

## **'The riots were where the police were': Deconstructing the Pendelton Riot**

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## 'THE RIOTS WERE WHERE THE POLICE WERE': DECONSTRUCTING THE PENDELTON RIOT

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### Abstract

This article explores the social dynamics in the city of Salford at the time of the Pendleton riot, which took place amidst the four days of national rioting that began with the killing of Mark Duggan in Tottenham by the Metropolitan Police Service. Attempting to counter what we see as a dominant narrative of the riots as 'shopping with violence', this article explores the development of the significant disorder in Salford through a triangulation of accounts, including an extensive review of journalistic accounts, alongside interviews from a dozen people who witnessed the riots as police officers, residents and spectators. Beginning with an overview of the events of August 9th 2011, we argue that the deployment of officers in riots gear in the vicinity of Salford Precinct proved provocative, and created a focal point for the widespread antagonism felt towards the police. Furthermore, we suggest that an understanding of local contextual factors is critical both in terms of answering the question 'why Salford?', but also in terms of explaining the ferocity of the violence targeted towards officers of Greater Manchester Police (in contrast to the focus on looting in nearby Manchester city-centre). Interpreting the riots as a response to punitive policing policies that have accompanied state-directed policies of large-scale gentrification, we highlight the degree to which the 'contestations over space' that characterised the riot pointed to an underlying politics of resistance (despite lacking 'formal' political articulation).

### Keywords

August 2011 English Riots; Salford; gentrification; policing; class

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This article attempts to deconstruct aspects of the dominant mythologizing around the August 2011 English Riots. In this dominant framing the riots were constructed as at worst pure pathology ('criminality, pure and simple' in the words of Prime Minister David Cameron) and as at best a sign of the triumph of neoliberal ideology: a perverse attempt by the marginalised to participate in a hegemonic consumer culture. This is a position taken both by a number of scholars (Moxon, 2011; Newburn, cited in Valluvan et al, 2013; Zizek, 2011; Treadwell et al, 2013) on the left (of both the mainstream and 'critical' varieties), as well as by commentators on the right (the historian David Starkey's analysis of the riots as 'shopping with violence').

In a sense it was ever thus; any cursory reading of the history of urban unrest will reveal that initial responses, largely framed by dominant social groups and their institutions, always tend towards delegitimisation, of the events themselves, of the people who constituted them, and of their motivation towards acting. Only with some hindsight, and often following arduous campaigns by more marginal groups to represent themselves, is a fuller understanding of the contexts of and causes for 'riot' achieved. To take just one indication of this, the same Conservative Party that reacted swiftly with condemnation for the 1981 Inner-City Riots *at the time* (Hansard, 1981), can now wax lyrical about the *legitimately* political factors that led to that outbreak of disorder 30 years ago, compared to the 'intensely criminal activities' that supposedly defined August 2011 (see Smith, 2013). Indeed, even decades after the event riots can be recorded for posterity in ways which would bear little resemblance to the realities experienced by their participants: Steven Hirschler (2012) has provided an excellent critique of the dominant renderings of 1958 and 1981 disorders as 'race riots', noting that two-thirds of those arrested in 1981 were white.

Yet it may also be that the English Riots of 2011 are being (mis)constructed in relatively novel ways. They are certainly the first such extensive riots to be so comprehensively covered by 24-hour rolling news (and by comprehensive we refer to the extent, *and not the quality*, of the output). The reporting biases of mainstream media institutions are well known and will not be rehearsed here, suffice to say that images of distribution centres going up in flames and looters carrying flat-screen televisions proved particularly 'newsworthy' and were endlessly replayed, giving a distorted understanding of the totality of events that were taking place. As Ball and Drury note (2012), a very small fraction of retail premises that were looted fell into the category of 'small independent retailers', with rioters throughout the country preferring to target national chain-store brands. The fact that ('mindless') rioters could riot in a distinguishing manner was elided as mainstream broadcasters focused on the 'human-interest' of that relatively small proportion of independent retailers who were targeted.

Two further points are pertinent in understanding the power of mainstream media institutions in framing the events of 2011. One is the near total decline in local media, and particularly local investigative journalism, both as a result of fragmenting audiences, increasing monopolisation and the introduction of 'lean' models of production (often leaving a single journalist to cover a population of over 200,000 people). The second is the evident hostility that members of a marginal working class (marginal to the middle-class majoritarian cultures of consumption and aspiration) routinely display to representatives of the media industry. As we discuss below, attacks on journalists were a feature of the Pendleton Riot of 2011 in Salford, but were also reported in other locations (Aufheben, 2012). On the basis of sustained ethnographic work in such communities we would suggest that such an antipathy is rooted in an understanding of journalists as parasitic upon these communities' experiences of poverty and dysfunction, the specific ways in which middle class journalists sensationalise and stigmatise such places, and (in *some* cases) a very real desire by those involved in criminal activities not to have their identities recorded. One practical outcome of this antipathy is that much of the events of the Salford riot

on Tuesday 9th August 2011 were effectively unreported by mainstream news.

Ultimately, what ourselves as authors of this piece experienced when we were exposed to the dominant representations elaborated above, or when we read academic accounts (themselves in turn based upon those representations), was a certain dissonance; a gap in intelligibility between what we had seen in Salford, the voices we had heard and the way those actors and events were being depicted in journalistic and academic discourse. This article is an initial attempt to provide *some* depth to an account of what took place in one of the locations that saw rioting in 2011 and why.

