'. However, 'we' do not all agree. Evans (2011) has suggested that the refusal to look to the impact of government cuts, 'empties politics of everything except a crude form of moralism' which 'can only see the world and its inhabitants as good or evil, the 'scum' who need to be swept from the street or the looters who should be shot'. Thus, she notes, a 'whole new kind of subhuman person is created, a person whose greed or anger or avarice suddenly takes on a uniquely dangerous social form'. Evans also criticizes Cameron for trying to re-create himself as an 'ordinary person' thereby obviating the need to question his wealth whilst Mooney (2011, p.8) suggests that attention should be re-focused on 'the privileges and lifestyles of the rich, whose often problematic and disorderly behaviour attracts little of the antipathy attached to problematic behavior among some of those in poverty'. Not to do so seems hypocritical.

Wary of such a charge, Cameron seeks to pre-empt accusations of hypocrisy suggesting: 'Moral decline and bad behaviour is not limited to a few of the poorest parts of our society' and acknowledging that 'In the banking crisis, with MPs' expenses, in the phone hacking scandal, we have seen some of the worst cases of greed, irresponsibility and entitlement'. Admitting 'we're not perfect beings ourselves and we don't want to look like hypocrites', perhaps Cameron has been hoisted on his own petard. If, as he avows, one 'of the biggest lessons of these riots is that we've got to talk honestly about behaviour and then act', he may need to look closer to home. It is revealing to recall how problematic, disorderly behavior has been handled in the political sphere and to compare this to politicians' calls for handling the rioters. Gerald Kaufman²⁰ asked how the rioters were to be 'reclaimed' by society and Hazel Blears²¹ demanded draconian action. One might ask how we 'reclaim' those such as Kaufman and Blears²², both implicated in the MP expenses scandals, from their own ethical standards. Cameron himself repaid earlier claims.²³ Cameron retained Andy Coulson as his Press Secretary when Coulson's activities became known, on the grounds that everyone deserves a second chance whilst offering no second chances for the August

looters, many of whom received punitive sentences.²⁴ Although he tells us that the ‘restoration of responsibility has to cut right across our society’, the political and elite perpetrators of moral decline are not deemed to be, or treated as thugs or criminals, not for them the ‘Hazel Blears option’ of simply paying back what she had wrongly claimed.²⁵ According to Chakraborty²⁶, ‘the people at the top of some of our biggest businesses have used their positions to extract money, rather than earn it’ and ‘politicians and regulators have connived at this organised looting’.²⁷ We might well ask now who is ‘feral’ in such an environment. Perhaps the issue at stake is ‘not a broken society but a broken state’ (Slater, 2011). Moreover, the riot reactions may be replete with such hypocrisy that the underlying causes and issues of the riots will go unheeded, thereby representing morally corrosive hypocrisy without integrity. The examples cited here illustrate an inequitable distribution of benefits and punishments meted out to people from different classes and professions, along with the asymmetrical distribution of respect and dignity. Combined, they suggest that some people ‘don’t count’ (Reicher and Stott, 2011).

Unwilling to acknowledge that the coalition government’s policies might have contributed to social disorder, it is not surprising that Cameron and his supporters resort to explanations of criminality, a feral underclass, and dysfunctional parenting. Claiming the very word ‘inequality’ always makes UK Conservative politicians feel uncomfortable, Slater (2011, p.113) notes that they will focus, instead, on ‘avoiding social (family) breakdown’ as the means to moral recovery. These are explanations for which the government does not need to accept responsibility: that lies with the rioters. However, research to date tells us 86% of riot participants said they were motivated by poverty, 85% by policing, 80% by government policy, 79% by unemployment, and 41% of those initially charged lived in areas in the top 10% of the index of multiple deprivation.²⁸ Cameron’s moral outrage, along with the indignation expressed by influential commentators such as Melanie Phillips²⁹, arguably misuses morality by denying dignity to the disadvantaged who are morally impugned. Using positions of privilege to morally censure the character of the rioters, such

reactions ignore who the rioters are, where they come from, what their genuine motivations might be. By pointing the finger of blame solely at the rioters, the elites, police and the government are erased. The more complex realities underlying the riots can be disregarded and the responsibility of the dominant groups to the poor, and other social groups, can be evaded. We have over-illumination of one part of an extensive complex that is the riots: the so-called criminality of the rioters. Other factors, including poverty, racial and class grievance, multiple deprivation, police power, a sense of alienation from the mainstream, might help to explain the riots providing a counterbalance to what has been emphasized but such discomfiting possibilities are masked by corrosive hypocrisy. It was easier to condemn than to understand, and there may be good reason for this.

