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*An Intergenerational Ethnography of School Disaffection in a
Post-industrial Coal-mining Area*

Nigel Geoffrey Bright

*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (by article)*

May 2013

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Epigraphs

Ghosts are social phenomena...and yet still particular...The experience of ghosts in particular places, whether these ghosts be sacred or profane, individual or collective, dead or alive, mine or yours, human or animal, past or present or future, is not happenstance. Ghosts have good reasons to haunt the specific places they do. These reasons derive ultimately from the character of our social experience, as mediated by the landscape upon which that experience unfolds.

From *The ghosts of place* by Michael Bell (Bell 1997:831)

Yeah, definitely, definitely... you know I've had kids that were second generation, you know, their parents weren't miners but, you know, they still say: "Aye, it's the fucking miners strike!"

Stacey, Youth worker, 'Coalbrook'

The willingness to follow ghosts, neither to memorialise nor to slay, but to follow where they lead, in the present, head turned backwards and forwards at the same time. To be haunted in the name of a will to heal is to allow the ghost to help you imagine what we lost that never existed, really. That is its utopian grace: to encourage a steely sorrow laced with delight for what we lost that we never had; to long for the insight of that moment in which we recognise, as in Benjamin's profound illumination, that it could have been and can be otherwise.

From *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination* by Avery F. Gordon (Gordon, 1997: 57)

To think time against the grain, to imagine what came 'after' can modify what was 'before' or that changing the past at the root can transform a current state of affairs: what madness! A return to magical thought! It is pure science fiction, and yet...

From in *The machinic unconscious* by Felix Guattari (Guattari, 2011: 11)

Dedication

Who for?

For my parents, grandparents and great grandparents who made lives in the Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire coalfields.

For my life-partner and comrade, Gillian.

For my sons, Danny and Alex, who have been told the stories.

And for all those who took part in, or actively supported, the 1984-85 strike.

Why?

Because of the moments of concrete utopia that we lived during 84-85 ... and the 'not-yet' that they continue to hold

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the young people and workers of 'Beldover District' for their open and generous co-operation and also wishes to acknowledge the help of Derbyshire County Council youth and adult education staff in gaining access to ethnographic sites referred to in this thesis.

Table of Contents

Part 1: General Introduction and Submitted

Publications

<u>Part 1, Section 1: General Introduction</u>	8
1.1.1 Abstract	8
1.1.2 Preface	9
1.1.3 Note on the overall structure of the thesis	12
1.1.4 Commentary on articles submitted	15

Part 1, Section 2: Published peer-reviewed articles

(Following p36. From there onwards, each article pdf is separated by a coloured sheet and paginated as per the original. Pagination becomes conventional again at Part 2)

‘Off the Model’: Resistant spaces, school disaffection and ‘aspiration’ in a former coal-mining community. In *Children’s Geographies*. 9: 1. 63-78. (CG)

“Non-Servile Virtuosi” in insubordinate spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield. In *European Education Research Journal*. 10:4. 502-515. (EERJ)

“It’s not a factory!” Performative educational provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a former UK coal-mining community. In Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (In Press) *Performativity across UK education: ethnographic cases of its effects, agency and reconstructions* Painswick: E&E Publishing. 217-240.

(PERF)

‘Sticking together!’ Policy activism from within a former UK coal-mining community. In *Journal of Education Administration and History*. 44: 3. 1-16.

(JEAH)

A practice of concrete utopia? Informal youth support and the possibility of ‘redemptive remembering’ in a UK coal-mining area. In *Power and Education*. 4, 3: 315-326. (Pand E)

<i>Part 2: Overview of thesis</i>	37
2.1. Research questions	38
2. 2. Research subject	48
2. 3. Relevant literature	61
2. 4. Methodology	96

2. 5. Conclusion: Results and Continuing research	145
2. 6. Appendix (a): Permissions	166
2. 7. Appendix (b): Table on article selection procedure	167
2. 8. References	169

Part 1, Section 1: General Introduction

1.1.1 Abstract

In meeting the regulations described in *Article-based PhD: Guidance notes for staff and students* at Sheffield Hallam University, this thesis critically situates a series of five peer-reviewed articles published in international scholarly journals during the period 2010- 2012. All of these articles have been derived from the analysis of a body of empirical ethnographic material gathered during a doctoral inquiry which commenced in 2006.

The principle topic of the doctoral inquiry is an ethnographic examination of intergenerational experiences of educational 'disaffection' in four former Derbyshire coal mining communities during a period of de-industrialisation, exploring the intersection between education and aspects of class, gender, community, culture and history particular to those communities. A key focus is the investigation of school disaffection as an *affective* aspect of local historical geographies of resistance and conflict relating, in particular, to the 1984-85 miners' strike.

The inquiry makes an original contribution to knowledge in the following ways. First, by producing and analysing a 250,000 word data-base of ethnographic materials, it extends the empirical knowledge of lived experiences of educational disaffection in de-industrialised and post-conflict settings. Secondly, in disseminating related research products throughout the international research community, it establishes a case for seeing school disaffection as significantly related to affective contexts of class experience and thus makes a contribution to the international literature. Thirdly, it contributes to the development of an innovative interdisciplinary account of the social flows of affect as they impact on education. Fourthly, it contributes methodologically to the field of educational ethnography by proposing that the discernible impact of such flows of affect on young people's educational identities necessitates a reimagining of the educational ethnographic project in line with the 'affective turn' (Clough, 2007) in social theory. Finally, it draws out some implications for youth support provision in de-industrialised and post-conflict communities by theorising a new form of critical intergenerational youth support practice.

1.1.2 Preface

In the 2008 introduction to the new edition of her *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*, Avery Gordon remarks that ghosts are, by nature, “haunting reminders of lingering trouble” and, further, that the “social violence[s] done in the past” that they call forth are often “treated as obsolete practices that require[...] a special brief to be considered a living inheritance, much less as urgent social problems to be addressed”. She notes how, at the time of first writing, “[j]ustification for my attention to them was constantly solicited” (Gordon, 1997, 2008: xix).

During the early years of this doctoral inquiry (which has matured effectively into an ethnography of a social haunting) I was asked for the same justifications. Sometimes, outraged teachers challenged me: how *dare* I excuse ‘bad’ behaviour in schools by making reference to events that happened before young people were born, to a historical moment that they don’t even know about? Others, of course ‘got it’ straight away. It eventually dawned on me that the difference between the two was to do with whether they ‘believed in’ (social) ghosts, or not; whether they attended to a ghost as a notification “that what’s been concealed is very much alive and present” (Gordon, 1997: xvi) or heard it rather as just the wind rattling in the de-industrialised eaves!

For anyone still in doubt about whether the UK coalfields remain subject to a social haunting that cleaves the present generation of young people to its spectral embrace, the events of the last couple of weeks during which I put the finishing touches to this thesis (8th – 20th April, 2013) should have given eerie pause. During that short period, one of the five remaining pits in the UK – Maltby, in South Yorkshire (about 12 miles

from my research site) – closed. A week or so later, the funeral of Margaret Thatcher – Prime Minister at the time of the miners’ strike of 1984-85 – took place and was greeted with celebrations in the coalfields (notably Goldthorpe, again in South Yorkshire).

In each case, the ambivalent, paradoxical and complex affective geography of coal-mining communities that I have drawn attention to throughout this thesis was abundantly evident in the fullness of its revenant presence. Here are some of its spectral visitations: at Goldthorpe, the long rows of blackened, boarded-up terraced houses; a ‘miner’ in black-face; a Thatcher effigy leaning against the wall of the Union Jack (!) club prior to being loaded onto a horse-drawn hearse and carried in procession through the village to waste land “where it was set light to cheers and cries of ‘Scab, scab, scab’”¹. This insubordinate, carnivalesque *up helly* – portrayed in the press, of course, as a scowl of *ressentiment* – was ‘mainly light hearted’ I’m told by friends who were there. At Maltby, the colliery brass band was heard playing the ‘disaster hymn’, *Gresford*, while a piece of coal was ceremoniously buried at the ‘grave of the unknown miner’; children were playing, meanwhile, in “Kier Hardie Close”. In Goldthorpe, a TV presenter said to a retired miner she interviewed: “It’s as if you’re in a time warp” Her interviewee paused momentarily as temporal logics clashed, then said: “We *are* in a time warp”. Every face, of course, made its backward glance; every trope was thoroughly rehearsed in the theatre of memory. But underneath the mummery, what was being voiced?

¹ For the Maltby Colliery closure see *The slow death of King Coal: Farewell, Maltby Colliery in The Guardian*, Thursday, 11th April, 2013. For the Goldthorpe protest see ‘*She ruined my family’s life. She took everything*’ in *The Guardian*, Thursday 18th April, 2013.

Well, an imperative. As Avery Gordon insists, “haunting is not the same as being exploited, traumatised, or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences or is produced by them” (Avery, 1997: xvi). It is, though a “socio-political–psychological state” that is:

...precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long a duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, *something different from before, seems like it must be done*. (Gordon, 1997: xvi. My emphasis)

Indeed. When “something different from before seems like it must be done”! This thesis tries to localise that imperative in a setting a long way from Avery Gordon’s US research locale but not far from Goldthorpe and Maltby; in a very similar coalfield setting where it is even *more* difficult than it is in those two South Yorkshire villages to *put away* disturbed feelings; a setting where the urgency – and difficulty – of *something being done* is redoubled by the persistent subterranean reverberations of silences which prevent it. Twenty miles or so from Goldthorpe, in ‘Beldover’, ‘Coalbrook’, ‘Cragwell’ and ‘Longthorne’², the necessary intergenerational remembrance through which ghosts might name their unmet need is present only in the fullness of its *absence*; an absence to which this thesis, in hope of something being done, invites our attention and wonders, with Guattari, “and yet...” (Guattari, 2011: 11)

² The names I’ve given to the four villages that constitute my research site.

1.1.3 Note on the overall structure of the thesis

As the first candidate for a PhD by article at Sheffield Hallam University I have, with a view to effectively demonstrating that the regulations for degree of PhD by Article have been met, structured my thesis as follows. For clarity and coherence, it is presented in two separate parts.

Part 1

Part 1 (General introduction and Submitted Publications) is organised in two distinct sections. The first section contains the abstract, the preface, this note on the overall structure of the thesis, and a further sub-section providing a commentary on the circumstances of each article's production, aspects of the peer review process and a critical commentary of each article's place within the developmental trajectory of my work. **Part 1, Section 1** is numbered from page 1 to page 36.

Part 1, Section 2, contains the five submitted published articles as PDFs. That is, they are presented *in facsimile* as finally published after proof reading. Now, in consultation with the Research Office at Sheffield Hallam University, I have finally decided to present the articles as PDFs for the following two main reasons. First, because there are differences between my final drafts and the published PDF versions that would not be otherwise captured. Secondly, because it is necessary and potentially fruitful in my view for a PhD by article to invite the examiners to see published articles as they already exist in the public domain. There, they are a *de facto* part of a wider discussion that needs to be taken into account, particularly in relation to a thesis by article. In whichever journal special issue or book collection the articles appear, they are obviously positioned editorially against other scholarly production

through both the ‘editor’s introduction’ and editorial juxtaposition with other articles in the collection. Thus they speak to other contributions in a way that meaningfully extends beyond their own specific topic-boundary. My aim, therefore, in presenting the PDFs is to encourage my examiners to follow up the published articles in on-line versions of the host journals with a view to familiarising themselves with the ways in which various guest editors have contextualised and evaluated my scholarly contribution. I hope that is self-evidently a worthwhile and productive aim. One inevitable down-side of including PDFs, however, is that pagination is not consistent through the published articles – or within the thesis – but follows the original pagination in each article, a matter that I trust has only a negligible impact. To avoid any unnecessary confusion, though, I have separated each article within **Part 1, Section 2** by means of an un-numbered, coloured, separating page.

Furthermore, the reader should also note that the PDFs in **Part 1, Section 2** retain the set of references *as used within each specific article as published* irrespective of any duplication that may occur between articles, or between the articles and the full set of references provided in **Part 2**. Format also varies slightly according to submission rules governing publication in the different journals in which the articles appear. Any typographical errors appearing in the printed versions also remain. Finally, it should be noted that each article is referred to in other sections of the thesis by an acronym (in bold and italicised) derived from its title (see the Table of Contents, above). For example, the article published in Children’s Geographies is referred to as ***CG***, the article published in Journal of Education Administration and History as ***JEAH***, and so on.

Part 2 contains what is effectively the ‘Candidate Statement’ mentioned in the Research Degree Regulations but presents it as an Overview of the Thesis which provides a considered discussion of the way in which the articles submitted in **Part 1** relate to the overall doctoral inquiry. Thus, **Part 2** situates the published material within a broader literature review and a more extensive discussion of methodology. It also draws out conclusions and opportunities for further research. In accordance with the guidelines offered in the Regulations, **Part 2** is structured around introductory sections that include “an explanation of the research question(s), the research subject, relevant literature and methodology” and a concluding section where the “results of the research are summarised and discussed” and future directions for research are outlined.

1.1.4 Commentary on articles presented

General

This PhD by Article gathers together a set of articles that were produced in an *ad hoc* way as they arose from the realities of research production for a Visiting Research Associate in the contemporary academy. They were *not* produced to conform to any plan that they might at some time be assembled together to constitute a doctoral thesis. Indeed, for me, the specific virtue of the PhD by Article format has been its very capacity for accommodating a set of disparate but related articles that have been collated retrospectively on the basis of the episodic and singular conditions of their production rather than any sequential or thematic coherence that they might or might not have as a group.