## Methods

It is important to acknowledge the ad-hoc manner in which the present study emerged as a 'research project'. Both authors were already engaged in doctoral research projects in the City of Salford when the riot took place. Jeffery (2011) was researching the intersections of social inequalities and spatial (physical) mobility in a neighbourhood in Central Salford (that part of the city adjacent to Manchester city centre), which included an analysis of experiences of housing and gentrification (in an effort to understand the linkages between 'belonging' and residential mobility). Jeffery has also been involved in a number of other research projects in the city, such as a study of the dynamics of car-crime and stolen goods markets (Coulton et al, 2010). Tufail (2013) was researching 'partnership policing', the extent to which the police engaged local communities, and the linkages between the police and other public sector agencies, in three locales across Greater Manchester, one of which fell within Central Salford.

We therefore found ourselves with a very wide range of 'data' to be able to draw upon. Over a hundred interviews on a range of aspects of life in Salford (housing, policing, employment, transport, activism) conducted with a range of participants (police officers, housing officials, health outreach workers, residents of all kinds of demographic backgrounds - including those engaged in 'prolific' criminal activity) and supplemented by extensive participant observation (at community centres, neighbourhood forums, council meetings), archival and historical research, and documentary analysis.

Yet we also encountered difficulties in attempting to research the riots specifically. On the actual day of the riots, both authors were working in an office less than a mile from Salford Precinct, Pendleton, where the events were unfolding. Yet both of us were unable to get much closer to the site than this, as the police sealed off approaches to the Precinct quite early in the afternoon (jumping out of the way of a bulldozer being joy-ridden by a number of pre-teens towards the Precinct was the closest one of the authors got to any 'disorder'). We also encountered problems when attempting to interview participants; even personal contacts were unwilling to admit to any involvement while being recorded, or in a 'formal' interview setting (a problem also noted by the Guardian/LSE researcher Helen Clifton in relation to the Salford 'leg' of that research endeavour). As one of our interviewees noted: 'I can't get anyone [...] I'm having difficulty with some of our young members getting them to talk about it mate. No one's saying anything. Cos you never know what meither [...] what backlash is coming from it' (Brendan, early 50's, community campaigner).

Undeterred and convinced of the need to attempt some kind of excavation of what actually took place in Salford, we have adopted a pragmatic approach to the assemblage of data that draws on material collected for other projects when relevant, is supported by an extensive and critical documentary analysis of every secondary report on the Salford disturbances we have been able to obtain, but which also makes use of original interview data conducted with a dozen individuals

who directly witnessed the riots as police officers, residents or spectators. On the basis of this material we hope to set out as systematically as may be possible the actual sequence of events, the most pertinent features of the disorder, the differential understandings of motivations that have been posited and the responses that have been mobilised. Following this, and in the final section, we attempt to move from description to explanation, by placing our analysis of the Pendleton Riot within the broader context of socio-spatial change in the City of Salford in an attempt to show how the riots are an explicable response to growing urban socio-economic polarisation and the securitisation of urban space.

## Sequence of Events

On Tuesday the 9th August 2011 at around 2pm shop-keepers at the 1960s concrete Salford Shopping City ('Salford Precinct') began closing-up in response to rumours circulating that a riot was imminent in Central Salford. Such rumours seem to have been fed by expectations of (and calls for) rioting in locations throughout Greater Manchester on social media. While reports of what happened next are frequently contradictory it seems at some point in the afternoon (a police source gave a time of 3.25pm) a large number of police (at least 40-50) in riot gear were deployed in the vicinity of Salford Precinct and took up position in Brydon Close (a social housing estate) where young people had been congregating. A number of witnesses have described the situation to us, and indeed the events were also captured by amateur photographers:

Just riot police, just marching through, almost like an army y'know, and there were people there just watching, and little kids there, and you didn't know what was going to happen, and it could have gone off at any time at that point [...] The lads weren't rioting at that time, although they were facing the police (Malcolm, public sector worker, early 50s)

As police marched up and down Brydon Close, so the spectacle of their presence seems to have acted as a magnet for a variety of local working class residents (including young people) to congregate at this point (see images 1 and 2). Some of the pictures from this moment show police officers speaking to local residents, residents taking photos of the spectacle, as well as more homogenous small groups of working class young men. One amateur photographer we spoke to noted that at this time there was just 'general to-ing and fro-ing' between the police and a group of local youths, whereby the latter group would throw the occasional missile and the police would raise their shields, and then advance towards the youths who would in turn scatter. The photographer did note that at one point he found himself closer to the youths than he had expected and was told in no uncertain terms: 'We'll smash your camera, we'll batter you, you're taking fucking photos of us'. He left the area shortly afterwards. Clearly the mood was beginning to turn. In a report for the Guardian/LSE study Clifton and Allison (2011) quote a 41 year old local woman as saying "They could've handled it a lot better, the police. [...] Most of the kids [...] was throwing bricks [...] but then the police was running at them with shields and their truncheons out [...] They was getting a buzz out of it and retaliating back. They was chasing each other, it was like cat and dog".

Picking up on the attraction of the riot police deployed on Brydon Close one local community worker explained to us:



*Images 1 and 2 depict police officers in riot gear in the vicinity of Brydon Close on Tuesday 9th August 2011 (photographs courtesy of Stephen Broadhurst).*



*Image 1*



*Image 2*

[...] they all hit Salford precinct. [...] But they all ended up there because the police was down there. *The riots were where the police were*, you know what I mean? At the beginning I believe the police was in Brydon Close just ready for the riots to start so wherever they turned up, that's where the riots were, that's why the riots started, but basically, again, I'm sick of it' (Brendan).

In contrast to reports from other localities experiencing disorder, to the effect that rioters were concentrated on looting commercial premises and avoiding engagements with the police, in Salford the police were clearly the main target:

[...] they had the armoured van on the corner. And it was just really interesting, because it's almost like [a] red rag to a bull, you know what I mean? [...] And it's that thing where [...] and then they didn't have the might behind them to deliver. So they started off with all of the best will in the world and then, they couldn't actually follow through, the police' (Julie, early 60's, volunteer with local charity).

