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a) Community to be Profiled

The word community is highly ambiguous with many definitions existing for it. One that resonates is: ‘...people have a common attachment, either directly or indirectly via an attachment that they share, for example, to a place or a set of practices’ (Somerville, 2011, p.17). The focus group for this community profile is females aged 15- 16 in Bishops Cleeve; a large village in the borough of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire. This group share the commonalities of age, gender, location and, I suggest, in many cases, experience.

The interest in profiling this community group arose due to a notion, through anecdotal experience, that its members could be somewhat lacking in voice regarding community resources that are available to them. Is there enough for 15-16-year-old girls to access or do? What do they currently use/ take part in? What would they like more/ less of?

It appears an extremely important age in terms of development and contains many challenges: examination pressure, peer pressure and those pressures created by our current society generally; not least the type emanating from the media and social media (Martinson, 2013). I would like to gain further insight into the current picture for this group to see how this suggests they fit into the community and to reveal more about their needs.

b) Purpose of Community Profiles and Methods

Community profiles are generally actioned by: the community itself, a voluntary organisation or a statutory agency; with a varying and often overlapping set of reasons for implementation (Hawton and Percy- Smith, 2007). Whatever the key driver for or who actions a community profile, it is a means of gathering information to develop knowledge and understanding of a community at a specific point in time and can often be used to aid development going forward (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2016). This approach is called a 'bottom up' one as opposed to 'top down', meaning that where people are at now is investigated rather than where we think they should be (Hawton and Percy- Smith, 2007).

Profiles undertaken by communities themselves, community workers or other professional serving local areas are often intended to support and strengthen community capacity, confidence and skills; aiming to impact towards increasing empowerment and agency (Hawton and Percy- Smith, 2007). Therefore, supporting greater strength and independence for members of the community, in order that they can contribute towards positive change themselves; not least by having opportunity to gain greater understanding of issues affecting them (Henderson and Thomas, 2013). Jones and Jones (2002) assert that, for this to be successful, it seems imperative for community members to be involved in all stages of the profile.

As Mayo et al. (2013) explain, voluntary organisations often carry out community profiles to support community campaigns; for example, to prove to service providers and statutory bodies that certain needs in a community are not yet met. Equally, organisations may use profiles to campaign against a local development because of its negative impact on a community. Additionally, this type of research can be a tool to highlight issues of poverty, disadvantage and social injustice existing (Packham, 2000). Frequently, it is a tool used to apply for funding, such as grants.

Statutory services and government programmes generally instigate community profiles to: increase local service accountability via public feedback, support evidence based policy by investigating residents' needs and evaluating what works in communities (Mayo et al., 2013). Although dating back to before this time, the evidence based policy and practice approach has some origins in New Labour's policy focus on social exclusion whereby it was

thought that to improve conditions for disadvantaged communities, a comprehensive picture of that community is needed first (Hawtin and Percy-Smith, 2007). Jones and Jones (2002) argue that not all government/ statutory based research is in fact comprehensive or approached in a way that contributes towards important issues such as community participation or empowerment.

However, whenever possible, gaining a comprehensive view from a profile seems a holistic approach to community analysis as it involves investigating a totality of issues effecting individuals' lives, for example: housing, health, education, income (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2016). This highly resonates, as the different influences on people's individual circumstance interact in such a way that the whole effect seems greater than the sum of the constitute parts (Morin, 2008). Thus, it does not appear possible to have a realistic picture of a community by analysing just one isolated issue as many issues interrelate and impact upon community members' quality of life.

A mix of primary and secondary data is generally preferable for carrying out community analysis for example; interviews with community members, where possible (Hawtin and Percy-Smith, 2007) in addition to data such as census reports and housing and crime figures (Gilchrist ad Taylor, 2016). Moreover, as Mayo et al. (2013) point out, any collection of information should only commence once the purpose, aims and objectives of the community profile are clearly identified so that methods employed match objectives.

Community profiles can serve many useful purposes. Profiles undertaken by community organisations are important as they are generally intended to empower a community to act itself towards positive change and are often used to underpin bids for funding or to apply pressure for improved local services. Government can use profiles for evidence- based practice approaches and to employ a more holistic approach towards issues such as social disadvantage. The method by which profiles are implemented, can have varying effects on the level of successful contribution profiles makes towards community development overall.

c) Data Collection

For the purposes of the profile I intend to collect a mix of secondary and primary data regarding the community and the focus group within. Thus, secondary data wise: statistics regarding the general locality of Bishops Cleeve, statistics specifically related to girls aged 15-16 in this area and national research existing relatable to girls in this group. Primary data will be information I collect myself regarding resources locally and conversations with the focus group to gain their 'perception, attitudes and experiences' (Hawtin and Percy-Smith, 2007, p.58).