Censorious attacks, as Grant (1997) reminds us, may be indiscriminate, but they allow attackers to feel good about themselves while avoiding responsibility for forces occasioning the condemnation. Shklar (1984, p.5) points to the corrosive effects of non-reflective but sincere hypocrisy in promoting censoriousness as a form of self-protection and self-reassurance: we can all 'wrap ourselves in unreality to protect ourselves against people whom we are not crushing but whom we do not choose to see or to help'. The unseen may be deprived, victims of police harassment, and young people without hope for the future. The hypocritical corrosion begins with a moral pretence that ignores the less than moral activities of the elite, but which turns with fury on those who speak out by rioting. Common morality, interests and standards of behaviour are, of course, important, binding members of a community to one another (Grant, 1997). The rioters may have broken the bonds of this community, but what of the bonds of community broken by bankers, divisive economic policies and elite self-interest? The suggestion implicit in the political rhetoric is that the rioters were not part of the community politic and had broken from, if they had ever belonged to, the community of shared moral values. But how we speak about individuals, groups or communities is important to how we see them and terms of approval or disapproval can determine the character of the act or person (Runciman, 2008, p.30). 'Feral youth' is an epithet of disapproval, placing those

thus described outside the bounds of ‘our’ civilised society and, in so doing, dehumanizing them. So, too, to invoke the concept of ‘underclass’ juxtaposed with ‘feral’ is to allude to a definition that, according to Aponte (1990, p.133) ‘allies itself with the individual-as-cause thesis ... in effect, a class of the poor in poverty by their own hand’ whose ‘problem is behavior and not poverty’ (p.134). Such epithets of disapproval amplify issues of [dis]affiliation, which, we suggest, have become enmeshed in the corrosive hypocrisy of responses to the 2011 riots and the prevailing discourses on marginalised youth.

[Dis]Affiliation?

With a focus on understanding the involvement of young people in the riots, data from the NatCen report, prepared for the UK Cabinet Office, suggests that belonging, ‘having a stake in society’, was a ‘protective factor’: those involved in voluntary and community work had not wanted ‘to trash their own backyard’ (Morrell et al., 2011, pp.45-46). By contrast, a lack of belonging, disengagement from their communities and a lack of interest or cynicism with regard to mainstream politics, was seen as a facilitator of involvement. For some young rioters, ‘making trouble was the only way they could get heard’ and the ‘trigger of boredom and the desire for excitement was linked to a lack of legitimate things to do and places to go’ (p.46). These post-riot findings accord with Wolff and de-Shalit’s (2007, pp.138-140) view of affiliation as a ‘high weight’ functioning which can be ‘both a corrosive disadvantage and a fertile functioning’. The idea of ‘being valued’ is a common denominator, incorporating ‘belonging’ and ‘being understood to be making a contribution’ (p.54). Akin to a ‘protective factor’, Wolff and de-Shalit suggest affiliation acts as ‘a sort of immunization’, enabling people to cope better ‘with threats and risks to their functionings’, to be more optimistic with respect to life chances and positive change, and to feel ‘much more self-assured about their ability to handle negotiations with the authorities’ (p.139). Claiming comparable import for affiliation, Nussbaum (2011, p.39) affords it ‘a distinctive architectonic role’ organizing

and pervading all central human capabilities in her Capabilities Approach. Nussbaum's affiliation includes recognizing and showing concern for other people, being able to imagine the situation of others, 'having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation, and being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others' (2011, p.34).