There is an obvious down-side to this as compared to the conventional doctoral monograph format, not least a sense of incompleteness. Inevitably, the gathered articles do *not* constitute a full set of chapters that are constructed in such a way as to present an overall thesis structured comprehensively around *all* the key topics that have emerged from a given inquiry. There are gaps: some topics, for a whole number of reasons, are never worked up as articles. There are also repetitions: each article is a time bound part of a work in progress and each, in my case at least, was written as a one-off response to a particular publication opportunity without my having an eye to its 'fit' against any other article. With a view to taking this into account, I have often employed the Candidate Statement (**Part 2**) to indicate what is *not* in the articles and remains yet to be developed. In this section, however, I want to note the specific circumstances of production and relative strengths and weaknesses of each article.

In the case of each, information is provided on the following aspects: the initial conference paper/s on which each article draws, the circumstances in which it was invited or commissioned, and a general commentary. For further information, the table at the **Appendix 2** to this thesis demonstrates how the procedure for article selection required by the regulations for the degree of PhD by Article has been met.

Article 1 Bright, N.G. 2011a. ‘Off the Model’: Resistant spaces, school disaffection and ‘aspiration’ in a former coal-mining community. In *Children’s Geographies*. 9: 1. 63-78

Initial papers

This article draws on material developed in the following conference papers.

Doing Autoethnography – Paper presented as one of three invited papers at ‘The PhD Experience’ international graduate student conference, University of Hull, September, 2008.

“Doin’ Stuff”: Educational Resistance among Disaffected Young Men in a Former UK Coalfield presented at European Conference of Educational Research (ECER) conference, University of Gothenburg, September, 2008.

Off ‘The Model’: Resistant Places, Unremembering and School Disaffection in a Former UK Coalfield presented at Geographies of Education conference, University of Loughborough, September, 2009.

The circumstances in which the article was invited or commissioned

The article was initially delivered as a talk supported by power point presentation at the Geographies of Education conference at Loughborough. I was then approached by the guest editors of a special issue on ‘aspiration’ to see if I would be interested in submitting an article.

Changes made during review

The article went through four drafts during the reviewing process and prior to the final submission. The reviews received accepted the article subject to revision of the structure of the article. In its original form the article began with a field note relating to a film that some young people had made and both reviews noted that the opening section would be better moved to a different place within the article, so the opening could be more conventional in form. In the final version – which was accepted - I removed the opening section altogether and used it eventually in a different form in the *JEAH* article.

General Commentary

This article was an attempt to put to work some ideas that were growing out of a preliminary reading in the geographical literature on space and place as a shaping factor in cultural, social, economic and political life (Hubbard *et al*, 2004). Though I’d initially had some familiarity with Raymond Williams’s 1970s work (Williams, 1972; 1975), Massey’s early work on gendered coalfield geographies (Massey, 1994,1995) and Harvey’s contributions to understanding geographies of capital and utopia (Harvey, 2000) I was less familiar with the contributions of Nigel Thrift (2008,

for example) Henri Lefebvre (1991, for example) and Ed Soja (1996) – all of which seemed relevant to my work.

Nevertheless, in line with my initial understanding of their work, a key aim of the article was to describe the space of the colliery model villages in which my research was conducted as affective, variously imagined, constitutive of social life and produced in moments of specific historico-economic conjuncture. In attempting to do so, the article sharpened the broad argument of my doctoral study, namely that ‘school disaffection’ has to be seen as situated in such layered frameworks.

Consequently, it articulated a much more sophisticated response to space and place than an earlier article I had published in *International Journal on School Disaffection* (Bright, 2010). The notion of space that I was mobilising can be summed up in the following from Lefebvre, where space is framed, capaciously, as an “encounter, assembly, simultaneity... [of] everything that there is *in space*” (Lefebvre, 1991: 101).

The draft article was generally well received in peer review with a recognition of the broad significance of ‘spatialising’ my key research question about the links between ‘traditions’ of resistance and the lives of the young people in the study:

I found it fascinating to consider how youths might be reflecting the traditions of resistance and aspiration that have been both present and often pervasively absent for such a long time in these communities (anonymous reviewer)

However, a significant issue came up about my analysis of the empirical material, with two referees being concerned that I was “over analysing” young people’s views towards the end of the paper, a point with which the editor of the *Children’s Geographies* special issue on aspiration agreed. I was asked to “reflect on this and

either adjust your argument, or use alternative data that better illustrates the points you are trying to make”. I was also asked to “make wider links back to geographies of education, or aspiration at the very least and also to think about why/how does this paper change the way geographers think about education or aspiration?”

There were two ways in which I responded to these points. First I added caveats to the claims about resistance that I had made in the first draft in the light of Samuel’s important contribution on radical conservatism in coalfield culture (Samuel, 1986). Secondly, I tried to work up the notion of ‘resistant aspiration’ as a paradoxical amalgam of historically formed attitudes that:

...point simultaneously in a number of different contradictory directions, responding to at least three energies. There’s the belligerent and direct refusal ...There’s the instinctive collective solidarism of the Beldover young people...and ‘everybody sticking together down Coalbrook’. But there’s also a substantial element of radical conservatism that is powerfully present. (Bright, 2011a: 73)

Basically, the argument was that working class teenagers growing up in spaces such as the Model weren’t suffering the *failure* of aspiration in which policy positioned them, but were, in fact, aspiring to a set of social values – sometimes politically ambivalent and nostalgic, to be sure – that run contrary to the dominant model espoused within education discourse generally and are constantly misrecognised within that discourse as ‘disaffection’.

On reflection, there are three fundamental weaknesses in this article all of which militate somewhat against its originality and significance. In the first place, and at a simple narrative level, the idea of ‘the Model’ as not clearly enough explained. It is

not clear that I am taking the local name ('The Model) of specific places (the Victorian colliery model villages) and interpreting them in a fully Lefebvrian way. This not only makes readability needlessly difficult but also serves to reduce the impact of the key point emerging from my research in relation to professional policy and practice, namely that spaces of 'aspiration' are contested in complex and localised ways and have to be recognised as such. Secondly, the idea of 'resistant aspiration' is at one and the same time both underdeveloped and over asserted. In reviewing this article now, it seems to me to me that the criticism of 'over analysis' is really based in a recognition that the key notion developed in the article is too schematic to encompass the complex paradoxes of lived, embodied practice that are discernible in the empirical material. Thirdly, at this stage in my research production I remained largely dependent on Diane Reay's (2009) notion of 'sedimentation' in trying to explain intergenerational continuities in young people's experiences of class and education. While Reay's idea is of seminal importance in my view, I am no longer content that it can bear the analytic weight that I placed upon it in my early published work. Effectively, I had suggested that 'sedimentation' might be able to fully capture the complex intergenerational transmission of affect that I was observing in the field – a claim that went much further than anything that Reay had in fact suggested and that could only gain warrant from a considered reading in the literature on affect.

**Article 2 Bright, N.G. 2011b. "Non-Servile Virtuosi" in
insubordinate spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a
former English coalfield. In *European Education Research Journal*.
10: 4. 502-515**

Initial papers

This paper draws on material from the following papers.

Ghost Stories and Love Songs: Autoethnography as an 'Affective' Space in Qualitative Educational Research presented at ECER, University of Vienna, September, 2009.

Refle[x]ions on the Margins: Researchers, Participants and the Affective Space of 'Hearing and Being Heard', 'Looking and Being Seen' (jointly with Sarah Dyke, MMU) presented at ECER, University of Vienna, September, 2009.

'Non- Servile Virtuosi' in Insubordinate Spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield. Paper presented in the symposium 'Bottom-up approaches to agency in Education'. ECER, University of Helsinki, September, 2010.

The circumstances in which the article was invited or commissioned

After the symposium at ECER, 2010, the organiser of the symposium, Carola Mick, proposed a special issue on 'bottom-up agency' to the editor of European Education Research Journal, Martin Lawn. This was accepted in principle and I was invited to submit my paper as presented at ECER.

Changes made after review

No changes were required

General commentary

This article originated from a mixture of motives. First, it attempted to deal with an interpretive dissatisfaction that remained about the *Children's Geographies (CG)* article (see above) in particular the emphasis that I'd placed on Samuel's (1985) identification of radical conservatism. After publishing the *CG* article, I had increasingly felt that the empirical materials – interview texts, field notes, recordings, film – that I had to hand spoke *emphatically* to the completeness of some young people's refusals of the disciplinary regimes they encountered at school, and that I'd not been faithful to that. Though undoubtedly tangled in a complex and uneven history in which radical conservatism plays a part, these refusals also owe something to local histories of rank and file militancy and 'DIY' community activism which, while poorly represented in the party political historiography of the coalfields (Holton, 1976, is a notable exception), are nevertheless visible. I felt, then, that I had backed away from the empirical material under the pressure of the peer review for *CG* and that the invitation to prepare a new paper for a symposium on 'Bottom up agency' in the ethnography strand of the European Education Research Conference in Helsinki offered an opportunity to address that omission.

Secondly, the article provided a forum in which to use a burgeoning and increasingly respectable literature – that around Italian Autonomist politics – to trouble an interpretive orthodoxy that stabilised in the aftermath of Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour*. That orthodoxy represents analytical emphasis on refusal as, at best, a "romanticizing" of young people's nihilistic rejections of education (Walker, 1986) or, at worst, as betraying a vicarious tendency to the enjoyment of gendered

“hooliganism”(Delamont, 2000). In sharp contrast, literatures genealogically rooted in the moment of *autonomia* view ‘the scream’ of refusal (Holloway, 2010) as politically productive in a fundamental way. In doing so, they potentially provide a bridge between the kind of refusals that I’d witnessed in the rural, de-industrialised margins that constituted my ethnographic site and the new “multitudinous” projects of social change (see Hardt and Negri, 2001, 2006, 2009) emerging in response to economic crisis on a global scale.

At the time of writing, this article felt outlandish. As can be seen from the abstract, the tone was somewhat polemical and the piece tried to some extent to perform a refusal of the orthodoxy that I’ve just touched on. Drawing on Virno’s (1996) work on ‘exodus’ allowed me to emphasise the improvisational *virtuosity* that was evident in the refusals of *both* generations of research participants taking part in my study. It also allowed me to pick up a barely developed reference to de Certeau’s work on the *perruque* (de Certeau, 1984) that I had first made in the CG article but failed to develop. In the light of the post-*autonomia* literature, I could now think of the everyday resistances such as ‘just doing stuff’ and ‘being a bit of a bastard’ as political in their own right but as flowing out of the local practices of the older generation of participants – of being a “combatant”, of “having a voice in here saying: you’re not telling me what to do!”.

What is more, one of the most troubling empirical phenomena – a practice of celebratory self-denigration that I have called ‘claiming a present dystopia’ – can also be seen as making political sense from this perspective. In its strident rejection of both redemption and respectability, this ‘roughness’ (“living in a shit ‘ole” on the “worst

estate in country” in “a nasty fighting town” where “everybody’s allus pissed”) refuses subjection to two, key, ‘improving’ discourses that have historically disciplined coal-mining communities: that constructing the middle class self and that constructing the disciplined proletarian.

That the review process for this article ran so smoothly meant that there were few changes and the text to my mind retains both its narrative drive and its adventurous analysis. Most importantly, though, it links my empirical field to a body of literature on small scale, bottom up, insubordinate political action in a way that is original and, as I’ll argue in other parts of this thesis, significant.

Article 3 Bright, N.G. 2012a. “It’s not a factory!” Performative educational provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a former UK coal-mining community. In Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (eds) *Performativity across UK education: ethnographic cases of its effects, agency and reconstructions*. Painswick: E&E Publishing. 217-240

Initial papers

The first draft of this chapter was presented as “*It’s not a factory!*”: *Performativity in education and support provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a former coal-mining community* at the Oxford Ethnography Conference, New College, University of Oxford, Sept 2011

The paper also draws on some ideas in the earlier paper *'You'd got to be a bit of a combatant': Education, aspiration and 'counter aspiration' in a UK coalfield* presented to the Power, Discourse and Education conference, University of Plymouth, April 2011

The circumstances in which the article was invited or commissioned

After initially proposing and having accepted a different paper for the 2011 Oxford Ethnography Conference, I changed my submission and proposed the first draft of this article. In the interim period between making the initial proposal and final submission to Oxford, I had been approached by the book editors, Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman for a chapter on performativity in the youth support sector for their collection on performativity in UK education. My idea was to use the Oxford Ethnography Conference to gain informal peer review on the first draft.

A summary of the main changes made as a result of review

In response to review, I shortened the article significantly through a series of three drafts and restructured the sections focussing on 'Christine' and on 'Karl'. Again, I changed the opening to a more conventional framing of the topic. The largest difficulty with this piece was trying to anticipate what might be covered in the Editors' Introduction and, hence, what I needed to say about the broad debate about around performativity.

General commentary

As noted, this piece of work was commissioned by editors Bob Jeffrey and Geoff Troman as a chapter in their collection of ethnographic investigations of performativity in UK education. My involvement with that project arose out of links I had established during the early years of my doctoral work with a group of people around the Ethnography network at the European Education Research Association, the Oxford Ethnography Conference, the journal *Ethnography and Education*, and an associated book series. The specific commission arose from discussions generated by papers I had presented at the Oxford Ethnography conference during 2009 and 2010 and another I had given as part of a symposium on ethnography and performativity at the 2010 Discourse, Power and Resistance conference.