In this account the presence of the police served to focus hostility, but ultimately the police did not have the manpower to contain that hostility.

While it has been impossible for us to pinpoint the precise moment that 'to-ing and fro-ing' gave way to more aggressive attacks against the police, it is clear that at some point in the late afternoon/early evening skirmishes reached a peak of intensity. Our police sources assert that there were elements of pre-planning to the disorder (such as the use of fireworks), but this has not been borne out by other accounts. Nonetheless, video footage of this stage of the riots shows very large numbers of male youths firing volleys of missiles at police lines and in one instance charging them. Between 5pm and 6pm there were also the first reports of disorder in Manchester city centre and this undoubtedly impacted upon decisions by Greater Manchester Police as to where to direct resources. One of our respondents noted: 'There weren't enough of them to do anything and they had to retreat' (Julie), while in a local representative of the Police Federation interpretation's: '[...] the Greater Manchester Police commanding officer took the brave decision to withdraw from Salford to ensure the safety of his officers [...]' (Hanson, 2012).

Events unfolded in rapid succession, as the police withdrew people began targeting shops at the Precinct (The Money Shop, Cash Convertors, Cash Generators, Bargain Booze and Timpsons, amongst others), whilst some set fire to a former housing office near the Pendleton Gateway Centre. Around this time (6pm) a BBC cameraman in the vicinity of the Precinct is assaulted, a BBC Manchester radio-car (Clifton and Allison, 2011), and another vehicle belonging to a reporter are torched (Slattery, 2011). *Amanda*, a public sector worker who at that point lived in a flat opposite Salford Precinct and witnessed the disorder as it unfolded, commented on how the journalists vehicles were the only ones to be damaged that night, and that this was because they had been left open and unattended. She notes that other neighbours had come out of their houses to ensure that no one damaged their property. She also notes that while the crowd was largely composed of youths and young adults, it also contained a broad range of ages.

By 7pm Lidl supermarket had been looted, before then being set on fire:

This was more of a party than an angry riot as youngsters handed old people packs of cigs, and tins of Carlsberg freshly liberated from LIDL, which is situated across the road from Salford Precinct and less than a stones throw away the Urban Splash Chimney Pot Park upside down houses. By 8.30am this evening around 300 people of all ages and races had

gathered in LIDL's car park and beyond, cheering as explosions boomed from a burning car and balley-ed up kids let off fire-extinguishers. Women struggled down the street with loaded LIDL bags. Beer from smashed bottles literally flowed down the road. Pretty girls in white dresses filmed the whole spectacle on their mobile phones, older lads skinned up, the local community hung out of their tower block windows to get a good glimpse [...] all that was missing was the DJ. This was a very Salford riot' (Kingston, 2011a)

While local community magazine the *Salford Star* was roundly criticised for the above report, with even their own staff writers (Pivaro, 2011) admonishing this piece for striking 'the wrong chord' and sensationalising disorganised criminality (as opposed to organised political protest), reports from others seem to bear out that such an atmosphere did pertain, at least for a time, following the looting of Lidl. An unemployed 22 year old man interviewed by Clifton (2011) stated: 'Salford had its own character. It was more like a party atmosphere. Everyone was stood around, drinking on the street, smoking weed, having a laugh. People' weren't threatening the public'. Even Reverend Hayley Matthews, appointed by the Diocese of Manchester as Chaplain for (the BBC-led development) MediaCityUK, who witnessed the riot, commented on the distribution of 'free beer' (Matthews, 2011).

By this point looting in Manchester city centre was occurring on a significant scale, and it would not be until night had long fallen and crowds had begun to disperse of their own accord that the police were gradually able to reassert control of Salford Precinct and its environs (initially the police moved in from around 8.30pm onwards to protect fire brigade units attempting to put out fires, only later did they fully secure the shopping centre). While a number of informants we spoke to believed that a heavy police presence throughout Central Salford on Wednesday 10th August prevented further rioting, many felt the weather to be of greater significance, with Malcolm commenting: 'It's just a melting pot, it would have happened again, but for the rain' (see also Clifton and Allison, 2011).

According to official accounts events in Salford and Manchester on Tuesday 9th August were significant. Greater Manchester Police Assistant Chief Constable Gary Shewan is on record as stating that more than 1,000 officers were deployed (along with support from neighbourhood staff and some officers from other forces), but that the thousands of individuals who rioted overwhelmed the force's capabilities (BBC News, 2011). Undoubtedly numbers in Manchester city-centre were much greater than in Salford, with most reports and accounts we have explored seeming to converge on 500-1000. GMP said they were called to 800 incidents in the city centre and around 130 in Salford. Ten officers were injured, including a broken ankle. Greater Manchester Fire Service reported 155 fires across the city centre and Salford and that around 100 business premises and a number of police vehicles were damaged (BBC News, 2011). The total policing cost was estimated at £3.3m, with £5.7 m worth of claims lodged through the Riots Damages Act (Clifton and Allison, 2011).

While we have already stated our impressions of who participated in the riots (largely young men, virtually all white working class people from Salford, but a cross-section of ages), official records paint a different picture. Arrest data released by the Guardian (and then later removed from its website following the commencement of its collaborative research project with the London School of Economics) on those who had been brought before a magistrates court by the end of August 2011 reveals that 76 of those charged had home addresses in Manchester, as compared to 21 in Salford (of a total of 1002 nationwide). Roughly half as many crimes were recorded for Salford as for its twin city of Manchester on the night of the riots (188 as against 386), but only a quarter of many arrests had been made as of late August. Later, more complete



arrest data was released by the Ministry of Justice (2011), but this did not identify the home address of those charged. What it did show was a context of just under 4,000 arrests nationally, 62 per cent of which were made by the Metropolitan Police, as compared to 16 per cent for West Midlands and only 8 per cent (326) for Greater Manchester Police. This seems to bear out what a number of sources have commented upon on and off the record, that particularly few arrests (more so than in other areas) were made in Salford due to the intensity of the violence police officers faced.