Not only might a lack of affiliation have featured as a contributing factor to involvement in the riots, but ensuing reactions may have entrenched feelings of disaffiliation. Many reactions failed to exhibit recognition or show concern for the rioters as human beings and the voices of the government and its allies did not demonstrate their capacity to imagine themselves in the situation of those engaged in protest, looting and violence. They were vociferous only in their condemnation, disaffiliating rioters from their bases of self-respect as dignified beings and casting them as other from 'those like us'. Responding to the Justice Minister's statement that a 'hardcore of rioters came from a feral underclass'³⁰, Lister comments: 'What better way to alienate further those involved in the riots than to dismiss them as members of a "feral underclass"'.³¹ Reactions, as noted, frequently took the form of othering, dehumanizing and out-grouping.³² The de-humanizing of the rioters may have reflected politicians' and journalists' regard for them as inferior and so amenable to impositions of power and control that sought to punish rather than to understand. For what is there to understand of subhuman, feral beings whose actions and emotions are alien?

Attention to the actions and feelings of the young people who rioted might reveal their own desire for a sense of power, an opportunity to dominate and to be in control as part of an out-group at odds with the those they deem responsible for their sense of injustice. The 'Reading the Riots – Investigating England's Summer of Disorder' Report³³ notes that emerging most strongly from interviews with rioters 'is a longburning frustration and anger with the police' (p.19). Black and Asian rioters especially, though not exclusively, expressed anger and resentment at the frequency with which they were stopped and searched, and at the lack of respect the police afforded them. Yet

the Prime Minister had been unequivocal: the riots were not about race, government cuts or poverty. By denying the effects of systems and institutions on people and yet referring to the negative dispositions of rioters, it becomes possible to ignore how institutions perpetuate indignity, feelings of low self-worth and alienation. The Guardian/LSE Report maintains that a ‘consistent theme emerging from the experiences of the rioters ... was that they harboured a range of grievances and it was their anger and frustration that was being expressed’ and ‘the term that kept cropping up was “justice” ’(p.24).

If people feel their culture is ignored or devalued, this can result in significant tensions, backlashes, conflict and resentment: those who feel isolated can ‘fall through the cracks of an orderly system’ (Buonfino, 2007, p.6). The disaffiliated may seek alternative forms of belonging in which ‘they can channel their feelings of injustice and rediscover their identity by becoming members of “enclaves”, gangs, extremist groups’ (p.11), groups that do have a ‘strong sense of belonging based on an ‘us’ and ‘them’ division, often leading to some degree of hostility towards the outside world’ (p.10). Rioting and looting may have offered a sense of belonging, an identity, however transient and precarious, as discernible in the comments of one 16 year old rioter and looter.

Everyone started joining in, different sides, different parts of town ... There weren't no gangs. I didn't know no one there, but we all got together that day, the Asians, the blacks, the whites. It felt like we were like one big gang. We took over Birmingham. Normally we don't get along. [But] we weren't fighting each other, we were fighting the police. ... What I really noticed that day was that we had control. It felt great. We could do what we wanted to do. We could do as much damage as we can, and we could not be stopped ... Normally the police control us. But the law was obeying us, know what I mean? (Guardian/LSE 2011, p.24)

The Guardian/LSE report notes only 51% of interviewees felt part of British society compared with 92% of the population and ‘what came across was a profound sense of alienation’ (pp.24-25). If, as appears to be the case from emerging data, many of the young rioters had a sense of disaffection and disaffiliation, and if such feelings contributed to the lawlessness and violence that ensued, then surely a reaction to those rioters must seek to re-affiliate them.

A Role for Education?

For Cameron, the ‘next part of the social fight-back is what happens in schools’. He proclaims that good schools ‘expect high standards from every child and make no excuses for failure to work hard’, they ‘foster pride through strict uniform and behaviour policies’ and show ‘how anyone can get up and get on if they apply themselves’. The reality of schooling for many of the young people involved in the riots may be very different from that experienced by Cameron and some of his colleagues. Two-thirds of the young people in court following the riots had some form of special educational need, compared to a 21% national average, more than a third had been excluded from school during 2009-2010 and more than one in 10 had been permanently excluded.³⁴ We know that many young people think they do not belong in schools³⁵ with Hilton’s (2006, p.295) research painting a bleak picture of how they feel: not respected, actively disliked, targeted and alienated ‘from the key adults who embodied the values and priorities of mainstream school’. Interviewees in the NatCen study following the riots, suggested Educational Maintenance Allowance³⁶ cuts were ‘part of the wider negative message being sent to young people’ and there was a ‘gap between media images of “the good life” to which people should aspire, and what young people in their communities could actually have, given the poverty of income and opportunity’ (Morrell et al., 2011, p.48). Frequently excluded from school and pessimistic they would enjoy better futures, these young people show little affiliation with Cameron’s ‘Big Society’.³⁷ Some hoped the government would hear the riots as a call to close the gap between the haves and the have-nots. But they did not think this likely.³⁸ Whilst education was still perceived to be ‘the key to the golden gate’ (James,