Reviewing the article now, it stands as a key development in the overall trajectory of the inquiry evidenced in this PhD by Article thesis. I can now see that drafting this book chapter allowed me to move beyond an unresolved tension between the first two articles. The CG article had been marred, in my view, by my own nervousness about reading the resistance of the young people as *politically* radical. As I have indicated above, I felt that such a claim inevitably positioned me in terms of a debate about resistance that had developed in the 1970s in the aftermath of Willis's *Learning to Labour* and that no longer felt appropriate. Consequently – and to avoid being so positioned – I had backed away from making that claim quite as vigorously as was justified by the empirical material (in sharp contrast, the EERJ article sought to make such a claim in a forceful manner, but in the light of a fresh literature on the legacy of *autonomia*).

This article also allowed me to range more widely in the very considerable amount of empirical material generated by the group of practitioners that had participated in and contributed to my field work. In considering the grip of performativity in the setting of alternative out-of school provision, youth support and ‘foundation learning’ this material extends the discussion of performativity beyond the framework of an established literature on professionalism and focuses instead on the impact of performativity on para-professionals, support staff, the variety of ‘multi-agency’ practitioners working outside the school system, and also on the children and youth themselves.

As interesting as that is in terms of the developing literature on performativity, the point I’d like to emphasise here relates to the place of this article within the development of my work as a whole. The way that I framed performativity from the joint perspective of staff and young people actually allowed me to think about the way that the relationship between the young people and the practitioners who were working with them was *co-constructed* as a mutually protective, validating and sometimes collusive enclave within in a broadly alien policy space circumscribed from without. To varying degrees, and through gendered rhetorical practices still framed within the geography of gender relations noticed by Massey twenty five years earlier, these locally originating practitioners sought to enact the affective continuity of ‘community’ unofficially and subversively within the official discourse of aspiration. In a notable divergence which merits ongoing research attention (see Continuing Research), the women tended to articulate their commitment as one of protecting “skin and feelings and brains” against the “factory” of performativity (see ‘Christine’ in Bright, 2012a) while the men positioned their actions heroically as

“combat” in the cause of grand projects such as “socialism” and “revolution” (see “Ray” for example in Bright 2012a). There is much still to be interrogated, here, about the residual gendering of labour and resistant practices within the new contexts of immaterial labour that are proliferating on the margins of the education and training sector.

Another key development within this article relates to the way in which I find myself compelled by the nature of my ‘data’ to move beyond the broadly interactionist perspective that has tended to dominate British ethnography of education as it has emerged as a field. This is the first paper in which I elaborate an ethnographic practice that operates at three different levels: as a “critical policy ethnography” (Smyth, 2010), as an interrogation of the dialectics of discourse and the everyday (Smith, 1987), and as an amplifier of the way that circulating intensities of affect occur within a conjunctural frame something like a “structure of feeling” (Williams, 1975, 1977). To that end, I outline, for the first time, an ethnographic enterprise situated:

...at the troublesome edge between policy discourse, material cultural practice and the “bloom-spaces” (Gregory and Seigworth, 2010, 9), “transmissions” (Brennan, 2004) and “atmospheres” (Anderson, 2009) of affect that are so obvious in the embodied choreography of ‘*dis*-affection’ as it presents in the locality. (Bright, 2012a : 317)

Article 4 Bright, N.G. 2012b. ‘Sticking together!’ Policy activism from within a former UK coal-mining community. In *Journal of Education Administration and History*. 44: 3. 1-16.

Initial papers

This article draws on the following conference papers:

'Not takin' no shit! Disaffected masculinities, resistance and schooling in a former UK coal-mining community presented to Oxford Ethnography Conference, St Hilda's College, University of Oxford, September 2009.

On refusing to be 'plastic': Educational disaffection and 'aspiration' as experienced by girls in a former UK coal-mining community presented to the Oxford Ethnography Conference, New College, Oxford. September 2010

The circumstances in which the article was invited or commissioned

I was approached by the guest editor, John Smyth, who had seen my earlier work in *Children's Geographies*, to contribute to a special issue of *JEAH* focussing on Policy Activism.

A summary of the main changes made as a result of review

Very significant changes were made to the article through four drafts as a result of these reviews. The whole opening section was deleted and the introduction redesigned to preview the content of the piece. The aim, overall, was to achieve clearer signposting generally and a more soberly and cogently argued case. The problem from the outset was that I had taken on the commission without really being convinced of the applicability of notions of policy activism in relation to the ethnographic material that I had available. Consequently, I was worried that the data was being over-interpreted and the comments of the third reviewer really struck home. Indeed, I would regard that particular review as constituting a turning point in

how I have approached my material which, as a result, has become more focussed precisely on –as Reviewer 3 put it – “showing rather than telling”. This whole question of how we work with field data, notes, conversations and anecdotes and whether the stylistic, rhetorical and analytic repertoire of British ethnography of education is sufficiently sensitive has become a central concern of my developing work (see discussion *Research Subject* and *Methodology* in **Part 2**).

General commentary

The complex, extensive and comprehensive review of this article, required a revisiting of the tension between the *CG* and the *EERJ* articles noted above. In the end, and after very significant rewriting, I think the conceptual framework in which the account was framed – policy activism – actually provided a vehicle for some resolution of that tension. This article still reads to me as a judiciously considered response to the ambivalences in my data and succeeds in capturing both the “scope and limitations” (as I termed it in the abstract to this article) of the affective legacy of the locality’s insubordinate history.

Obviously, this article employs what was, to me, a new literature in providing an account of the salient features of policy activism. It expands the notion of policy action employed in the previous article on performativity (Bright, 2012a) but focuses the discussion in the context of the other key policy relay that, at the time, dominated the youth support sector: aspiration (which had been visited first, we’ll remember, in the *CG* article). Furthermore, it draws on data – a detailed observational account of the young people’s film, *Sticking Together* – that had not been employed before in any of the final versions of the previous material. Most importantly for the general

discussion here, however, is that this article is the first one where I add significantly to Reay's notion of sedimentation by working with Valerie Walkerdine's seminal psychosocial work on affect in de-industrialised settings (Walkerdine, 2010; Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012) and the notion of the industrial ruin developed by cultural geographer Tim Edensor (Edensor, 2005).

Walkerdine describes the way in which a "containing skin", created through a range of affective relations and social practices particular to "traditional communities" such as steel or coal-mining communities, "provides a feeling of ontological security for a community beset by uncertainty and insecurity" (Walkerdine, 2010: 93). In the event of a community trauma such as the closure of a steelworks or pit the painstakingly fabricated skin can, she goes on to suggest, be jeopardised in such a way as "to cause a lack of safety and fear of death within the inhabitants" (Walkerdine 2010: 93). This work is critically important to my developing account of empirical material indicating a persistent and pervading atmosphere of bereavement and loss – of something very bad having occurred in a past which is at the same time both ever present and utterly eradicated.

When this notion is put to work alongside the idea of the industrial ruin proposed by Edensor, it becomes possible to respond to one of the key luminosities in my empirical material where a narrative theme of "a kind of haunting going on" commonly surfaces. In this narrative, the young people of the locality are frequently seen by those adults who *originated in the community* and now work with them, as being somehow condemned to an unknowing but endless occupation of the moment when the past and its imagined future – so important in coal-mining communities –

suddenly and traumatically stalled with the closure of the pits. Time *has* stopped, and no one knows how to get it going again. Of course, in the common sense of the ‘outsider’ services who position these communities in policy discourses of deficit, this is plain nonsense. The incapacity to “move on” is a simple failure of ambition, mobility and aspiration. The cognoscenti, however, continue to whisper that things are different, that there’s “summat goin’ on”, something that’s “not done wi’ yet”.

Now, for Edensor, the industrial ruin is a site redolent with such hauntings. In the ruins left by de-industrialisation, “spaces of working-class political action [are] eradicated . . .” (Edensor 2005: 132). Forms “of collectivity and solidarity...skills, ways of behaving and feeling, traces of arcane language, and neglected historical and contemporary forms of social enterprise” (Edensor 2005:166–167) are lost, and “there is a forgetting that things might be otherwise, that elements of the past might have conspired to forge an alternative present” (Edensor 2005, p. 141). Essentially, at the level of conventionally representational knowledge, the utopic possibilities apprehended in lived, historically concrete experience are obliterated as the pits, steelworks and so on are closed, dismantled, cut away from the surface of the smoothed over landscape.

However, and this is critically important, a residual utopic energy remains as a remnant excess of the semiotic, whereby: “. . . ruins are rampantly haunted by a horde of absent presences, a series of signs of the past that cannot be categorised but [are] intuitively grasped” (Edensor 2005, p. 152). In this account, the stories given out by ruins are “inarticulate but suffused with affect” (Edensor 2005, p. 163). There is an inarticulate transmission of knowledge that leaks even through those powerful,

socially necessary post-traumatic practices of silence noted in Walkerdine's (2010) work and so powerfully evident in my own material. That knowledge, however, emerges "out of the confrontation with these phantoms [and] is not empiricist, didactic or intellectual but empathetic and sensual, understood at an intuitive and affective level" (Edensor 2005, p. 164).

In this account, then, I read Edensor as adumbrating a notion of a collective, affective knowledge that is transmitted otherwise than through representational logics, but within specifically patterned historical relations. Furthermore, such knowledge is grasped intuitively and always carries within it all the as yet un-actualised possibilities of how things might be otherwise. In a Blochian move, the "industrial ruin" carries – even in its emptied out, "smoothed over" spaces – an intuitively accessible excess of meaning in the form of the "not yet" of utopic immanence (see Bloch, 1995). It is this idea, and its potential relevance to practice in youth and community settings, that I work with in the final article submitted in this PhD by article thesis.

Article 5 Bright, N.G. 2012c. A practice of concrete utopia? Informal youth support and the possibility of 'redemptive remembering' in a UK coal-mining area. In *Power and Education*. 4: 3. 315-326

Initial papers

The article draws on material from the following conference papers:

Seancing voices of the uncouncted: a duet on affect, resistance and 'redemptive' remembering in a UK coal-mining area presented at Spaces of Alterity conference, May 2011, University of Nottingham.

A practice of concrete utopia? School disaffection, refusal and the possibility of 'redemptive remembering' in a UK coalfield presented at the European Conference on Education Research, University of Berlin, September, 2011.

'Ghosted bodily matter[s]': Affect and school 'disaffection' in a UK coal-mining area'. presented at BERA, University of London, September, 2011.

Using affect theory to re-think school disaffection presented at International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. May 2012.

The circumstances in which the article was invited or commissioned

This article initially arose out of a symposium on Schooling after Neoliberalism at ECER 2011. Subsequently, a special issue on the same topic was proposed and accepted by *Power and Education* to be guest edited by John Schostak

A summary of the main changes made as a result of review

Basically, once again a response to a request for minor changes led to a significant rewrite of the article. I shortened the article significantly, changed the opening entirely and incorporated some new material that I had developed in a paper to the British Education Research Conference, 2012.

My main aim in this article was to bring out the practical significance of my research for modelling critical practice in youth and community work at a moment when individualised and de-historicised notions of ‘aspiration’, ‘resilience’ and ‘wellbeing’ were proliferating in policy discourse on informal youth support practice. By this time in my doctoral inquiry, I was working with a much firmer idea of young working class people’s disaffection from education being situated within historical geographies of collectively transmitted affect and was keen to argue for a form of politicised and historically attentive intergenerational practice that might productively interrogate that affective legacy.

In particular – and drawing on my integration of the work of Walkerdine and Edensor in the *JEAH* article – I had in mind a pedagogic practice that could work with those insubordinate community histories that become silenced when a collective psycho-social space once redolent with hope becomes a space of ruin as a result of politically orchestrated de-industrialisation. Maybe such a practice could respond to the imperative arising from global anti-capitalist protest and link the traditionally insubordinate, but now neglected, margin of the coalfield to new forms of urban and metropolitan political action. If able to do so, it might help outmanoeuvre the extreme Right who are active in the coalfield area (something that I’d drawn attention to by way of a warning in the closing paragraph of the *JEAH* article).

Basically, I drew on Blochian readings of Freire by McLaren and others (McLaren and Tadeu de Silva, 1993.) to call for a form of intergenerational “redemptive remembering” that I referred to, after Bloch (1995), as a practice of “concrete utopia”. Such a counter practice, I proposed, might work to recover the now ‘unspeakable’

imaginings of a radical reconstitution of society (in which coalfield history is rich) and make them available for a collective remaking of the de-historicised and individualised notions of, for example, resilience and aspiration that prevail in policy and have come to dominate practice interventions.

Now, while this article indicates a more extensive reading in the area of affect theory – Brennan (2004) and Anderson (2009) are both mentioned – the significance of that reading was not elaborated in the confined space of the article. However, as my understanding and ongoing employment of the literature on affect has become central to the doctoral inquiry and the work that I am now developing it has, consequently, been more significantly addressed in this thesis (see Literature Review). Indeed, the developing literature on affect has provided the key vector between what I have called the “in-bye” of subjectivity and the “out-bye” of social structure – a minor theme of this thesis, as I outline in the *Research Subject* section of **Part 2** below.