Yet even the information we have regarding those charged should be treated with the utmost caution. Ball and Drury (2012) have conclusively illustrated the ways in which the demographics of those arrested during the 2011 English Riots was an artefact of the ways in which police practice operates. Making comparatively few arrests during the riots the police sought to identify those who participated through CCTV footage. Naturally those individuals they already had photographs of (i.e. those with a prior criminal record) were the easiest to locate. Given that reports (see Meikle and Jones, 2011, for instance) stated the total number of arrests by GMP to be only 110 (out of a final total of 326) on the night of the 9th, we can be reasonably confident in our assertion both of specificity of Salford (fewer arrests than comparable areas), but also of the unreliability of police arrest data as an account of who participated in rioting. These points seem to have escaped a local policy think tank, Salford Action Research Foundation, who, in their study of the 'causes' of the riots (2012), make repeated reference to the arrest data to identify the kind of 'target groups' to be the focus for policy implementation.

### **A Tale of Salford, and Manchester**

Having established the broad sequence of events, in the following section we want to explore some of the comparisons that have been made between the incidents in Salford and its twin-city across the River Irwell. Such comparisons are impossible to avoid given the proximity of the two riots, but also positively invited by the differing contexts, political regimes and identities that have historically distinguished the two coterminous urban areas.

Virtually all sources we have explored converge on the distinction between looting commercial premises in Manchester city-centre, and direct hostility and aggression against the police in Salford (see Indymedia, 2011; Clifton and Allison, 2011; SARF, 2012). In the words of Peter Fahy, Chief Constable of GMP:

The night of rioting in Manchester was different from what we had seen in the past, in terms of groups of youths moving from shop to shop - not attacking the police, but just out to steal property. In Salford it was different again, with those involved attacking police and fire crews and destroying local community facilities (Fahy, 2012).

What seems evident is that Manchester city-centre, groups of people commuted into the city centre in order to target commercial premises. Research by the Guardian/LSE (Rogers and Prasad, 2011) mapped the distance between rioters homes (taken from arrest data) and the locations where they were accused of a riot offence and produced the figure of 2.8 miles as the average 'riot-commute', slightly shorter than the equivalent journeys made by those in Birmingham, longer than those made in Nottingham or London. One officer we spoke to said the following:

In Manchester it's slightly different cos' they used, obviously, transport home. So they've

put their balaclavas on, they've done what they've done, they've walked off and, to all intents and purposes, they've taken them off and they've been like an innocent member of the public [...] It was difficult to know who'd done what in Manchester. Whereas here [Salford], like I say, the attack was more sustained against property, police. At one time, I thought the police station was going to be a target for arson (Dominic, late 40's, police officer).

The impression we are left with is one of a more fragmented body of rioters in Manchester, who we know from arrest data (problematic as this is) were drawn from across the Greater Manchester conurbation (though predominantly from multiply deprived inner city neighbourhoods). Salford by contrast appears to have been a much more localised riot in the sense that participants were overwhelmingly drawn from the neighbourhoods that constitute Central Salford and that they acted more cohesively as a group. While we would not wish to push this 'looter/rioter' distinction too far - as Reicher and Stott have sensibly noted (2011), you can have an anti-police riot without looting, you cannot have looting without an anti-police riot - there does seem to be a broad distinction in the motivations of participants in the two twin cities.

Certainly one theme on which there was broad consensus was the lack of desirability of Salford Precinct as a location for looting, given the predominance of pawn shops and budget retailers. One resident noted:

There's nothing on the Precinct to take, it's all low-end shops, there's not Bang and Olufsen's over there [as in Manchester city-centre], there's not a Sainsbury's or a Selfridges. There's no value in any of those shops. So what they got out of it must have been chicken feed, really' (Julie)

And the incredulity of targeting the Precinct for looting was also shared by the police: 'They looted Timpson's and Lidl and Cash Generator and Cash Converter and Poundland, and I thought that was quite bizarre' (Dominic).

One theory initially put forward by the police and other actors was that the intensity of the riot in Salford was due to the presence of organised crime groups who took the opportunity for 'payback' against the authorities, a position taken by the then Local Authority Chief Executive Barbara Spicer (2011). This interpretation, nuanced by an appreciation of a more general 'anti-police culture', was also offered by police officers we have spoken to:

In Salford, there was a mixture. There was [...] also some, "it's payback time". There's a lot of police tackling organised crime in this area, at this moment in time. There was a feeling that some of the policing, you know, was a little bit brutal in Salford compared with elsewhere in Greater Manchester, and there was an element of payback in that response. And probably, uniquely, there was an element of anti-police feeling during that riot (George, late 50's, senior police officer)

From our perspective, the foregrounding of 'organised crime' is a red-herring, as we discuss further below. It is also a theme that was initially promoted by the national governing coalition, but then quietly dropped as the evidence for mass 'gang' participation failed to materialise (see Hallsworth and Brotherton, 2011).

### ***Motivations***

Having unpacked the sequence of events in Salford on the 9th of August, and distinguished the character of the disorder from that which took place in Manchester city-centre, in this section we attempt a systematic analysis of the varying accounts of the motivations of those who were involved. Many institutional actors were quick to echo the words of the Prime Minister, in foregrounding 'pure criminality'. In keeping with his own party political perspective, the leader of Manchester City Council, Sir Richard Leese, argued events '[...]' appeared to end up as the riots of the Thatcher generation, the greed riots, the something for nothing riots' (Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council in SARF, 2012: ii).