2011)³⁹, Cameron's 'fightback' solutions for schools and a 'National Citizen Service'⁴⁰ show little evidence of recognition and concern for other human beings by imagining their situations and seeking to treat them as dignified beings whose worth is equal to others (Nussbaum, 2011). Rather, the post-riot reaction of the government looks reminiscent of Wacquant's (2011, p.2) scenario of 'putting the marginalized fractions of the postindustrial working class under stern tutelage guided by moral behaviourism'. The UK Secretary of State for Education stressed the urgency of restoring discipline to schools, bemoaning the 'slow, and sustained, erosion of legitimate adult authority in this country' and arguing that the 'only way to reverse this dissolution of legitimate authority is step-by-step to move the ratchet back in favour of teachers' who 'are there to be respected, listened to, obeyed'.⁴¹

A more appropriate fightback might entail acknowledging that society may be unfair and exclusionary in its treatment of young people. The young surely cannot be held accountable for 'broken Britain' any more than the poor. Proffering solutions based on a narrow view of what is acceptable, a view that conforms to a rigid understanding of behaviour and morality, that in itself is hypocritical, seems unlikely to foster the sense of belonging, the affiliation, so urgently needed. Designed to be consistent with pupil's needs, Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence has the potential to offer a more promising alternative. Affiliation is embedded in a school ethos in which pupils 'should be encouraged to contribute to the life and work of the school ... to exercise their responsibilities as members of a community' with 'opportunities to participate responsibly in decision making'.⁴² School staff will be expected to foster 'open, positive, supportive relationships' in which young people 'will feel that they are listened to' and to be 'sensitive and responsive to each child or young person's wellbeing'.⁴³ Such aspirations might more likely foster affiliation than Cameron's call for 'strict uniform and behaviour policies'. However, the challenge of giving young people a voice, of responding to the needs of each child and of developing a more inclusive educational experience for marginalised youth is enormous against the prevailing neo-liberal

backdrop of today's educational agenda. On our account though, the task, however Sisyphean, is to ensure educational institutions seek to understand and respond to the lives of disaffected young people not least because, as noted by Wolff and de-Shalit (2007), in the absence of affiliation, other functionings will become insecure. Stressing that measures to sustain affiliation could significantly help to address other forms of disadvantage, they are clear that 'leaving these people outside society ... is in many cases only a self-fulfilling prophecy: it keeps them outside society, and it renders other functionings insecure, causing them further disadvantage' (Wolff and de-Shalit, 2007, p.159).

In work with young people excluded from mainstream schools, Hilton (2006, p.205) noted their frustration and anger that 'disciplinary structures had failed to successfully investigate the root causes of problematic behaviour'. There are, we suggest, parallels to be drawn here and the root causes of the behaviour of disaffected young people and the sense of injustice some feel deserves attention. Educational institutions can play their part but re-affiliation will necessitate changing hearts and minds. Shklar (1990) suggests there is no clear distinction between 'injustice' and 'misfortune' when public officials are complacent, ineffective or corrupt and turn misfortunes into injustices. Is it a misfortune that many of the young people in the riots lived in deprived areas that had suffered cutbacks and closures of public facilities? Is it a misfortune or an injustice that many held out little hope for a future that would provide them with the consumerist lifestyle that advertisers promote? Excuses of inevitability will not be accepted if the acts of government, the authorities and the media perpetuate or ignore the sources of a sense of injustice. Given citizens' expectations of wealth redistribution and their 'belief in political equality, these citizens would and should vent their outrage upon the established authorities in the hope of at least making them more efficient and careful and less arrogant now and in the future' (Shklar, 1990:3). Accusations of injustice may often be the only resource available to young people who have an interest in equality and fairness, and who want to see those who represent them held to the same standards of responsibility, fault, punishment and rectitude as themselves. What passes for a validated injustice

(police aggressiveness, political indifference, poverty) may result in an invalidated injustice, such as the riots, because they do not match rule-governed and rule-sanctioned behaviour. Such behaviour, whatever its underlying causes, is never sanctioned, is never just, because there are 'victims' who are innocent, law abiding and decent. But the form and content of the claim can miss the point of what it is like to suffer injustice if one is working class, colored, jobless, poor, disenchanted with school and authority.