‘Off The Model’: resistant spaces, school disaffection and ‘aspiration’ in a former coal-mining community

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Discussions of ‘aspiration’ influencing contemporary education policy and practice are framed almost exclusively in terms of individual – or, at most, familial – ambitions towards economic prosperity. The failure to achieve ‘social mobility’ in British society is often posed as being due to the ‘low aspirations’ of working class children, particularly in formerly heavily industrialised areas. In a classic case of ‘blaming the victim’ the social exclusion that undoubtedly exists in such areas is blamed on those who suffer it. Things would be different, the argument goes, if only people aspired to ‘get on’. This paper looks at material from an intergenerational ethnographic study of some former coal-mining communities in the north of England which are often popularly characterised as insular and lacking in ambition. In contrast to this stereotype, however, the data suggests that working class teenagers growing up in the impoverished and abandoned geography of Victorian colliery model villages, rather than suffering a failure of aspiration, often angrily and powerfully aspire – but for something contrary to the dominant model. Reviewing the ethnographic data in the light of a sociological and historical literature that attests to the exceptional nature of coal-mining communities, I suggest that such exceptionality impacts on young people’s dispositions towards the educational project as a whole through a complex process of cultural transmission. A historically and locally situated notion of counter aspiration – that I call, here, resistant aspiration – is evident. I propose, in conclusion, that an acknowledgement of such resistant aspiration might help understand the widespread ‘school disaffection’ of working class youngsters not only in these former coal-mining communities but also in other post-industrial settings – nationally and internationally – that are similarly characterised by contested histories.

Keywords: coalfield communities; ethnography; intergenerational; disaffection; resistant aspiration

There seemed to be about a dozen kids there when I got there. The youth workers were locked out of the minibus which was parked up outside Cavendish Hall. The kids were huddled together in small groups getting cold and impatient, one lad whacking a football against the side of the bus. As we talk, it’s clear they are mainly from the Model Village itself and there’s clearly a bit of a thing about being ‘off the Model’, as they call it. They see themselves as a distinct group and in one interchange we were talking about school – where there’s a new Head Teacher – and they were saying ‘Aw, it’s shit!’ and ‘it’s wank!’ or ‘it’s all about uniforms’ and I said, ‘Oh, they’re sorting you out, are they?’ and they said, ‘They’ll not sort *us* out! We’re off the Model!’ (Field notes, 22 January 2010)

I want, here, to explore aspects of how some young working class teenagers – powerfully disaffected from schooling – are living the key years of their teens and ‘making meaning’ in the particular physical, cultural, historical, imaginative and embodied space that is available

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to them in the former pit villages where they live. I will make the argument throughout that this particular post-industrial setting – three neighbouring former coal-mining villages in the Beldover¹ district of Derbyshire, England – is exceptional in some key ways, particularly in relation to the questions of ‘aspiration’ and ‘social mobility’ currently exercising politicians and education pundits alike. Such exceptionality, I suggest, significantly impacts on children’s and young people’s attitudes to education in the broadest sense and is at the root of what I describe as a form of *resistant aspiration* evident in this local space – a space I call here ‘the Model’.²

Before beginning that discussion, however, it is probably worth saying a little bit about why – as an ‘ethnographer of education’ – I come as enthusiastically as I do to those various interdisciplinary contributions identified by Taylor (2009) as still moving ‘*towards a geography of education*’ (my emphasis), particularly those focussing on the study of children and young people as ‘key actors in society and space’ (Taylor 2009, p. 651) brought together in *Children’s Geographies*. My interest is to do with specific aspects of ethnography.

According to Paul Willis,

The ‘ethnographic impulse’ is to be so moved with curiosity about a social puzzle ...that you are seized to go and look for yourself, to see ‘what’s going on’... Physical and sensuous presence then allows observation and witness... (Willis 2000, p. xiii)

Ethnography’s methodological edge, *par excellence*, is in getting close up and providing rich descriptions of social worlds. It is particularly effective in social moments when

...profound processes of re-structuration and de-traditionalisation ... are eroding the certainties of previous transitions and inherited cultures, as well as inciting them to re-establish themselves in new forms. (Willis and Trondman 2000, p. 7)

At such points ethnography can make a very significant contribution to understanding how a ‘...particular culture works – how it maintains itself and adapts to changing circumstances’ (Walford 2009, p. 273). Ethnography is not, of course, merely descriptive. At its most powerful it is both theoretically informed and capable of ‘*grounded imaginings*’ (Willis 2000, p. xii, original emphasis).

In the case of my own work which occurs at precisely such a moment – a generation after the year-long strike of 1984–1985 that presaged the end of the UK coal-mining industry – the physical and sensuous presence necessitated by ethnographic immersion has constantly abutted against recalcitrant questions about the complex, paradoxical, contested and uncertain nature of the ‘space’ that my study occupies. On a day-to-day basis, I have found myself inhabiting a dimension where the primary *real* would be at one moment simultaneously invested with past *and* present; with the remembered *and* forgotten; the physical, the imaginative *and* the affective; the material *and* the discursive.

Being able to draw on notions of space originating in the work of Lefebvre and Soja, both of whom stress that space is socially constructed and that social relations are constitutive of that space, has been essential in exploring some of the ‘luminosities’ that are ‘resonant with *enigma, paradox or absurdity*’ (original emphasis, Katz 2001, p. 447) in my work. Geography’s increasing interrogation of the relationship between space and time – and, related to that, liminality – is also pertinent to themes that are brocaded in the fabric of my own empirical data. What is more, ideas coming out of what arguably constitutes an ‘affective turn’ in the humanities and social sciences (see Ticineto-Clough 2007) – some of which, such as Thrift’s elaboration of ‘spatialities of feeling’ (see Thrift 2008, pp. 171–197), have originated on the fringes of geography – have been particularly valuable in coming to grips with the sheer emotional energy of the data. My geographical enthusiasm is, therefore, empirically driven. In being so, I hope it does not contribute accidentally to that rather unsatisfactory borrowing of vocabulary that Taylor, following Massey, warns against (Taylor 2009, p. 652). It is just that notions of space as multi-layered,

constitutive, active, uneasy and contested seem really *useful* to me. They help get an ethnographic purchase on the slippery empirics of growing up on the social margins in contemporary Beldover.

The Model

So, what about 'the Model'? Now, I have tried to represent the almost impenetrably dense, multiply stranded, interwoven, braided texture of this space – with its hauntings and injuries,³ its 'geography of gender relations'⁴ (Massey 1994, p. 181), its iconography of collective unity, and its utopian dreamings – elsewhere (see Bright 2009, 2010a, 2010c). Literally, the term denotes the three Victorian model villages built by local coal companies in the neighbouring villages of Cragwell, Beldover and Coalbrook that constitute the boundary of my study. Two of these, Cragwell Model Village and New Beldover – built by the Beldover Coal Company under the patrician but none the less acquisitive eye of the local coal-owning aristocracy in the last decade of the nineteenth century – are particularly celebrated in architectural terms. The now structurally restored oval village at Cragwell – designed under the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement and built just prior to the publication of Howard's *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Social Reform* in 1898 – is a classic of its kind. New Beldover, a slightly earlier square of 200 houses overlooked by the castle at Beldover, reminds sharply of the stern 'moral quadrilaterals' that informed even these apparently enlightened social architectures (see Fishman 1999, p. 14).

So, 'the Model' is a group of very specific places. But it is already more than that. At first description even, it spills beyond its own literal content and reveals itself as a remnant, as the concretised *desideratum* of model coal-mining labour and social relationships as envisaged in the hey-day of the great 'vertical', privately owned coal and steel companies like the Beldover Coal Company. At this first level then, the Model is a frozen map of the labour hierarchy of extracting coal. As testament to the rigidity of that hierarchy, the dwellings in each Model Village vary subtly in design from the village's centre to its periphery as collier's houses give way in a precisely measured way to larger accommodation intended for officials.

At a second level, I extend the term 'the Model' to include also the other 'pit rows' and 'white city' estates that were developed at different times to accommodate a growing workforce in this part of the Derbyshire coalfield. But 'the Model' is more than that, too. It's a key example, in fact, of the broader 'spatial apartheid' (Skeggs 2004, p. 180), that Beverley Skeggs, not mincing her words, recognises as powerfully impacting on lives in contemporary Britain. It is also a locus of celebrated, belligerent, identity as we see in the field note excerpt that I have used as an epigraph to this piece. Equally it's a space of denigration. All the kids that cause trouble, it seems, are 'off the Model'. The 'druggies and thieves' live on the Model. It has its concentration of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), its high numbers of teenage pregnancies, its surveillance and its curfews.⁵ It is a space of anecdotal fascination and reputation, an abandoned front line where time slips backwards and forwards, where nothing changes and everything has changed. It is a space, perhaps most significantly, steeped in the present absence of its own truncated history. And, arguably, that is having an impact on the way that young people envisage the possibilities of their lives – their aspirations – in ways that are complex and cannot easily, in the local idiom, be 'reckoned up'. It's as a contribution to that reckoning up that I hope to tease out some of those complexities here.

A coalfield ethnography

To do that, we will have to come in much closer to the space of the Model. First though, a few words on the focus of my research study as a whole⁶ and the methods employed. It is an

*intergenerational*⁷ ethnography of class, education and youth transitions in part of the British coalfield – a setting that has been seen not only as paradigmatic of working class ‘community’ in modernity (see Lockwood 1966, Bulmer 1975, Kamanka 1982, Waddington *et al.* 1991, Warwick and Littlejohn 1992) but even as ‘archetypally proletarian’ (Dennis *et al.* 1956). This is a setting, furthermore, shaped by a ‘context of *singularity*’ (Strangleman 2001, p. 255, my emphasis) relating to an exceptional history of workplace and community resistance (see the standard national and area histories: Page Arnot 1961, Griffin 1962, Williams 1962). Indeed, Fentress and Wickham identify the coalfields as characterised primarily by ‘a very clear sense of the past as struggle [which] constitutes a memory that goes back at least a century’ and that has the strikes of 1926, 1972, 1974 and 1984–1985 as a ‘common touchstone’ and ‘the imagery of the strike as defiance of the state [as] ... a constant one’ (Fentress and Wickham 1992, pp. 115–116).

At its core, my research looks at the continuities and disjunctions between that particular *resistant* history and the structures of meaning shaping present day young lives. The study assembles data drawn from ethnographic fieldwork material gathered between 2006 and 2010 in the specific geographical setting already mentioned. The empirical material has been generated as part of a doctoral study itself arising from a long-term engagement with the studied communities – as a member of a pit family, as a trade union activist (particularly during the miners’ strike of 1984–1985), as an adult and youth educator working in the Further Education sector throughout the 1990s and, more recently, as a senior development manager with the youth support service, Connexions.

Fieldwork

Acknowledging ethnography as a repertoire of methods characteristically involving *direct* and *sustained* social contact with agents, concentrated fieldwork has been carried out over a four-year period in a variety of settings including an out-of-school 14–16 project, informal education and youth work venues, a youth service mobile unit, a community venue, private homes, a miners’ welfare club and in the street. Two key sites, however, have generated the bulk of the data:

- i. A sustained link (2007–2009) with staff and learners at a community based ‘pre Entry to Employment’⁸ programme – *Go 4 it!* – recruiting 14–16 and 16–18 year olds from the three communities who are either still at school but at ‘risk of becoming NEET’ (not in education, employment or training) or who have finished school and are NEET.
- ii. A sustained (2009–2010) participant observation of staff and young people of mixed ages involved with local authority ‘detached’ and club-based informal youth work provision in the three communities.

The former generated a series of semi-structured interviews with young people and staff, as well as a series of participant observation opportunities. The latter has generated regular observations, conversations and involvement in activities as well as semi-structured and unstructured interviews with groups and individuals. As might be expected in an ethnographic study, other methods have also been employed including spontaneously arising conversations; unstructured, small group informal discussions, ‘go-alongs’ (Kusenbach 2003) and reference to biographical ethnographic material generated by the writer.

The Derbyshire coalfield

Interestingly, any mapping of Derbyshire as a whole on *any* selected indicator of deprivation always happens to generate a map of the coalfield on the eastern side of the county. The core

of what became the modern coalfield lies in what is now the Beldover District Council area of Derbyshire, though most of the large villages or small towns that grew rapidly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century have now been 'rebranded' as increasingly desirable 'historic market towns' since the pits closed in the 1990s.⁹ Certainly, the pattern of deprivation within the Beldover District Council area plots the specific contours of coal extraction. Deeper still within the mapping of the district, impoverishment and marginalisation shows up as concentrated in the former colliery villages themselves. Within the villages, the shadow concentrates darkly around the scoured sites of former pits in the rows and estates of colliery housing (for accounts of coalfield decline see Beatty *et al.* 2005, Bennett *et al.* 2000, Gore *et al.* 2007, Murray *et al.* 2005).

Surprisingly though, a drive through Beldover district takes you through a rural scene redolent even of the Cotswolds. Quiet, minor roads skirt the edge of Dukeries estates. Hedgerows circumscribe worked agricultural land, each salient hillock capped by pheasant coverts planted in the nineteenth century. 'Beauty spots' are prominent as the roads run into Sherwood Forest. The former pit villages sit rudely in the middle of this contemporary commuter idyll. Deep-rooted inequalities, which worsened abruptly and in some ward areas catastrophically, with the end of coal-mining, persist. Regeneration projects, demolition, site clearance and landscaping have erased the worst scars but the coalfields remain blighted by severe socio-economic problems, relating to unemployment, long-term sickness and poverty. Beldover District Council *as a whole* – its bucolic rural reaches notwithstanding – compares unfavourably with national averages (Derbyshire County Council 2006) on indicators of health, benefit dependence, GCSE achievement, teenage pregnancy and 'lifestyle indicators' such as obesity, smoking, life expectancy and mental health. At a smaller scale within the small towns and large villages, the geography is increasingly one characterised by the tightly bounded micro-sites of multiple exclusion that I am calling The Model.