Picking up the strand around organised criminality noted above, a local community worker we interviewed asserted: 'As far as the police are concerned with it being organised crime, it wasn't organised crime. It was just as it happened [...]' (Brendan). A 22 year old unemployed male interviewed by Clifton (2011) offered a further interpretation: 'These aren't gangs. Gangs to me means the Bloods and the Crips in LA. The kids just did what they wanted cos' they wanted to do it, not because some gang boss orchestrated it to get back at the police'. While initially keen to foreground this argument - and both authors can attest to the way this narrative was deployed at community meetings and other public relations exercises - by the end of 2011 there seems to have been some backtracking, with the GMP Chief Constable switching to poverty, social exclusion and youth unemployment as key drivers of the disorder (see Clifton and Allison, 2011).

Many commentators on the 2011 English Riots in general spoke not only of 'criminality', but 'mindless criminality' and 'wanton destruction'. This is an impression that we would wish to challenge in relation to Pendleton. The community worker we cited above was keen to emphasise that destruction was not 'indiscriminate':

Don't forget like, there was erm [...] It is a Paki shop anyway. It wasn't touched mate, on the Clarendon Estate. Fucking left it. He's been there twenty years the guy, thirty years. Are you with me? No one touched it mate. No one touched his shop. And he was ill [...] (Brendan)

Kingston (2011e) also quotes an individual who participated in the riot as stating that they could not burn down the Gala Bingo premises next to the Precinct because his 'mam would kill him'. And the fact that rioters did distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate targets was also noted by the MediaCity Chaplain:

As some men picked up bricks and got in line to lob them at police vans, the action shifted from one place to another so no matter where you stood, you ended up in the thick of it at some point. Bizarrely, whenever it came near me, one of other of the brick throwers would halt fire until I was somewhere safe - on occasion even escorting me and physically shielding me from rocks - before giving the OK for more missile throwing (Matthews, 2011, our emphasis)

Though there is some contradictory evidence here, with Pivaro (2011) pointing to the targeting of two small independent retailers in the vicinity of the Precinct, the overwhelming impression we have been left with is not one of 'mindless criminality', but violence targeted firstly at the police and secondly at the commercial premises at the Precinct (once the police had withdrawn). A youth worker cited in Goulding (2011: n.p.) notes that while few participants could articulate why they got involved in the riots, '[...]' what may seem like careless nihilism is often a

survival mechanism' and this is suggestive of the kind of habitus that is forged by conditions of poverty, deprivation and desperation.

A particularly predominant trope in explanations of the Pendleton Riot is the influence of severe deprivation across Central Salford as a whole. As one contributor to a Salford Star message board noted: 'After forty years of decline and neglect [...] Salford is a black hole of deprivation. It is impossible to take so many thousands of jobs from a city and not expect the social problems we experience' (Kingston, 2011c). Indeed the article from which this comment was taken was an open letter from the Secretary of the Salford UNISON branch, which argued that the 60 per cent rate of child poverty across the city, 40 per cent youth unemployment in a number of wards, and the drastic cuts made to youth services in general and youth employment services in particular (in response to cuts in central government funding), should be seen as factors contributing to the riot in Pendleton (see also Clifton and Allison, 2011). Indeed public sector officials we spoke to also drew attention to the deep-rooted nature of deprivation in the city: 'And there was that structural issue thing with, you know, social mobility. Most of the people haven't got a way out of it. So I think it's a bigger structural class problem [...] than we can solve. It's a policy issue' (Sandra, early 40's, local authority employee). Malcolm, an eye witness to the riot, nevertheless contended that such ongoing issues had become more pressing of late: 'Kids just seem to be living for the moment [...] Housing, a car, everything seems to be out of reach, they can't afford anything, it's all too expensive now'.

Clearly not everyone accepted this position, with Inspector Hanson of the Police Federation (2012) declaring:

Since the events of that night I have heard many theories put forward as to the socio-economic causes behind the criminality, hypothesised by people who were nowhere to be seen when our city was under attack. I have heard wanton greed and criminality excused as the simple manifestation of the frustration felt by youths who felt excluded by society.

Middle class residents living in the gated communities that have sprung up across Central Salford during thirty years of state-led gentrification, were also cautious in their acceptance of motivations for riot centred on socio-economic (class) inequalities, with one individual commenting that because none of the gentrifiers' homes in the vicinity of the Precinct were targeted, this ' [...] proved it wasn't a class thing' (Carol, early 30's business owner).

It is also worth making a few comments about the role of race and ethnicity in the Salford riot, or at least the lack thereof. In Salford 94 per cent of those arrested were of a white background (Ministry of Justice, 2011) and this is reflective of the city's overall population, which historically has been home to much smaller ethnic minority populations than some of the other Greater Manchester authorities it is adjacent to. And though as noted arrest statistics are highly unreliable, eye witnesses accounts confirm the ethnic homogeneity of the crowds. This did not prevent the local branch of the British National Party from attempting to claim that the riot was the work of marauding 'blacks' from Moss Side and Longsight (BNP, 2011). Such nonsensical claims have been rebutted by those we have interviewed (see also Clifton and Allison, 2011): 'I [...] spoke to this fella that just stood there, and said, "do you believe it's a race issue?" And he said "No, no, I live above the Precinct, it was nothing to do with it."' (Sandra). What was nevertheless striking in some official accounts was the ways in which problems around 'community cohesion' could only be understood in terms of ethnic difference:

The riots [...] weren't like the ones that happened in Oldham or Burnley that were caused

and sparked by a few racial tensions. [...] [This time] [i]t wasn't something that was sparked with racial tensions, so there wasn't a great deal of cohesion work to do' (Gabrielle, mid 20's, local authority employee).