Immediately, some will charge that many of the youths were rioting, not because they were interested in equality and fairness, but simply because they sought the immediate gratification of consumerist desires and found pleasure in copycat wanton violence. Bauman (2011) has suggested that these riots were a 'revolt of frustrated consumers'⁴⁴ and exploring explanations for the rioters' anger, for what he calls the 'un-planned, un-integrated, spontaneous explosion of accumulated frustration', he claims that 'when looting and burning shops they did not attempt to "change society" – [to] replace the present order with another, more humane and more hospitable to decent and dignified life'. Both Bauman and Žižek return us to issues of affiliation, to a sense of not belonging and of injustice whilst condemning the punitive, if predictable, reactions of politicians and the media. Maintaining that 'the conflict was between two poles of the underprivileged, those who have succeeded in functioning within the system versus those who are too frustrated to go on trying', Žižek (2011) claims that the complexity of the anger fuelling the riots is 'not the violence as such, but the fact that the violence is not truly self-assertive. It is impotent rage and despair masked as a display of force; it is envy masked as triumphant carnival'. If we are to look to the role that education might play in the wake of young rioters' 'authentic rage' then we might, initially, need to appreciate the possibility that they were, in Žižek's words, expressing 'a spirit of revolt without revolution' and that we should, now, 'make the effort to understand the deeper causes of the outbursts'.

If education is to contribute to a response that does look to causes, it will need to avoid, for example, relying on citizenship that falls towards the minimal end of McLaughlin's (1992) minimal-maximal interpretation. Schools may be all too content to maintain the status quo, looking to citizenship education to ensure compliance rather than attending to McLaughlin's maximal interpretation that 'insists that questions relating to substantial identity, to virtues of general focus, to significant participation and to the problem of social disadvantage be seen as relevant to citizenship, not that they be given a particular answer' (1992, p.237). Even then the 'parajudicial concept of morality' (Feinberg, 1970, p.5) may not be an adequate response for the disenchanted who compare their morality with that of the elites and the legal structures that support the maintenance of morality bearing upon not only the rules of conflict, but also upon those who may or may not express anger. Perhaps we need to encourage greater moral scepticism amongst those we teach if we are to enable them to call out in anger against perceived injustices. Patricia White (2012, p.1) has recently argued that 'a democracy cannot dispense with political anger, which has a vital role to play in protecting things of value', suggesting that civic education must 'ensure citizens will not feel apathetic or simply fearful, but angry and possessed of a repertoire of ways of expressing democratic anger' if they believe their democratic values to be under threat.⁴⁵ 'Schools and teachers ... should not attempt to extirpate political anger. But neither should they fan its flames in their students', argues White, calling for a 'robust civic education, within a broad curriculum and a democratic ethos, that encourages a love of democratic values' (2012, p.8). Some would, of course, go further. Giroux (2012), for example, is adamant that teachers have a critical and political role to play in building a more inclusive, just democracy, arguing that they 'will have to focus their work on important social issues that connect what is learned in the classroom to the larger society and the lives of their students', including what he calls 'the current war against youth'. Acknowledging that dissenters will call, instead, for teaching to be politically neutral, Giroux (2012) proffers classrooms as political sites which, simultaneously, eschew indoctrination by teaching 'by example and through dialogue about the importance of power, social responsibility

and the importance of taking a stand ... while rigorously engaging the full range of ideas about an issue'. Giroux's political pedagogy unashamedly positions teachers as public intellectuals, as individuals whose responsibility is not to consolidate and reproduce authority but to question and, if necessary, to disrupt it in order to 'promote critical citizenship and address the ethical imperative to alleviate human suffering' (Giroux, 2012). A turn to such a political critical pedagogy would seek not to include currently disaffiliated and alienated young people into the status quo but to develop 'a dialectical and dialogical process that instantiates a reciprocal exchange between teachers and student... bringing into dialectical relief the structural and relational dimensions of knowledge and its hydra-headed power/knowledge relations' (McLaren, 2000, p.185).