Coalbrook, Cragwell and Beldover all saw their pits close in the early 1990s. Coalbrook, one of the largest communities and formerly the site of one of Derbyshire's biggest pits, has a population of around 10,000. Here, more than a third of the working age population are inactive¹⁰ while more than 50%¹¹ possess no qualifications. Three of Coalbrook's five wards are in the top 4, 3 and 2% nationally. A fourth, Coalbrook North East ward – containing the colliery model village – is placed in the top 1% most deprived. Cragwell, with a population of about 5,000 has 32% inactive due to illness, disability or caring responsibilities, 52% with no qualifications and similar levels of deprivation at ward level. Beldover, the largest community, shows the same characteristics in the former colliery housing estates. Basically, deprivation in these localities reaches the very worst urban levels – a decline described at its nadir as a fall from 'model village to brown [heroin] city'¹² – in a setting, often, of classic rural isolation.

The global has impacted on the local here, too, in quite dramatic ways with significant East European economic migration into some former coal-mining towns and villages,¹³ an issue that has been exploited, with some success, by the extreme right. All of these facts are compounded by the tendency for these 'villages Santa Claus has forgot'¹⁴ to be represented imaginatively, even by local professionals, through what Skeggs (2009, p. 37) has called a 'moral and discursive positioning of all types of the working class with degeneracy'. They are 'hillbilly country, yeah, get your banjo out!'¹⁵ People are described as trapped in a web of dependency and benefit claims in a landscape where, because of the levels of disability, 'Market day in Coalbrook [is] call[ed] "stick Wednesday"'.¹⁶ The places 'are still stuck in 1972', people 'won't change', kids 'won't travel out o' their village'. Nobody, it seems, wants to 'get on'.¹⁷

Coal is now desperately unfashionable¹⁸ and coal-mining communities have long fallen from their 1980s position as the *cause célèbre* of the liberal intelligentsia. Overall, any questions of class exclusion and contested access to power in places such as these have largely been collapsed into a racialised discussion (see Páll Sveinsson 2009, Gillborn 2010) about the 'white working

class'. This fails to connect in any way at all with the broad traditions of radical dissent and militant political action in British working class and labour history generally, never mind with the specific resistance histories of the coalfield. Consequently, there has been no attempt to situate the contemporary experience of growing up in these particular places in relation to that history. Youth disengagement and the apparent failure of aspiration that is supposedly to blame for the UK's lack of social mobility is rarely, if ever, seen as situated in differentiated local settings. Indeed, it is rather too often modelled as symptomatic of a near pathological – even congenital – intellectual *and* moral deficit extending to the white working class as a whole. In contrast, my work suggests, rather, that the unwillingness of young people 'off the Model' to embrace the aspirational project of 'resourcing the entitled middle class self' (Skeggs 2004, pp. 135–154) is *deeply* entangled with the specifics of local working class culture and history. To begin to see this web of connections in operation we need to enter the lived space of the Model. These characteristic excerpts from the ethnographic data will hopefully help us do that. I will let them speak for themselves.

Entering the space¹⁹

Yeah. When I first started I walked up, come out o' police station went up Model Village an' this bloke din't [didn't] recognise me at first but I'd actually worked with 'im in past an' e' says 'Were tha goin' youth?' [Where are you going, mate?] I says, I'm goin' on Model. He says 'They'll fuckin' kill thee' [you]. He says 'Nobody's walked up there since 1984' [the year of the strike]. I says 'There is today'. That were two years ago [2005] An', er, it weren't accepted. You couldn't walk round there. But it's, like, *Model Village!* (Chris Stevens, adult, Police Community Support Officer, Coalbrook)

Well, that come[s] up a lot. Cragwell, you bloody scabs, and UDM lot! And this was kids, that didn't know anything about the bloody pit. Yeah, you're dad's a scab, quite a lot of them said that to our kids. And I said, hey, some of their dads have never worked at the bloody pit. (Ivy Nichols, adult, Model Village community activist, Cragwell)

Talking to some of the girls who came in to the evening drop-in session. One, Gemma, whose dad now works at a pit in the Midlands. So he's commuting around ninety miles each way. Interestingly, quite a political girl, she clearly knows about the strike. She's already talking about 'This new, bastard President' [Prime Minister, David Cameron]. It's day one of the coalition. She was talking about how she wanted to work in care, or as a teaching assistant but 'This bastard President is getting rid of teaching assistants'. These girls all knew about the pit disaster at Cragwell, one of them saying 'They don't tell you nowt about it at school but I think me grandad were in it'. (Field notes, Youth club, Cragwell Model Village, 12 May 2010)

The Community House on the Cavendish ('The Cavs') estate in Beldover, Derbyshire on a bitter cold Wednesday night in February, 2010. Cocker ('Cock o' the Estate'), Kandy, Potpot, JimJam, Heartbreaker and some other kids off the Cavs are sitting in the stifling, fart laden, artificial heat of the Community House watching the film short they made earlier in the year. It's called *Sticking together*. *Sticking together* came out of the experience that a couple of the kids – Cocker and Kandy – had in a locally made feature film of lives blighted by negative educational experiences, made by a noted progressive film-maker and starring an internationally acclaimed lead. Fired by the taste of it, they wanted to make something of their own that said something about themselves and about life in Beldover. Supported by a network of youth work practitioners and managers, the group of young people now huddled on the Community House settee, eventually scripted *Sticking together* from the fabric of their own lives and acted it over a couple of days under professional direction. We watch the DVD with the kids enunciating every line perfectly just before it's said, fascinated again by the space between them as kids and their screen personas as the kids who they aspire to be – kids 'that have it rough but *aren't* 'idiots', kids that stick together and together 'can do it, why can't you?' The dark tale unfolds. A gaggle of noisy teenagers, one bullied and abused by her alcoholic father, hang out together, look out for each other. They drink from large bottles of cider 'up the woods'. Roxy goes missing after witnessing her dad crashed out drunk again. She tries to kill herself. The kids find her before her father does. They confront him – 'Wanker!' He backs off. Three months later. They're hanging out again, heading for the woods, swinging the big plastic bottles. Roxy is with them. When the bottle goes round, she doesn't take a drink. She smiles, having all she needs – the solidarity of her mates. (Field notes, Cavendish Community House, 7 February 2010)

The other youth worker, he's from Coalbrook. When I said 'You're from Coalbrook are you?' one of the kids piped up: 'Scab!' The youth worker – he'd not been a miner but was from a pit family – just stared at him. I

later asked this lad what that meant and he mumbled evasively 'Oh, I don't know, a scab's just like, er, summat [something] on your arm, a sore or summat that's not got better'. (Field notes, Model Village, Beldover, 22 January 2010)

An insubordinate space

These extracts touch paradoxes that are commonplace in the ethnographic material that I have available. The past intersects constantly with the present in ways that are obvious but unacknowledged. Hidden insubordinate histories – still densely affective – assert themselves almost by rote. There is a belligerent sense of exceptionality and a feeling that there are important aspects of what it is to be 'off the Model' that school, for example, 'tells you nowt about.' A 'solidarist' colouring – as potentially collectivist as it is communitarian²⁰ – leaks vaguely through a home-made vision of what a group of young people might become if only they stick together. In doing so, it references – not directly, but through something like an embodied *gnosis* of social memory – a contradictory iconography of stridency and plaintive impeachment commonly woven through the silks of miners' trade union banners²¹ from villages in this area (see Gorman 1973). 'It's still there' as Stacey tells us,

People have still got wounds that are quite raw. Even though [the kids] don't know about it. [T]hey've not told the kids the reason why, but deep down, if they're honest, it's back to miners' strike. (Stacey, youth worker, Coalbrook)

If we are to understand the unevenness and complexity of young people's attitudes towards aspiration and mobility then we need to acknowledge that meaning-making in communities such as these occurs within a powerful framework of social memory (see Passerini 2006). The 'tradition of resistance', however complicatedly constituted, remains active even if the forms of transmission have been blunted by the demise of the industry and disrupted by the particularly conflicted nature of its history locally.

Notably, that tradition has been unevenly memorialised throughout the coalfields, with some areas developing a substantial and multi-sited public remembrance of the industry and its landmark 'struggles' (see Roberts 2007) and others very little. In the Beldover area, the resistance history of the coalfield is more complex and occluded than it is in other areas. These villages share a history as sites of sharply contested political, work-based and community disputes running back to the earliest days of the coal-mining industry and before that to the machine breaking of Luddism (see Thompson 1963). These conflicts run from syndicalist influenced 'direct action' during early twentieth century strikes (see Holton 1976, p. 106) through the strikes, lock-outs and general strike of the 1920s, bitter internecine disputes between the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) and the 'Spencer' union in the 1930s (see Williams 1962) to the events of the 1984–1985 national strike (see Richards 1996) during which picketing, policing and local divisions were the most intense anywhere in the British coalfield.²² Throughout this history, large-scale confrontations involving local men, women and children in open conflicts with 'occupying'²³ police forces, even troops, have been not been uncommon. Memorialisation is thus in this locality, complex, dangerous and, as yet, incomplete. The necessary work of remembering 'to remember in order to forget' (Passerini 2006, p. 240) has not yet been carried out.

The very real tradition of insubordination locally is, as a consequence, enigmatically both absent and present. In pit families it is almost a condition of everyday life, but is barely referred to. Yet it is transmitted, and at least partially legitimated, through the conduit of social memory. The groups of young people – 'over a hundred' in a Community Police Support Officer's accounts – confronting the police in Coalbrook recreate, in scale at least, the confrontations of the 1984–1985 strike. Similarly, youth gang conflicts crudely reprise the conflict between largely striking

and largely working villages. For those over 30, the severity of 1984–1985 strike is easily and vividly recalled. Kelly, then a girl in infant school, now a probation worker recalls

...someone built a house and they smashed that down... Yeah someone was working. Someone was working two streets from us and they went and put their windows through. The clearest thing I can remember from the strike and my mum can't believe I can remember it, was we went up to X pit, wives and husbands, and my dad got arrested and I leant back on a wall and I can just remember seeing my mum jumping on a copper's back attacking him, my uncles being locked up...²⁴

While some young people, as we have already seen, have a clear knowledge about past conflicts and historical legacies many others, though – not surprisingly given the studied intergenerational silence – know little, if anything. 'Nobody talks about pit round Longthorne anymore' according to ASBO Jonnyo²⁵, Leanne²⁶ has 'never 'eard' of the strike. Cocker²⁷ has, but 'It kind o' went straight through'. Knowledge is ghosted, rather, in an unhappy combination of intergenerational disconnection, a severing of young people from their own history ('I've only seen Billy Elliot' – Dave²⁸) and the acting out of a stagnant, unspecified grievance – an 'attitude' – that still carries a blunt and surly currency. If, though, as Diane Reay (2009, p. 27) has suggested, 'children negotiate schooling not only directly through their own experiences but also through the sedimented experiences of parents or even grandparents' then we would expect to see this history influence young people, and it is there. There *is* a transmission of resistance:

Yeah, definitely, definitely, you know I've had kids that were second generation, you know, their parents weren't [even] miners, but you know, they will still say: 'Aye, fucking miners strike! (Stacey)

What is more, resistant power, as a magnetically attractive, if dangerous force, is collusively reproduced through a set of narratives that, while arguably true to the facts of marginalisation, dramatise life around the Model. Police mythology has Coalbrook, according to PCSO Chris Stevens, as a 'vicious, fighting town' where you get sent for punishment. Professionals exchange anecdotes about young people who now exercise masculinity through unemployment and allegedly learn to labour at crime through a form of apprenticeship to their fathers. This labelling is parodied here by Liam McCain:

...white trainers, tracky bottoms, baseball cap. Always playin' on his *X Box*. Workin' class. Always out robbin' or stealin'. Broken family and all the rest of it.

Undoubtedly, too, young people are often happy to perpetuate these stereotypes, at least initially, sharing in the sinister frisson of living in a 'shit hole', a 'Bronx', a 'Beirut'²⁹ like the Model and engaging in excitedly contested discussions about the comparative status of the various localities – which is worst for drinking, which for 'smackheads', which for 'thieving'. Indeed, I have sat with two detached youth work groups on two different estates in Beldover – the Cavs and the Model (both of which are subject to the same anti-social behaviour order banning gatherings of more than three under 18s after nine o'clock at night) – on two different nights of the same week and heard each group use exactly the same phrase about the other: 'They'll pinch thy [your] shoe laces o'er thee! [over there]'.

Resistant aspiration

This combination of, on the one hand a resistant history transmitted through the fabric of cultural memory and, on the other, a deliberately cultivated 'outlaw' status perpetuated through a celebratory, ironic, double identification with the worst denigratory stereotypes – a kind of *perruque* (De Certeau 1984) of negative expectation – is common in the space of the Model. Indeed, it is noticeable enough to amount to a broadly coherent form of what, for want of a better term, I'd like to call *resistant aspiration*. It takes a number of forms – being a 'little bastard', 'sticking up for yersen [yourself]', 'not taking no shit', 'walking out' and for the girls 'not being plastic' (see

Bright 2009, 2010b, 2010c). It is aimed at the world beyond the village generally but specifically at that world as it is represented through compulsory schooling. At its mildest, it attests to a persistent disconnection from school except that school provides desirable access to 'yer mates'. At its most extreme, it amounts to what seems to be a straightforward, unambiguous *refusal* by young people of the education project *as a whole*, its values and practices, its visible and hidden curricula.

While superficially nihilistic, I would suggest that at a deeper level it constitutes a form of aspiration none the less. It is no mere underclass 'incontinence'.³⁰ Its 'ambition' is to counteract the conventional framework of *individual* aspiration promulgated through the schooling system by pre-empting school's many formal and informal exclusionary powers. If we *pre-exclude* ourselves, then the power of those that exclude is neutralised and the indignity of exclusion eliminated. It is defensive, to be sure, but not necessarily negative. In its very refusal it aims to protect and re-affirm through a range of tactics – including both direct disruption ('just doing stuff') and an exaggerated, resistant humour (see Dubberley 1993) that echoes the pit demotic of 'pillocking' – a set of class-rooted values. As an aspect of the continuing singularity of coal-mining communities such resistant aspiration is richly active within community culture. It is also, I am suggesting, active in the school classroom, where it manifests primarily as resistance to the imposition of a set of class values imposed by 'outsider' teachers.