What this overlooks is the possibility of threats to community cohesion from other forms of difference, and especially, as we will begin to argue below, from the growing polarisation between marginalised working class locals and the incoming gentrifying middle class, as well as the changing policing strategies that have accompanied such developments (there was some limited recognition of disparities in police practice according to class rather than race in SARF, 2012).

This brings us to the penultimate motivation we wish to examine here, which was by far the most widely noted; hostility towards the police and the grounding of that hostility in discriminatory police practices. Graham Cooper, a Salford based youth worker who referred to increasing tensions around stop-and-search in Minton's (2009) study of gated communities, has repeated his claims of unjust policing in relation to the causes of the 2011 riots (see Kingston, 2012). Such comments are exceedingly familiar to the present authors, as illustrated in the following quotes taken from previous research projects in the city:

So how do the police treat you?

Luke: They humiliate you!

Kev: I've been strip searched in the street while mi' son 'as been kicking the side of the van, "get off my dad, y' bastards!" and then they'll get out the van and say "cheeky little cunt him, we're getting in touch with the social workers over you and your kids"

(Late teens and late 20s respectively, Central Salford)

What else do you think the authorities could do to improve things around here?

Mikey: [...] tell the police to stop being fucking violent. They start at a young age. They've got no regard for the law so why should we? (Early 40s, Central Salford)

And such comments were evident to those we spoke to subsequent to the riots, with the community worker quoted above commenting: 'They should protect and serve everyone, not just who they think they should protect and "He's not worth protecting cos' he's got previous criminal whatever", do you know what I mean?' (Brendan).

Yet it is also clear that what a participant described as '[...] a lot of seething resentment in a lot of these areas towards the police' (Julie), predates the riots by some time, but also predates the widening inequalities of recession Britain, and even the ongoing rounds of gentrification over the previous three decades. As Evans et al's (1996) exemplary study on Salford makes clear, a counter-police culture and injunction against 'grassing' has its roots in the industrialising and industrialised city of the 19th and early 20th centuries, whereby extreme deprivation and the proximity of almost limitless opportunities for theft (from Manchester/Salford/Trafford docks) led to a distancing between local communities and police. This echoes those numerous histories of policing that point to class repression and the maintenance of (capitalist) order as key functions of the institution (Neocleous, 2000; Reiner, 2010).

What is more is that the collapse of employment, disinvestment and population flight from the inner-city, following deindustrialisation, exponentially multiplied the necessity to commit crime. From the late 1970s onwards we see more antagonistic attitudes towards the police, but also increasingly towards the middle class incomers moving into gentrification sites in that part



of the city adjacent to Manchester city-centre. This is evidenced by the presence of a 'GrassWatch' van, 'kill the yuppies' graffiti, and the outbreak of rioting at the Precinct in 1981 and on the Ordsall Estate in 1992 - during the latter incident shots were fired at police officers (Banks, 1981; Evans et al, 1996; Brotherton and Hughes, 1996). Certainly the idea of an anti-police culture was attested to by the Greater Manchester Police officers we spoke with:

Certainly for our area you have got pockets of people that are very anti-police, their parents were anti-police, their grandparents were anti-police and that's just the way it is, that's the way it goes (Jade, mid 20's, police community support officer).

Nonetheless, and over and above this background of generalised hostility towards the police and their functions, the ways in which police practice has been modified, concomitant with processes of state-led gentrification, has clearly exacerbated tensions. A stark example of this is the dispersal orders that have been in operation around Salford Quays since 2007, which are widely seen as being selectively targeted against working class youth (see SARF, 2012: 15; Minton, 2009), while middle class visitors to the site are left alone. Indeed what the present authors have learned from our research in Salford, is that 'securitisation' (Neocleous, 2000) has not been limited merely to policing practice, but has come to embrace such disparate fields as environmental design (principally in the form of 'gated communities') and the policies of Registered Social Landlords. In this context it is instructive to note Hancock's (2007) research on the ways in which 'regeneration' also means the recuperation of a neighbourhood's 'image', which necessarily entails producing environments that are seen as 'safe' and free from disorder.

The consequences of these shifts have and will continue to be played out in contestations over the control of space. McKenzie (2013) in her study of the social conditions of St Anns estate in Nottingham, which included ethnographic research with a number of those who participated in the Nottingham Riot of August 2011, describes the ways in which locals think of themselves as 'being St Anns', a localised identity predicated upon an attachment to space and a sense of value within a localised symbolic economy (being able to 'tough it out'). In the very same way, we also see those who participated in the Salford riot legitimating their action through a defence of socio-symbolic space, a defence of 'Salford':

I think it was about having a go at the police - you know, after years of abuse. [...] Because the police do abuse people, they do like take liberties. I know people who get harassed by the police on a regular basis, and it will always go on - and I can't see it ever stopping. What you have to understand is there are a lot of people from Salford who love Salford - who will fight for Salford' (our emphasis, 'Barry', cited in Kingston, 2011e)

Control of space certainly seems to the fore in testimony of the 22 year old male interviewed by Clifton (2011): 'We had total control of the precinct. There's a massive police station there, and they couldn't do anything. It was ours for a day'.

This also links to the final thematic grouping of motivations, under a generalised sense of 'injustice'. On this note we heard repeated references to the MP's expenses scandal, the wages of premiership footballers, and the current economic crisis: 'Do you know what I mean? Look at the banks. The bankers and the government have pulled [bailed] them out. It's hard on benefits' (Brendan). Yet commentary on this theme was mixed, while some saw the attempts to smash through the windows of Hazel Blears MP's constituency office - on Langworthy Road (Kingston,

2011b), a short walk from the Precinct - as definitive evidence of the 'politics' underlying the riot, others, such as Pivaro (2011) were keen to attest that this was 'not Peterloo or Kersal Moor' (two mass protests by pro-democracy movements in Greater Manchester during the early 19th century). Nevertheless, a recurring refrain was that rioting was the only way those who participated could make their voices heard (see Kingston, 2012).