The approach of combining methods therefore, collecting secondary and primary data containing both quantitative and qualitative information; is an attempt to collect a rounder, more comprehensive view for purposes of the profile (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2016). However, ideally, if I was researching this group more extensively I would additionally look to interview the local youth club leader, key staff at Cleeve Secondary School and importantly, also extend the feedback and involvement from the group itself by sending out surveys and communicating with a greater range of girls aged 15-16. This would further enhance the primary data and most likely, the overall qualitative nature of the research.

d) and e) Data Presentation and Findings

Population

Bishops Cleeve is a large village with a population of 10,612 (United Kingdom Census, 2011). It is rapidly growing due to many housing developments. The over 65 demographics is larger than average, as is the number of under 16s. Using Cleeve School figures (Office for standards in Education, Ofsted, 2017) as a guide the proportion of the population who are females between 15-16 is approximately 120.

Socio-economic status (Data from UK Census, 2011)

	Bishops Cleeve	Gloucestershire	England
Social Housing	12%	12%	18%
Owner Occupied	75%	70%	64%
Lowest Social Grade by Occupation	19%	22%	25%
Highest Social Grade by Occupation	27%	25%	23%

Figure 1

The data in figure 1 shows a better than average (compared to county and national figures) outlook for Bishops Cleeve socio- economically. However, numbers of pupil premium pupils at Cleeve School are average in relation to national figures thus, contradicting below average indicators in Figure 1 (Office for standards in education, Ofsted, 2017).

National Research

‘Girls’ wellbeing explored’ (Girlguiding in association with YoungMinds, 2016)

62% of girls and young women surveyed aged 11-21 know a girl their age who has experienced a mental health problem.
82% of girls and young women surveyed aged 11-21 think that adults around them do not understand the pressures young people are under.
70% of girls aged 11-16 surveyed feel they have to be ‘perfect’ (stated as often shaped by gender stereotypes, sexism, school work expectations and social pressures).

Figure 2

The research in figure 2 points towards a high level of mental health concerns amongst girls and young women which could be linked to a range of pressures. The 'perfect' notion could, I suggest, mean that girls who appear 'successful' to the outside world, could be achieving this at a cost to or to mask areas of their well-being. Most interesting, is the high figure of girls that feel misunderstood by adults regarding pressures on them.

Review of local Resources

Of the 67 clubs or support groups on the local website (Bishops Cleeve Parish Council, 2017) only 3 are open for attendance by girls 16 or under (Running, Youth Theatre and Cleeve Colts- girls' teams). Therefore, only 4% available for the focus group despite the fact that there is a higher than average under 16 population existing. The vast majority of community clubs and societies appear to be for the much older demographic or for parents and toddlers. However, data does not include any school run activities which girls aged 15-16 may take part in. Additionally, there is a youth club provision via the Parish Council's service level agreement with Community Mentoring Support (CMAS) that runs for boys and girls aged 13 plus on a Monday evening. Situated in a community sports club building on a main road, it is almost a mile out of the centre of Bishops Cleeve (Bishops Cleeve Parish Council, 2017)

Conversations with members of focus groups

Conversations were undertaken with girls aged 15-16, from average socio- economic backgrounds locally. A semi structured approach was employed with four main questions and discussion around; a summary of which follows in figure 3:

<i>What do you currently use/ take part in within the local area; such as clubs, social spaces and sports facilities?</i>
'Enjoy the school music clubs'
'There are place further afield like the Rock Foundry Music Group and volunteering at Cotswold RDA but they are not easily accessible- must take public transport'
'Go to Costa in Tesco but it is expensive and there are also older people and pensioners there; they don't really like teenagers being there'
'Subway has recently opened; more affordable and popular with some but it is very small'