If we move on to consider some examples, we can see how this works. Firstly, though, it's necessary to acknowledge that school disaffection in the localities that I have studied does, of course, have much in common with the experiences of working class kids in other areas and settings. As Diane Reay reminds us, state educative and associated processes take place in a *national* context where, as a result of a century of class domination, there persists a 'historical legacy of being the inferior "other" . . . that resonates in the present' (Reay 2009, p. 24). Reay's own finding that

The vast majority [of working class young people] . . . talked about a sense of powerlessness and educational worthlessness, and feelings that they were not really valued and respected within education. (Reay 2009, p. 24)

is constantly echoed throughout my work:

It were just teachers, used to do me 'ead [head] in. Just used to talk to you like crap. Used to think they're better . . . Well, they'll just talk to you like you're nothing. . . . They don't say 'please' or nothing. (Lianne, young person, *Go 4 it!*, Coalbrook)

She [the teacher] just thinks she's reight [right] good, an' she said that none of us are gonna get qualifications, none of us are gonna get jobs an things like that. An' she used to say: *Yeah, and you think you can live off your Daddy's money for rest o' your life?* An' fins like that. An' teachers wonder why I got mad wi' 'er [with her]. (Josie, young person, *Go 4 it!*, Coalbrook)

Reay also notes the emphatic impact on boys specifically,

It [is] working class boys, in particular, who manifest [. . .] the alienation that continued domination within the educational field generates. (Reay 2009, p. 25)

Karl, P-J, ASBO Johnnyo, Dave, Kandy and Cocker all talked about adopting a persistent low-level resistant behaviour in school that they called 'daft'. It took fairly inane forms, stayed within masculinised and often sexist boundaries, incrementally achieved a 'reputation' by virtue of escalation, and contributed inevitably in most of their cases to permanent school exclusion – something often met with a mix of anger and relief,

I used to like goin', just used to like goin' to mess about an' that . . . Yeah just to ay [have] a laugh . . . Daft stuff. Puttin' . . . porno on their computers an' that, so when they go to lift their lap top up. . . (Dave, young person, *Go 4 it!*, Coalbrook)

Misbehavin' inside classrooms . . . Jus' like interruptin' people, putting people off their work, laughin', throwin' things, callin' teachers, walkin' out, walkin' back in again . . . Used to 'ave a laugh all time. . . (ASBO Johnny-O, *Go 4 it!*, Coalbrook)

We' just used to do like daft stuff and [eventually] nobody'd be bothered about doin' it anymore, so it just used to go to more serious stuff an' that ... There were loads on us. We all got excluded. All at same time, really. I were happy 'cos all me mates were excluded wi' me. So I weren't really that bothered. (Dave)

So, I am not saying that the experience of the Model is *completely* distinctive. But it *is* a very specific and singular case of this general phenomenon. The kids 'off the Model' refer to an ongoing, persistent struggle with teachers who come from 'elsewhere', represent alien values, don't understand what it had been like in what Cocker calls 'old nature'³¹ and talk to them 'like shit'.

They come from round Chesterfield area an' stuff like that ... Yeah. You'll get some from Chesterfield, some from Sheffield and places like that. (P-J, young person, *Go 4 it!*, Coalbrook)

In a context of de-industrialisation and poverty this struggle is sharply instrumental, having its own bitter political economy,

I've 'ad teachers say to me: You're a waste o' space. You're not gonna get nowhere. They don't like kids from round 'ere, I don't think. They're just stuck up. All they're bothered about are getting their wages: 'I get £20 an hour!' [Incredulously] Up your arse! Alright, then. That's *bull!* They [the teachers] say: We can sit 'ere all day and do nothing. We'll still get our wages. (Samantha, young person, Cavendish Estate, Beldover)

They used to just, like, look down at you cos, oh, I'm higher than you so you do this and you do that ... Teachers? They not bothered really about you. They just want to ... get their money. (P-J)

Eventually the boys – and some of the more belligerent girls, such as Sophie from a Beldover pit family – pitch against this and decisively fight back in defence of what they feel are the intergenerational core values underpinning life in their communities,

That's wor it got to ... Yeah, just thought : 'Fuck it!' ... Not takin' no shit! ... they just talk to y' like shit ... I thought 'I 'a'nt [haven't] been brought up like that ... An' it's 'ow you get brought up really in't it. I got brought up to take no shit really, so that's what got me kicked out when I were in year 10. (Karl, young person, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

Half o' 'em are from Sheffield, like. Belder³² people they're like: We're *not bothered!* Belder's Belder! If you want to live in Belder you've got to ger on wi' everybody! They pick on us 'cos, well, we speak us minds. Belder people speak their minds. If they get a bang, they get a bang. If they get put in 'ospital, they get put in 'ospital... Teachers don't like that. Like, you say what you think ... you 'ave to fight back at 'em. (Sophie, young person, Beldover)

Josie, here, refuses the educational project outright as did her youth worker, Stacey, a generation earlier,

[I'd] just walk out lessons. Walk in lessons late. Just don't do nowt [nothing]. Just sit there ... I told 'em [emphatically] *I'm not doin' what nobody says!* (Josie)

I could've had an easy life ... but I've got this voice in here, saying you're not telling me what to do! (Stacey)

In more than one instance, both boys and girls refuse even to collect their GCSE results, stepping firmly and completely outside the credentialist valuation that they represent,

[Emphatically] No, I don't! I don't! I don't need me – what you call 'em? – GCSE grades, to get where I want to get. Like your teachers – what's it called? – [in whining voice] 'You know you need them grades to get that job and y' need this. You'll never get anywhere you won't', and stuff. And I *don't* need 'em. Do you know what I mean? (Lianne)

This resistance is commonly embedded in peer and family culture too, as we see in this exchange among the members of the *Cavs Lasses Group*³³

Nicky: Me mum told teacher to 'Kiss my arse!'

Samantha: She's a legend, her mum!

Nicky: She's just like us ... if you get me. She just 'as a laugh.

Samantha: She's sound. But she can be a bitch.

In that these refusals are 'infused with [a] sense of the righteous indignation that once underpinned a strong working class politics' to which Reay has recently drawn attention (2009, p. 26) they constitute a resistant ambition for something other. That 'something other' is often represented in the coalfields as something that has been irrevocably lost, but must still be fought over. Sometimes – as in the vision of *Sticking together* – it is glimpsed as something still sensed as redeemable. What I am calling resistant aspiration is, therefore, complex. It seems to point simultaneously in a number of different contradictory directions, responding to at least three energies. There's the belligerent and direct refusal that we've just noted here. There's the instinctive collective solidarism of the Beldover young people's DVD and 'everybody sticking together dahn [down] Coalbrook'. But there's also a substantial element of radical conservatism that is powerfully present. Sharply curbing any tendency to romanticise the militancy of young people's disaffection, this latter merits a detailed description.

Radical conservatism?

In a remarkable piece in the early historical literature on the miners' strike of 1984–1985, Raphael Samuel outlined what he argued were the backward looking themes that played out in that 'war of ghosts' where 'the miners, though stigmatised as the "enemy within" were defending ... old fashioned' values ... the dignity of work, the sanctity of family, 'roots' (Samuel 1986, p. 6). Samuel emphasised the significance of kinship networks and village localism rather than 'community' – itself *discovered* during the strike rather than already present – and argued that 'the animating spirit of the 1984–1985 strike, its 'common sense' or implicit ideology, was that of *radical conservatism*' (Samuel 1986, p. 22, original emphasis). The very 'modesty' of demands – for personal dignity and job security – and the potent mobilising appeal of 'family hearth and home' was strongly highlighted.

Nearly 20 years after the closure of the pits and the precipitous collapse of the local economic and social structure linked to coal-mining, the kids are still, for sure, defending the same hereditary, patriarchal virtues of 'loyalty' and 'honour' that Samuel (1986, p. 22) saw as the key elements of a widespread, radically conservative 'common sense'. This protective defensiveness – exercised within a still extant, if attenuated, 'ideology of virility' (Massey 1994) where 'staying' is a critical measure of loyalty, 'moving on' is *always* tantamount to betrayal and 'mobility' is a fundamental risk to identity – is characteristic:

... You know, you can't better yourself and get out of this box in Coalbrook because of the effect that it would have on your family. And these family things, like my mum's having a nervous breakdown because she can't cope with all the stress of having to pay the bills and she's a bag of nerves and she drinks and she smokes and what have you. It's like, well, what does your dad do? Well, he sits in the [miners' welfare] all day because you know, that's what he knows best, he still wants to hold onto ... that mining culture where he felt safe, but can't afford to do it. He wants to go back to work but at that time, they were all going off sick because they got more benefits from going off sick with bad backs and, you know, pit did this to me, and the kids were saying to me: I might as well be on the dole, same as my dad. Who's going to look after my dad if I go to work? Who's going to fetch my dad's fags if I go to work? (Stacey)

Also discernible is a kind of scrupulously choreographed nostalgia. Although young people are supposedly running wild – their anti-social behaviour a strictly contemporary phenomenon – observation suggests the continuing operation of a repertoire of gestures and social routines recognisable from 50 years ago.

... you see it on the skate park, it's dead weird ... they get these cans, and they go and sit on the skate park. The lads all sit around doing what they do, and the girls sit over here. There's a clear divide ... You know you see a lass come over and [she'll] say: Can I have a light for my fag? And the [lads] say: No! Go over there! We're with the lads! But it's [his] girlfriend really, but [she's] not allowed to come and sit over here. It's like a having a taproom in a working men's club. (Stacey)

This is the kind of *'nostalgic evocation* of [work] regimes, even in the aftermath of their disappearance' noted in the work of Taylor and Jameson (1997, p. 153). Astonishingly, there are numerous references within my data – even among the relatively extreme cases of young people who have finally been imprisoned after numerous breaches of anti-social behaviour orders – to street behaviour originating more in folkway 'mischief' going back a hundred years³⁴ than in any breakdown of 'law and order'. While there is fairly widespread consumption of cheap alcohol and regular use of 'weed' and 'phet' among young people, the acme of 'trouble' is often still regarded as 'hedge-hopping' and 'knock-a-door-run':

I 'ant caused trouble ... I don't play knock-a-door-run anymore. (Milly, young person, Beldover)

I 'ad an ASBO ... soon as I left school. When you've got nothin' to do you keep getting' in trouble all time ... But it all started, like, mischievous an' things like that ... Knock-a-door-run, stuff like that. Then I jus' got, got out o' control ... they used to call me 'ASBO Johnno' ... [The ASBO] just made me worse. (ASBO Jonnyo)

Personal ambitions, through this backward glance, like the aspirations of the strikers noted by Samuel, are modest. They're also – notwithstanding the changes in women's lives both as a result of their involvement in the strike (see Seddon 1986) and relatively recent changes in employment – powerfully gendered. The young men's envisioned futures remind one of the National Coal Board's 'modernising' recruitment campaigns of the 1960s in their quaintness:

When my kids grow up I want to tell 'im [him] I've got a career behind my belt, not just as like a dole-er for rest o' me life. Gor [got] a nice missus [wife]. Hopefully get married, like. Get summat behind me belt. Nobody can say owt [anything] then, can they? (Cocker)

I'll be able to get a nice car eventually, a nice place to live, even if I don't own it, I wouldn't mind renting, making it look really nice, and having a nice car and dressing well and looking after myself. I think after I've got that, a girlfriend and long term partner will come with it ... I'll have options, I'll be able to get up and think what do I *want* to do, not what *can* I do ... Yeah to enable you to do anything, I don't mean extravagant. I'd like to go for a nice quiet pint, with some nice people, to be happy. (Ryan, young person, *Go 4 it!*, Coalbrook)

Young women's aspirations, too, are often tightly circumscribed. Melanie, in this exchange, looks to motherhood – and the male protection it brings – as a route to adulthood:

M: Well I have to admit, I've always wanted a kid since I was 13, but obviously I've never had one, because I've taken the pill and stuff and it takes about a year to come out of your system.

NGB: So you're not using anything now then?

M: No, not now.

NGB: And if you got pregnant you'd be happy would you?

M: Yeah. I've talked to Jimmy about it and I've talked to my mum about it.

NGB: Right. So what would that mean for you to have a 'little un' in your life?

M: More close and more trusting ... I think it would bring us closer together, no paranoia, and if we walked in the street he wouldn't be watching lads if they were checking me out or anything like that.

NGB: Because you'd be a mother and you'd have a baby?

M: Yeah, and it would be different, we'd be more close anyway.

NGB: What else would you get from it?

M: Settling down, getting our own house and getting married.

NGB: It would be kind of like growing up, would it?

M: Yeah, it would. (Melanie, young person, Coalbrook)

Clearly, the aspirations evident here are shaped in significant part by the kind of radical conservatism that Samuel identifies – just as much as they are by the other strands we've already identified. At different times, both Cocker and his sister, Jimjam, make this unambiguously explicit,

When pit shut, it meant a lot o' consequences for everybody ... but to tell you truth, if pit ever reopened I think I'd be first 'un theer [first one there]. (Cocker)

I wish they'd open pit and them factories again, now. 'Cos we 'an't got no jobs. (Jimjam, young person, Beldover)

Conclusion

As we have seen, teenagers in these former coal-mining communities are framing their individual hopes in situations shaped more by complex, classed forms of cultural transmission and by social memory than they are by the kind of atomised biographies that are modelled in contemporary discourses of aspiration. What's more, the transmission is dense, uneven, messy and contradictory. Sometimes, too, it is only partial – scrambled by the elisions and silences of painful conflicts still impacting on families 25 years after the 1984–1985 strike. Knowing this, where does it leave us?