### **Responses**

Having explored the contrasting motivations identified in relation to the causes of the Pendleton Riot, we now turn to analysis of the official responses to the event, in the hope that this can shed further light on the underlying dynamics. In the first instance, it seems clear that the relevant authorities were determined to send a tough message to those had been involved. While GMP swamped Central Salford in the immediate aftermath of the riot, Chief Executive Spicer (2011) also communicated this tough message when she (and other senior figures within the council) pushed for the evictions of any council tenants from addresses where convicted rioters had lived at (ultimately only 5 eviction notices were served - Wellman, 2012). In the same article she contrasts such 'undeserving' cases, with a decent 'majority' that included those who turned up at Salford Precinct on the morning of Wednesday 10th August as volunteers to assist with the post-riot clean-up. Incongruously, Malcolm, who also returned to the Precinct that morning, notes that some of those who had turned up to 'help' were actually 'trying to smuggle out odds and sods'. For at least one interviewee, the 'clean-up' was little more than a public relations exercise:

I mean, I think what was really sad was, everybody that didn't do any brushing got their photograph taken, and everybody that did do the brushing didn't. So all the councillors and that, they did a photo-shoot with Barbara Spicer and everybody holding their rooms as if they'd been brushing away there' (Julie)

Attempts to 'reclaim space' from the delegitimized rioters took many forms; one striking example was the 'I love Manchester' and 'I love Salford' walls established in the Arndale Centre (Manchester city-centre) and Precinct, respectively. Hanson describes:

On the Friday morning two school children, for no other reason than they were angry, bought a pack it of post-it notes and wrote about what they thought was best about their city and posted them on the wall just inside the entrance to the Arndale Centre. Within a matter of hours this makeshift tribute had grown from dozens to around a thousand, with passers by being drawn to this impromptu shrine to leave their own messages of support' (Hanson, 2012)

Yet those 'tributes' did not only contain messages of support. When the present authors took photographs of the wall of post-it notes in the Arndale Centre (see images 3 and 4) we were struck by the number that contained expressions of class hatred (against 'chavs', 'pikies' and 'scallies') reminiscent of Jones' (2011) recent work on the demonization of the working class, as well as calls for a stronger response from the police/state (such as the use of tear-gas and rubber bullets). Essentially we would argue that these public relations campaigns signified a call to the middle classes to reclaim 'their' consumption sites. Nonetheless, while such a strategy is plausible in Manchester city-centre as a nationally significant consumption site, it is less plausible at Salford Precinct, where the surrounding locality is still overwhelmingly inhabited by a poor

and marginalised working class. Unsurprisingly when we visited the Precinct following the riots, we found only a handful of forlorn looking post-it notes celebrating the city, in contrast to the many hundreds on display at the Arndale Centre.

Yet perhaps the most striking reference to the desire of authorities to reassert control over their city spaces is to be found in the comments of the Honorary Recorder of Manchester, Judge Andrew Gilbert, who makes explicit the fact that riots constituted a threat to city's prosperity and the consumption sites upon which such prosperity is deemed to rest:

Some who live outside this great city may be unaware of the dedication shown by those Councils and other parts of the community to putting this City back on its feet once the recession of the 1980s had taken its toll [...]. The achievements in regeneration have been substantial, not least to the renewed vitality of the City Centre's commercial core. To those of use [sic] who knew Manchester and Salford in the 1970s and early 1980s, the transformation has been quite remarkable. The City has struggled and must still struggle through bad economic times so that all of its areas can benefit from the regeneration that hard work has produced. The commercial life of the retail sector is no small part of that. It provides jobs for large numbers of people, and services the whole population of the area. It also supports Manchester City Centre, and Salford Quays in providing cultural vitality to the region [...] (Gilbert, 2011)

Though it is clear that these comments pertain more to the disorder in Manchester city-centre than to that of a relatively 'undesirable' (in investment terms) locale in Central Salford, the implication of this statement, made as a part of the sentencing remarks in relation to the first few Greater Manchester riots cases to come before the courts, is clear; the riots constituted a threat to the economic engine of these two 'entrepreneurial' cities. Sentencing for those who rioted in Salford, as across the country (Sim, 2012), was punitive, with the police view being that: 'hopefully the publicity had done its job; sentencing frightened a lot of people' (Dominic).