'Public transport to go into town is really good as long as you have the money'
<i>Do you think there are enough facilities for your age group in Bishops Cleeve?</i>
'There is not enough for people who are not interested in hill walking or the cafes'
'I would want there to be more facilities that cater for everyone's likes, not certain minorities.'
'There are things like rangers (scouts) which are run but they are for people who enjoy camping and doing Duke of Edinburgh award type activities.'
'No, because there are a lot of teenagers (a certain type) who walk around the street aimlessly with nothing to do and because they have nothing to keep them occupied, they cause havoc.'
'Some adults and pensioners get angry at teenagers for causing trouble or for just being a teenager however, these same people are not doing anything to prevent it/ creating things to keep teenagers occupied.'
<i>What ideally would you like more/ less of locally?</i>
'More musical activities like a local band.'
'More clubs that offer a greater range of activities (not just sport or music). Maybe also where you can learn more things that you do not get chance to talk about in school.'
'There are a lot of charity shops therefore, could just some of them be modernised to something more useable?'
'Cleeve School have a sports centre open to the public at a cost however, I think students of the school should have more access and a free/ very cheap rate. Would keep teenagers occupied more then and not divide people that are poorer than others. Also, keeping fit promotes health and happiness'.
'Something like a cheaper version of Starbucks would be good so that we could go and socialise and maybe study together and not be constrained to our bedroom all of the time.'
<i>Are you aware of the youth club on Monday evenings at the local sports pavilion?</i>
Most girls spoke with had not heard of any local youth club.
A couple of girls had heard of the youth club but not any specifics and nobody spoken to had attended.
Some girls said they would go along and give it a try but only if there was a session for 15-

16-year olds (no younger age group there).

'Sometimes youth clubs are portrayed as places for challenged youth/ those from a difficult background who need help or occupying to stop them being dangerous. This might put me off going.'

'I think I would go if it was advertised more, if it was more local and at a reasonable time, like a Saturday afternoon and my friends went.'

Figure 3

A plethora of information regarding the focus group is revealed from the conversations in figure 3 including: some level of satisfaction regarding what is on offer locally together with unawareness regarding the youth club (and a possible stigma existing towards attending it). Furthermore, there is a feeling that facilities/ activities available are limited to certain interests and possibly not representational of or inclusive towards the range of 15-16-year-old girls in Cleeve (both interest and individual circumstances). At times, resentment is palpable towards older people who are sometimes seen as unconstructive and lacking in understanding towards young people. Moreover, a sense of unfairness that resources are often geared towards older members of the community; including usage of the sports centre which is attached to their own school. More practical and useful social spaces to get them out of their isolated bedrooms or for some, away from wandering the streets; seems another key point made.

Discussion

The Department for Education (DfE, 2011, p2) states: ‘The teenage years are a critical period of growth and change. They are an important time for making significant life choices and decisions...’ Important therefore for all young people, with Batsleer (2013) claiming that boys have had more than their fair share of attention recently regarding difficulties for them in society thus, pressures relating to girls should not be over- looked in the process. Not least as many reports, including the one in this profile’s data from Girlguiding (2016), suggest that there has been a recent decline in girls’ wellbeing. This could be compounded, at times, by our increasingly marketized, fragmented and individualised society whereby social connections can sometimes be reliant on the internet or via the dubious virtues of social media (Marsh, 2017).

Furthermore, Wenger (2004) claims that engagement in social practices is how we all learn and become what we are hence, recreational opportunities and social spaces in the community are important for a range of young people including teenagers from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Buckroth and Parkin, 2010). However, the data in this profile suggests that the level of resources available for young people in Bishops Cleeve seem disproportionately small. Thus, although a few (often costly) resources exist that the focus group are reasonably happy with, a lack of say is apparent for them regarding what is there. Therefore, a lack of empowerment and agency is suggested and consequently possible disadvantage together with a level of marginalisation (Gilchrest and Taylor, 2016). Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) explain that marginalisation is a complex concept linked to social status and related to a group having less agency and therefore less power to influence their own situation within society than others. They can be treated as less significant therefore, peripheral to the dominant group.

The dominant group in the community is indicated by the profile data as being the much older demographic as they seem to dictate the content of many of the activities available in a rather hegemonic manner. Thus, as Batsleer (2013) describes, the dominant group appears to dictate the purposes and needs of society to reflect only their own values rather than the heterogenous mix of the community they are within. Put this together with the lack of trust and misunderstanding between this group and teenagers, suggested by the data, then it can heighten and make more problematic any divisions and power imbalances that exist. However, As Gilchrest and Taylor (2016 p.63) explain, this seemingly rather rigid

structure in the community could potentially be changed by creating greater agency and empowerment for youth by listening to them more. This could be done without taking away the other group's agency. Thus, seeking what is termed a 'positive sum' or 'win, win' situation where there is movement towards more equality of power for all groups.

To conclude, despite the relatively small-scale nature of the research undertaken, this community profile has identified: information on resources available to girls aged 15-16 in the Bishops Cleeve area; issues that they may face; views, attitudes and feeling they have; some of their general needs and a picture of their position regarding power and agency within the community. I would suggest that it has provided a good starting point from which to consider further analysis of needs and to support action towards development for the focus group and the community.

Word Count 2194

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