Acknowledge that approaching conflict in classrooms 'is no easy task', Todd and Säfström (2008) have noted that 'democratic education needs to concern itself with practices that not only encourage respect, but that can negotiate through the very troubled relations that often afflict classrooms and schools'. Drawing on Mouffe, including her distinction between antagonistic and agonistic conflicts, Todd and Säfström suggest that, as we have seen so clearly in this paper, moralizing discourse has become the order of the day as a means to deal with conflict and so dehumanize opponents who can be 'cast in terms of evil instead of in political terms that legitimate their adversarial position'. Whilst not aligning ourselves with Todd and Säfström, or Mouffe's critique of rational deliberation and consensus in liberal democracies, our assessment of the voicelessness and disaffiliation amongst young rioters resonates with Mouffe's (2011) view that 'if you don't take the responsibility for different conflicts and struggles to take a political form of expression, then, when these conflicts erupt, they erupt in violent form'. Whether we deploy dialogue for consensus or to manage dissensus, there seems to be broad agreement that we need to listen, to take seriously the views of young people and to 'maintain those institutions through which the division can be expressed, where people can participate in decision-making and have the possibility of making a real choice' (Mouffe,

2011). That might well involve a form of critical pedagogy, following McLaren and Farahmandpur (2005, p.9) that is participatory and creative, that uses a ‘dialogical learning approach’ articulating and locating ‘the underlying causes of class exploitation and economic oppression’ starting from the ‘“real concrete” circumstances of the oppressed masses’ to reconstruct and make ‘the social world intelligible by transforming and translating theory into concrete social and political activity’. From any theoretical perspective this surely means that we should work, in education, to bring young people into society, albeit a different society, seeking every means possible to allow them to belong and to enjoy lives of dignity and self-respect. Whilst the reactions to the riots and talk of broken Britain have demonstrated forms of hypocrisy that Grant (1997, p.181) might well say ‘will always be with us’, hypocrisy must always be regarded with ‘a discerning eye, which requires that we keep those images of integrity that guide our judgment always within our sight’. Excessive outbursts of anger, which conflagrate into riots, might be indefensible but, if we agree that, in liberal democracies, self-respect and dignity are primary goods, we must surely respect, at least consider, other people’s sense of injustice. In Baier’s (1995, p.204) view:

It is no new phenomenon that people grow more reckless of the lives of others as their own lives become more wretched, insecure and intolerable. People who have been dispossessed, degraded, and humiliated, but whose spirit has not been broken, understandably want to proclaim their grievances, whether or not they expect the proclamation to advance their cause.

One remedy for grievance is to seek to understand and ultimately work to remove the grounds for grievance, to re-affiliate those who are aggrieved and feel they have no stake in society or hope for the future. But that will not happen if politicians, commentators or educators fetter themselves to moral indignation, censoriousness and corrosive hypocrisy, and if they ignore the real, everyday lives of those who rioted.

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¹ For locations see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/aug/09/uk-riots-incident-map>.

² http://www.haringeyindependent.co.uk/news/education/8884634.MP_asks_Haringey_Council_to_review_75_per_cent_youth_service_cuts/

³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/video/2011/jul/31/haringey-youth-club-closures-video>

⁴ <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pm-statement-on-disorder-in-england/>. David Cameron is hereafter referred to as Cameron, following the British convention to refer to political leaders by their surname.

⁵ 'PM's speech on the fightback after the riots', 15-09- 2011, <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-on-the-fightback-after-the-riots/>. Please note that unless explicitly referenced, extracts and paraphrases from David Cameron are all taken from this speech.

⁶ 'After the riots', the final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel, suggests that the riots resulted in 5,000 crimes, five fatalities, 1,860 arson and criminal damage incidents, 1,649 burglaries, 141 disorder incidents and 366 incidents of violence against the person. See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121003195935/http://riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Riots-Panel-Final-Report1.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.newstatesman.com/2011/08/police-streets-violence>

⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/08/london-riots-met-promises-more-police-streets>

⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2023898/London-riots-Red-sky-night-Tottenhams-alight.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/10/uk-riots-language?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>

¹¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2011/sep/06/use-of-feral-suddenly-everywhere>

¹² Melanie Phillips at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2024690/UK-riots-2011-Britains-liberal-intelligentsia-smashed-virtually-social-value.html>; Tony Parsons at <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/top-stories/2011/08/13/uk-riots-tony-parsons-the-britain-we-knew-has-gone-for-ever-115875-23340566/>.