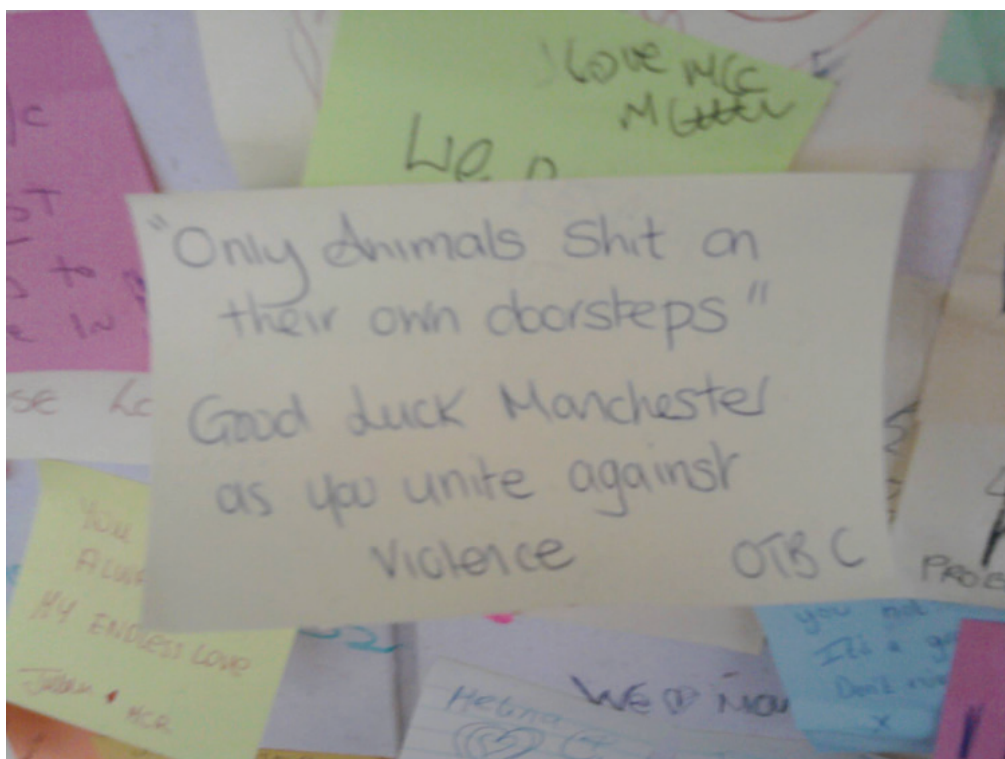
As for medium to longer term responses to the riots, it seemed that Salford City Council were in no mood to listen to more critical voices on the causes of the riots. For instance, at a community event some months subsequent to the riots, where a Guardian/LSE researcher pointed to issues such as antagonisms towards the police, then leader of the council John Merry attempted to undermine the basis of the research's findings (Mancunian Matters, 2012), expressing 'outrage' that of 270 interviews conducted for the Guardian/LSE project, only seven were conducted in Salford. At the same meeting the GMP borough commander also insisted upon the involvement of organised criminals in the Pendleton Riot, but could offer no evidence to substantiate these claims.

A sustained analysis of the causes of the riots was also attempted by Salford Action Research Foundation (2012), as noted above. However, while striking an accurate chord on certain issues (such as policing), ultimately the authors are hamstrung by their attempts to appeal to local policy-makers/growth coalitions, by invoking a depoliticised policy discourse that resonates with contemporary rhetoric around 'Broken Britain'. Thus they talk of 'improving parenting', 'building community resilience' and 'social capital', and 'reducing dependency'. Implicit in these terms is an evaluation of communities that have been deprived through the mechanism of their own moral failings. Though SARF do identify significant issues around community engagement, noting the 'over concentration on the physical aspects of regeneration' in the city and stress the need for greater democratic accountability over policing, they nevertheless have few meaningful solutions (a parenting programme here, a micro-finance initiative there) to Salford's socio-economic

*Images 3 and 4 depict the 'I Love Manchester' wall set-up in the Arndale shopping centre in the immediate aftermath of the riots (photographs by Bob Jeffery).*



*Image 3*



*Image 4*

difficulties.

Finally, and perhaps unsurprisingly, given the tensions that have developed around 'regeneration' in Salford over the last three decades, a key proposal from the local authority in the aftermath of the riots has been more regeneration, in the form of a revamp of the dilapidated Salford Precinct (Kingston 2011d). On this point it is worth noting that a number of police informants and council officials we spoke with in Salford discussed the need of setting up some form of 'business watch' scheme for the Precinct in the aftermath of the riots, to address the concerns of owners.

## Conclusions

In this final section we attempt to draw together the key findings that our investigations have produced. In the first instance, it seems clear from our unravelling of the sequence of events that an initial police 'show of force' on the afternoon of Tuesday 9th August in the vicinity of Brydon Close did not have the desired effect, but served as a magnet for those who wished to demonstrate their hostility towards the police ('The riots were where the police were', as Brendan argued), and as a catalyst for the outbreak of disorder (which is not to say that disorder would not have broken out in any case, at a different location and at a different time).

In the second instance, we have noted that the riot in Pendelton was marked by an especial level of antagonism towards the police, and by participants who were overwhelmingly drawn from localities immediately adjacent to the location of the riot (both in contrast to the dynamics witnessed across the Irwell in Manchester). We have also noted at least some evidence that suggests that the rioters were not entirely 'mindless' or 'wanton' in their attacks, but rather that the focus of aggression in Salford was the police, and those present only turned to looting once the police had withdrawn.

Exploring the competing motivations that have been ascribed to the rioters, we noted that the dominant themes were deprivation, policing and a generalised sense of injustice. Of these, policing dominated understandings of the causes and dynamics of the riot, a point also identified by the Guardian/LSE (Clifton and Allison, 2011) and Salford Action Research Foundation's (2012) studies. Drawing on both our own previous research projects in the city, as well as other studies (Minton, 2009), we identified gentrification and its accompaniment, securitisation, as serving to exacerbate already existing tensions between a marginalised working class and those in authority. Such an analysis is seemingly confirmed when we look at the official responses to the riots that hinge around the reclamation of physical space, punitive retribution for those involved, and a return to 'business-as-usual' whereby the solution to the problems symbolised by the riots is seen to necessitate further 'regeneration' (gentrification).

We thus end this piece with a riposte to those authors on the Left and Right who have sought to provide totalising accounts of the English Riots of August 2011. Contra the coalition government, this was not 'criminality, pure and simple', but a response, albeit lacking in a formal political articulation, to perceived injustices that relate to poverty, exclusion and oppressive policing. As a consequence, and contra Hall and Winlow (2012: 467), the rioters did not 'misrecognise their enemy' in attacking the police, but struck back at the symbol of an oppressive state that looms largest in their everyday existence.



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