There are currently a number of reasonably well-funded, imaginative and enthusiastic projects in the Derbyshire coalfield area that are attempting to address aspects of 'raising aspirations' among young people in former coal-mining wards specifically. They bring together a host of practitioners and managers across a range of partner agencies working in both schools and the wider community and will probably be, given the change of UK government, some of the very last coalfield initiatives. Significantly, the staff employed to develop these projects generally share a view that there is something particular going on in these localities – something deep-rooted but rarely articulated that needs to be identified and taken into account in planning and practice if there is to be any lasting change.

In this piece, I have tried to articulate that 'something' as it arises as a set of paradoxes in my ethnographic data. In doing so, I have availed myself of an expansive notion of space that seems to me characteristic of the adventurousness of contemporary human geography. In taking that notion on board, I have argued in some detail for the 'grounded imagining' of a space called 'the Model' as a way of theoretically informing empirical data that emerges in convoluted ways from a site dense with layered meanings of various forms – material, imaginative, storied, remembered, embodied and erased.

Such an approach, I hope to have shown, enables us to *situate* the ways in which a group of young people make meaning in the richly lived quotidian circumstances of their lives. Specifically, I have suggested that attitudes toward aspiration and mobility, in these former coal-mining localities at least, can only really begin to be understood if they are seen thus, as situated. In fact, I have claimed boldly and with something of a polemical purpose that the cluster of influences operative in the Model effectively amounts – as tangled and convoluted as its roots are – to a form of resistant counter-aspiration. As such, it sets itself against the dominant discursive model of aspiration as individual economic advancement that predominates in current discussions. If that is the case, then the implications for practice models that fail to move beyond that discourse are fairly clear – they will likely meet the same forms of resistance.

As I have said throughout, the coalfields are exceptional in some very important ways but I do not think they are unique. There are other localities and other groups that have their hidden histories and their resistant identities and that also stand outside the dominant discursive framework of mobility as a central resource of the middle class self. Some, like those 'off the Model', are marginalised by de-industrialisation and class, others – nationally and internationally – are marginalised by gender, ethnicity and the dislocation of migration under the impact of globalisation. All are very specifically situated. Critical inter-disciplinary practice – possibly across the fertile hinterland of ethnography and the geography of education and, further, responding to bell hooks' exhortation to enter 'the margin as a space of radical openness' (hooks 1990) – will be imperative in coming to an in-depth understanding of the complex needs, indeed 'aspirations', of any of them.

Notes

1. Names of all people and all places at a sub-county level have been changed. I couldn't resist borrowing 'Beldover' from D.H. Lawrence's *oeuvre*, some parts of which are set in the research locality.

2. 'The Model' refers literally to the three Victorian colliery model villages and the other former colliery housing. It also refers, as I explain in the text, to a powerfully affective space of injury, betrayal, longing, belonging and dreaming.
3. Upwards of a 100 men were killed at a colliery near Beldover in the 1930s and around 20 at the same colliery at a later date. Scores of men were also killed in an underground disaster at 'Cragwell' Colliery in the period after World War 2. The vagueness of statistics here is deliberate and with a view to protecting identities of participants.
4. The question of gender is critically important in the ethnography as a whole. I presented a paper – 'Not takin' no shit'. Disaffected masculinities and aspects of gender, resistance, community and schooling in a former UK coal-mining area – at the 2009 Oxford Ethnography Conference, St Hilda's College, Oxford and a linked paper – 'On refusing to be 'plastic': Educational disaffection and 'aspiration' as experienced by women and girls in a former UK coal-mining area – at the 2010 Oxford Ethnography Conference at New College, Oxford.
5. Beldover has a village-wide curfew preventing young people being on the street in numbers after 9 pm. Other villages have spaces of controlled movement. Interestingly, the geography of curfew and surveillance very neatly reflects the ghosted social geography of the coal-mining industry and its conflicts, particularly the strike of 1984–1985.
6. To be developed as a book length study in the Ethnography of Education series.
7. That is to say, it looks at issues affecting young people as they emerge from the accounts of both young people and the adults that work and/or live with them. Where quotations are given, the status of contributors will be made clear as either 'adult' or 'young person'.
8. Entry to Employment, commonly known as 'E2E', is a programme for those NEET (not in employment, education or training) 16–18 year olds aiming for an apprenticeship study programme but 'not yet ready'. *Go 4 it!* is a pre-E2E programme. I also studied the associated, 14–16, *Go 4 it!* programme aimed at those still in school but 'at risk of exclusion'.
9. The 'Let's move to...' column in *The Guardian* of 20 March, 2010, focussed on 'Let's move to... Sherwood Forest and the Dukeries, and live the legend' It noted 'a hidden world of villages and market towns as picturesque as you'll find, and countryside rolling with gorges and copses'. Unfortunately, it registered 'The case against', namely 'the coal industry which has left swathes of countryside pretty bleak looking'.
10. The level of industry related illness and subsequent unavailability for employment is high enough in the northern part of Derbyshire – a county now without a single mineworker – to occupy three full-time National Union of Mineworkers officers in pursuing injury compensation claims.
11. All statistics referred to in this section are derived either from the 2001 census or are publically available from Derbyshire County Council's website.
12. Discussion with Stacey, youth worker, Coalbrook.
13. Coalbrook is an example. A major development, *World of Leisure* – funded significantly by regeneration money – occupies a site on the old colliery area in the heart of Coalbrook model village and employs a workforce the majority of which is made up of East European economic migrants.
14. Frank Lowe, adult, former coal miner now community tutor, Coalbrook.
15. Liam McCain, adult, 'fathers worker'.
16. Christine Wolf, adult, education manager, Coalbrook.
17. Such comments are completely commonplace, being a discourse of derision in their own right.
18. See Rebecca Solnit's 'What apocalypse are you nostalgic for?' in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2010. That Solnit – a celebrated, progressive public intellectual – might so easily forget to mention the notoriously exploitative conditions of coal extraction, is remarkable.
19. I am deliberately echoing bell hooks' (1990) exhortation in *Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness* which runs thus: 'Marginality as a site of resistance. Enter that space.'
20. I am drawing on Byrne's account (Byrne 1999). Byrne distinguishes between various 'solidarisms', both 'collectivist' and 'communitarian'. Some viewpoints regard market capitalism as reformable, others do not.
21. Beldover's 'lost' banner shows the pit being handed over – by a handshake – from the coal owners to the workers on vesting day, 1 January, 1947, when the National Coal Board was established. The motto under the scroll 'National Union of Mineworkers, Beldover Branch' is 'Our heritage'. I am indebted to Nottinghamshire NUM and their Retired Members Section for searching for an image of the banner and to the former secretary of 'Beldover' branch of the NUM, for finally providing me with one. Beldover's modern NUM banner shows the arrest of Arthur Scargill at the Orgreave mass picket during the 1984–1985 strike. These two contrasting images represent the uneasy coincidence of plaint and militancy in coalfield iconography.
22. Gary Charlesworth, then the NUM Branch Secretary at Coalbrook pit, describes the period: 'It were terrible ... what you'd got, you'd got people goin' to work from out o'village and then you got [long pause] people breakin' their windows, painting black crosses on their doors ... all this and that. They [the police] were marchin' 'em in [to work] from village an' all. Oh, aye, Model Village, aye. They were walkin' 'em [working miners] down, youth. Aye, used to get more abuse in their families an' all. It were just, well, horrendous'. Gary

also described the storming of Coalbrook police station and the burning of 'scab' buses in Coalbrook during the strike, the latter of which led to custodial sentences for strikers.

23. The term used by Neville, a former miner from Cragwell. He described Cragwell 'as occupied for a whole year by the Metropolitan police' during 1984–1985.
24. Karen, at the time of interview a learning support assistant with young people, now a probation worker. Interviewed in Coalbrook.
25. ASBO Jonnyo, young person, interviewed in Coalbrook.
26. Leanne, young person, Coalbrook.
27. Cocker, young person, conversation in Beldover Community House.
28. Dave, young person, interviewed in Coalbrook.
29. Names used by young people to describe their home villages.
30. See Bright (2010c) where I review some key concepts from Paulo Virno's work which looks at 'exodus' and 'defection' as forms of political refusal. Virno uses Aristotle's distinction between 'incontinence' and 'intemperance' to drive a wedge between apolitical and politically potent refusal.
31. The past. This usage seems to be unique to Cocker.
32. The local name for Beldover.
33. An informal after-school, girls only, youth group in Beldover.
34. Growing up in the same locality, I played 'knock-a-door-run' and went 'hedge-hopping' in the 1960s. My mother (1916–1996) spoke to me of doing the same things in the 1920s.

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‘Non-servile Virtuosi’ in Insubordinate Spaces: school disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield

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ABSTRACT This article reviews excerpts from a body of ethnographic data examining some young people’s disaffection from, and refusal of, the education project as a whole in a UK coalfield area. Key examples are used to illustrate intergenerational continuities and disjunctions in attitudes to formal education in these exceptional and sometimes ‘insubordinate’ localities. It is argued that reviewing such data in the light of concepts emerging from the literature on Italian autonomist politics of the 1970s – particularly Paulo Virno’s work – is potentially fruitful in reclaiming a politics of educational refusal from the dual grip of a middle-class imaginary that abhors it as pathological and dangerous and a body of scholarship that seems incapable of moving beyond either lionising it as heroic or loathing it as nihilistic.

I could’ve had an easy life ... but I’ve got this voice in here, saying you’re not telling me what to do! (Stacey, youth worker, Coalbrook)[1]

... the major force of redefinition has come from *below*: in the continuous reproduction and invention of systems of counterculture and struggle in the sphere of everyday life. (Bologna, 2007, p. 44; emphasis added)

Picking up the theme of this special issue of *EERJ*, I want to explore some data from my ethnography of educational disaffection in a former coalfield area of England (Bright, 2010, 2011) that cluster around the idea of what seems to be a straightforward, unambiguous and active *refusal* by some young people, both girls and boys, of the education project *as a whole*: its values and practices, its visible and its hidden curricula. In doing so, I will look at the extent to which this refusal among contemporary youth relates to patterns of resistance to school as lived by an older generation of participants in my research who ‘learned to labour’ in the same localities but in economic conditions that were very different from those of today. On the basis of that comparison, I will go on to suggest that contemporary refusal might be seen as a manifestation of a somewhat neglected but nevertheless enduring aspect of local working-class culture - namely, a propensity for ‘bottom-up’ action. I will give some examples of the ways in which young people seem to act within a socially remembered repertoire of refusal at the very same time as they improvise afresh, even virtuosically, with newly available cultural materials. Finally, I’ll float the idea that such resistant cultural fabrication constitutes – if only temporarily and episodically – an inherently oppositional, insubordinate, and therefore counter-hegemonic space of cultural production; that is to say, its contestation of power, though certainly not programmatic, reaches beyond both the merely reactive and private and is, therefore, political in essence.

In addressing this final point, I will review the data against the potentially illuminating power of some concepts – Virno’s notions of *non-servile virtuosity*, *defection* and *exodus*, for example (Virno,

1996a, b) – emerging from a burgeoning literature (in English translation, at least) reflecting on *autonomia*, the 1970s Italian anti-capitalist movement from below, par excellence. Overall, I'd like to suggest that such an approach offers a novel space in which to overcome some of the binary controversies – whether classroom and community resistance is progressive or reactionary; nihilistic or actively political; agentic or structurally conditioned; reproductive or liberatory – that have dogged the field at least since Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour*. (Giroux, 1983; Gordon, 1984; McLaren, 1986, 1995; Walker, 1986; McFadden, 1995; Muns and McFadden, 2000; Arnot, M. 2004; and Dolby & Dimitriadis, 2004, are just some examples of scholarship engaging those questions.)

Now, it might seem like an unwarranted, even eccentric, leap of the imagination from the 'Italian exception' (Power, 2008, p. 51) to the impoverished, de-industrialised, currently politically stagnant reaches of the Derbyshire coalfield, and I wouldn't want to contribute to what Power has already warned of as a problem of autonomist concepts 'drift[ing] unattached from their original context' (Power, 2008, p. 51). Nevertheless, I think the exercise is justified for three reasons. First, the literature is *there*. It is now available in English (see Elliott, 2008) and is becoming increasingly influential in fields that are endeavouring to grasp and revivify political praxis in the contemporary moment. Second, and much more significantly in relation to our field of educational change, employing such a vocabulary to reconfigure school disaffection might help us develop a debate about how apparently individualistic resistant agency might yet be articulated to wider, 'multitudinous' (see Hardt & Negri, 2001, 2006, 2009) projects of social change. Positioning resistance as refusal – as a meaningful political strategy *in its own right* – potentially moves us beyond the charge of 'romanticizing' young people's rejection of education (Walker, 1986) as a kind of valorised, sexist 'hooliganism' (Delamont, 2000). Recognising the political nature of highly specific, *local* refusals leaves us much better placed to link them to any developing critique of liberal notions of unitary forms of global citizenship. Third, and specifically in the case of my study, such an approach allows me to theorise the sometimes incoherent, paradoxical refusals of some angry working-class kids in the four former coal-mining communities that I've studied in a novel way – that is, as related to a deeply contested history where seams of syndicalism and direct action run under the surface of the perhaps more clearly discernible 'radical conservatism' noted by Samuel (1986).