¹³ <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/>

¹⁴ See, for example, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/feb/01/prime-minister-questions>.

¹⁵ 27% of rioters in court for public disorder offences were aged 10-17, 26% 18-20. See

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/statistics/criminal-justice/public-disorder-august-11>

¹⁶ Kittay (1982, p.286) considers ‘the corrosive effects of hypocrisy’ suggesting a ‘special threat’ occurs because ‘the hypocrite, in feigning sincerity just when sincerity really matters, undermines the very conception of that to which he pretends, be it piety, virtue or friendship’.

¹⁷ From Molière’s (2000) hypocrite Tartuffe, who keeps his affair with Elmire secret, assuring her ‘The public scandal is what constitutes the offence: sins committed in private are not sins at all’ (p.75).

¹⁸ Reicher and Stott (2011) argue that earlier US, Brixton, Broadwater Farm and the 2011 riots were all sparked by aggressive, brutal police methods and the heavy-handed use of stop and search powers. Some young people in Tottenham spoke of being stopped three times in one day. Between April and June 2011 police stopped people 6,894 times in Haringey, with no conviction in 6,809 cases.

¹⁹ See, for example, Cameron’s ‘Leadership for a Better Britain’ speech, October 5th 2011,

http://www.conservatives.com/news/speeches/2011/10/david_cameron_leadership_for_a_better_britain.aspx

²⁰ Labour MP who tried to claim for expenses that included £8,865 for a television and £1,851 for a rug.

²¹ Labour MP who was accused of avoiding paying capital gains property tax and repaid £13,332.

²² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/mps-expenses/5297606/MPs-expenses-Full-list-of-MPs-investigated-by-the-Telegraph.html>

²³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/18/looters-rioters-mps>

²⁴ For example, a mother of two received a five-month prison sentence for handling stolen shorts and a six-month prison sentence was imposed for the theft of a £3.50 case of water.

²⁵ See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/aug/16/hazel-blears-option-for-looters>, 16/09/2011

²⁶ *The Guardian* Economics Editor.

²⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/09/wrecking-of-barclays-organised-looting>

²⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/dec/09/data-journalism-reading-riots?newsfeed=true>

²⁹ See, for example, Melanie Phillips’ ‘Britain’s liberal intelligentsia has smashed virtually every social value’, *Daily Mail Online*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2024690/UK-riots-2011-Britains-liberal-intelligentsia-smashed-virtually-social-value.html>

³⁰ Ken Clarke, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/sep/05/punishment-rioters-help>

³¹ Ruth Lister in a letter to *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/sep/13/social-deficit-behind-riots>

³² Ben-Ze’ev (2000); Leyens et al. (2000).

³³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/interactive/2011/dec/14/reading-the-riotsinvestigating-england-s-summer-of-disorder-full-report>

³⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15426720>

³⁵ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b018gy4x> ‘Why some teenagers skip school’, 30-12- 2011.

³⁶ An allowance for students remaining in education after GCSEs which closed to new applicants January 2011, see <http://www.education.gov.uk/vocabularies/educationtermsandtags/2451>

³⁷ See <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/big-society>

³⁸ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/05/young-people-2011-summer-unrest>

³⁹ See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/05/young-people-2011-summer-unrest>

⁴⁰ See

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/nationalcitizenservice/a0075357/national-citizen-service> and, for a view of National Citizen Service as ‘an unproven vanity project’ largely founded on David Cameron’s own experiences in the cadet force at Eton see

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/24/national-citizen-service-unproven-vanity-project>

⁴¹ Michael Gove speech at <http://www.michaelgove.com/news/michael-goves-speech-durand-academy>

⁴²

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/understandingthecurriculum/howisthecurriculumstructured/schoolcommunity/index.asp>

⁴³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/06104407/5>

⁴⁴ <http://www.social-europe.eu/2011/08/interview-zygmunt-bauman-on-the-uk-riots/>

⁴⁵ Although White would not necessarily hold young rioters to be ‘politically angry’ if they did not have the ‘appropriate beliefs about the agency causing the harm you are angry about. To have those, you need some understanding of political affairs, to be in other words, politically educated’ (2012, p.4).