As for *autonomia*, the history is complicated (Wright, 2002) and, as is always the case with activist-orientated retrospection, inevitably subject to *post hoc* sectarian claims of privileged lineage and influence. I don't want to get caught up in turgid discussions relating to the details of the various groups/grouplets that constituted the loose autonomist movement in Italy between 1972-77, nor do I wish to engage with tangled questions of political pedigree and strategic or tactical finesse. I will, though, need to look briefly at one aspect of the 'extraordinarily prescient analyses of the shifts in work' (Power, 2008, p. 51) that came out of that moment – namely, the incorporation of worker 'virtuosity', in servile forms, into 'post-Fordist' production. Indeed, it is the contrary notion – of *non-servile*, virtuosic and improvisatory *defection* from such servility (outlined mainly by Virno) – that strikes me as relevant to school disaffection. Before we come to the exotica of what Hardt (1996) has called 'laboratory Italy', however, we might usefully make an acquaintance with the more prosaic but nevertheless periodically politically inflamed 'model villages', 'pit rows' and 'white city' estates [2] of the Derbyshire coalfield.

A Coalfield Ethnography

The focus of my research study as a whole is an *intergenerational* ethnography of class, education and youth transitions in part of the British coalfield, a setting that has been seen not only as paradigmatic of working-class 'community' in modernity – even 'archetypally proletarian' (Dennis et al, 1956) – but also as shaped by a 'context of singularity' (Strangleman, 2001, p. 255) relating to a history of workplace and community resistance (see the standard national and area histories: Page Arnot, 1961, Griffin, 1962; Williams, 1962). Fentress & Wickham, for example, identify the coalfields as characterised by 'a very clear sense of the past as struggle [which] constitutes a memory that goes back at least a century' and that has the strikes of 1926, 1972, 1974 and 1984-85 as

a 'common touchstone' and 'the imagery of the strike as defiance of the state [as]... a constant one' (Fentress & Wickham, 1992, pp. 115-116).

At its core, my research looks at the continuities and disjunctions between that particular history and the structures of meaning shaping present-day young lives. The study brings together data drawn from ethnographic fieldwork material gathered between 2006 and 2010 in the specific geographical setting of four neighbouring communities in the 'Beldover' district of Derbyshire, England. The empirical material has been generated as part of a doctoral study arising from a long-term engagement with the studied communities – as a member of a pit family, as a trade union activist (particularly during the miners' strike of 1984-85), as an adult and youth educator working in the further education sector throughout the 1990s and, since 2002, as a senior development manager with Derbyshire-wide responsibility for equality and social inclusion with the youth support service, Connexions. Concentrated ethnographic fieldwork – including a series of sustained participant observations with adults and young people – has been carried out over a four-year period in a variety of sites. These include an out-of-school project for 14-16-year-olds; an associated project (*Go 4 it!*) for 16-18-year-olds; club- and street-based youth work venues; community venues; private homes; a miners' welfare club; and in the street.

'Not What It Seems' – an insubordinate space

It's still there. People have still got wounds that are quite raw ... Very much so. Even though they don't know about it. (Stacey, youth worker, Coalbrook)

The former pit villages of Longthorne, Beldover, Coalbrook and Cragwell (their pits closed in 1978, 1993, 1993, and 1991, respectively) sit within five miles of each other close to the M1 corridor on the Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire border at the edge of the rural tourist attractions of Sherwood Forest and The Dukeries. Three of the villages were built in the last decade of the nineteenth century in established agricultural settlements as colliery 'model villages' under the influence of the burgeoning Garden City movement. Though subject to the steady changes occurring throughout the British coalfields in the 1950s (see Dennis et al, 1956; Lockwood, 1966; Waddington et al, 1991; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992), they nevertheless exemplified for around a hundred years the 'ideal type' of the traditional mining community recognised by Bulmer (1975), their 'ideology of virility' and their traditional 'geography of gender relations' (Massey, 1994, p. 181) solidly intact. By the turn of the millennium, however, their post-industrial decline - in the memorable phrase of a local youth worker, 'from model village to brown [heroin] city' – had become catastrophic, epitomising the multilayered deprivation that followed on from rapid pit closures. More than a decade later – although 'rebranded' and apparently increasingly desirable – enclaves of profound poverty remain, with wards being classified in the top 1% of deprived wards nationally. Places are not what they seem:

... there's druggies, thieves ... It's supposed to be a quiet village but it's not. (Josie, aged 17, *Go 4 It!* project, Coalbrook)

There's always people speedin' about in cars 'n stuff like that. People twoccing [3] cars, joy riding at night, bombing [speeding] about. On Model [village] there must be, oh, some nights, fifty people ... it's a lot different than say you just drivin' through ... Looks like a nice place but when you know what goes off it seems a lot different when you livin' 'ere all your life. (Karl, aged 17, *Go 4 it!* project, Coalbrook)

This gap between seeming and being is significant for my purpose here. It allows us to claim a space of 'opening and reopening' – like Stewart's (1996) Appalachian coalfield study, *A Space on the Side of the Road* – capable of fashioning 'a gap in the order of things' and accommodating 'a local cultural real' (all references Stewart, 1996, p. 3) that sits as far outside the mainstream of 'England', as Stewart's 'coal hollers' sit outside 'America'. These localities may seem to have been absorbed into 'Middle England' but this is not the case. Against the de-historicising, culturally cleansing, market-driven process of re-invention already noted there is, as Stacey says above, a ghosted history that 'is still there'. This is the 'common touchstone' to which Fentress & Wickham (1992) refer.

These villages share a history as sites of sharply contested political and social conflicts running back to the earliest days of the coal-mining industry, and before that to the machine breaking of Luddism (see Thompson, 1963). Conflicts run variously from syndicalist-influenced direct action during the 1911 railway strike and the 1912 miners' strikes (see Holton, 1976, p. 106) through the coalfield strikes, lock-outs and general strike of the 1920s, bitter disputes between the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) and the 'Spencer' union in the 1930s (see Williams, 1962), to the events of the 1984-5 national strike (see Richards, 1996) during which picketing, policing and local unrest were among the most intense anywhere in the British coalfield. Throughout this history, large-scale confrontations involving local men, women and children in open conflicts with 'occupying' police forces, even troops, have been relatively common. In that sense alone, the imagined distance is not so great between the 'ragging up' [4] of the rank-and-file coalfield militant, the organisational inventiveness of the women's support groups and the refusals of the extra-parliamentary Italian left.

Now, in the last 15 years, the British coal industry has virtually ceased to exist and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the strike has come and gone. The catastrophic economic and social impact of the nationwide pit closure programme has been well documented (see Beynon et al, 1991; Bennett et al, 2000; Beatty et al, 2005), and the communities themselves have undergone significant changes, particularly as the notoriously gendered division of labour has shifted to emphasise part-time women's employment. These places remain, however, near the bottom of any hierarchy of opportunities, resources or social esteem. They are severely affected by socio-economic problems relating to unemployment, sickness, and a recently deepening material poverty fuelling worsening problems of drink, drug use and domestic violence. Startlingly, the level of coal-mining-related illness and subsequent unavailability for employment is high enough in the northern part of Derbyshire – a county now without a single locally employed mineworker – to occupy three full-time National Union of Mineworkers officers in pursuing injury compensation claims. In such places as these, 'class inequality', as Wendy Bottero recently points out, 'is – literally – marked on the body' (Bottero, 2009, p. 9).

The global has impacted on the local, too, in quite dramatic ways, significant East European economic migration into some former coal-mining towns and villages [5] being an issue that has been exploited, with some success, by the extreme right. Meanwhile, as coal-mining communities – with coal desperately unfashionable – have fallen from their 1980s position as the cause célèbre of the liberal intelligentsia, there has been little attempt to situate the contemporary experience of growing up in these places in relation to their unique political and resistance history. Indeed, questions of class exclusion and contested access to power and value – questions traditionally posed as sharply political in these particular communities – have largely been collapsed into a racialised discussion about the 'white working class' in general (see Páll Sveinsson, 2009, for a recent edited collection addressing this topic) which fails to connect in any way at all with traditions of radical dissent and militant political action in British working-class and labour history. In the local setting, youth disengagement, whilst identified and, to be fair, funded as a key service priority, is rather too often modelled in professional discourse as symptomatic of a near pathological *deficit*. Anecdotally, it is often characterised as resulting from a mystifying combination of failed aspiration, inability to change and an abject incapacity to embrace the project of 'resourcing the middle class self' that the order of things requires (Skeggs, 2004).

Forms of Refusal

I've touched on the history that has shaped coalfield lives and noted some of the extensive literature that argues for its exceptional character. That history attests to an unparalleled level of conflict. Given the well-documented depth, breadth and duration of that contestation, it offends any even *vaguely* historical sociological common sense to suggest that that past might *not* somehow still be having an impact on the present. The question is, how - by means of what layered and complex cultural processes?

An advantage of the intergenerational aspect of my ethnographic work is that it allows comparisons to be made that bring this point out. In the case of *all* the adults I have observed and interviewed, the data confirm the power *in their lives* of a social memory of conflict (see Passerini,

2006, as well as Fentress & Wickham, 1992). It also confirms their own commonly expressed view that social memory continues to act on the present, almost a generation after the 1984-85 strike and subsequent local pit closures, as Stacey recognises:

Yeah, definitely, definitely ... I've had kids that were second generation, you know, their parents weren't [even] miners, but you know, they will still say: Aye, [yes] it's the fucking miners' strike! (Stacey, youth worker, Coalbrook)

Once the topic is opened up with the adults, the strike is a key and constant reference – a point at which the nature of social, economic and political relationships was harshly laid bare and the intensity of conflict vividly experienced not only as trauma but also as possibility and movement:

The clearest thing I can remember from the strike ... was we went up to X pit, wives and husbands, and my dad got arrested and I leant back on a wall and I can just remember seeing my mum jumping on a copper's back attacking him, my uncles being locked up. All the family were on the picket line... there were quite good times. It used to be quite exciting goin' down on front line and chucking bricks at buses ... we had all the Londoners stop at our house that came up in the strike. So we always had a houseful. (Karen, youth worker, Coalbrook)

As well as being personally significant, the experience of 1984-85 also commonly constitutes a storied route into a collectively accumulated memory shaped through narratives of struggle, hardship and social improvisation from below:

My dad was a very strong trade union bloke. His dad was a collier, and apparently went through the 1926 strike. And I think my grandad was a big union bloke and he got the sack in the 1926 strike for causing trouble. Obviously, he never worked again ... My next up brother, I know he ... very often – although he doesn't know much more than that – he'll always say when he was in the last strike, he used to say, you know my grandad lost his job in the 1926 strike! And, you know, he thought it was really important to be out on strike and stick it through and through and that's what he picked up from my dad. (Christine, youth support manager, Coalbrook)

Yeah, if you weren't on the picket line, you'd be down at the miners' welfare collecting your food or you'd be sat in your house, all the women would be sat in the house ... Yeah, I mean all the women in my family are quite strong ... they had to live through the strike and if you had to support a family, so if you're living on so much money, it used to be a chuck up between a bag of potatoes or some sanitary towels, and you think, Jesus, I didn't realise how bad it was. Yeah, we actually had documentaries made of us as a family – what it's like on Christmas day living through a strike. The [BBC] filmed us on Christmas morning. (Karen, youth worker, Coalbrook)

The second year at secondary school was the start of the strike, and I can remember even to the point, this is how rebellious I was, coming in non-uniform and saying: well my dad's on strike he can't afford a uniform, and being sent home just for that. (Stacey, youth worker, Coalbrook)

Throughout my ethnographic work there has been an eagerness to talk about these continuities – a kind of hidden arcana of unfinished business, known only to the cognoscenti – that are perceived as otherwise unutterable in reinvented localities in a changed world where history has, to all intents and purposes, been foreclosed. Sometimes, accounts provide a summary of the attributes that rank-and-file refusal required in the mining industry:

You'd got to be a combatant, you'd got to have a good mouth, you'd got to be able to stand your ground, quick wits. (Roger Williams, former National Union of Mineworkers activist, now youth support manager)

Of course, in many ways these adults' reports of their early disaffection from the classed educational project are similar to those in other contemporaneous accounts of working-class youth in areas other than coal-mining areas (Mungham & Pearson, 1976; Willis, 1977). There is the truancy, the counterculture of having a laugh, the learning to do gendered labour in preparation for the local gendered divisions of the coal and hosiery industries. It is the *historically politicised context* that is singular. The repository of collective memory – still unfolding and becoming increasingly militant through the 1970s and 1980s – allowed those who challenged school, 'wagged it' [6] or got into trouble with the police to quickly slot into lives as politically conscious

'combatants' within the miners' trade union or as activists in the women's movement against pit closures as it developed (see Campbell, 1986; Seddon, 1986).

There are tensions in this history to be sure. The complex ways in which variously radical and conservative tendencies played out over the two-hundred-and-fifty-year life of coal-mining labour history are fascinating, even though the dominant historiography – shaped somewhat by Communist Party of Great Britain's influence in parts of the academy – has done little to identify either syndicalist-influenced rank-and-file-ism or the everyday *perruques* (de Certeau, 1984) of 'scrounging', 'brawnge-ing' and 'glassback-ing' [7] that were common certainly by the 1970s. Suffice it to say that these adults' accounts – structured as embodied tradition – clearly demonstrate the context in which young people's refusals of aspiration and advancement through education were made and remade a generation ago. But do they still? Are the processes still the same or significantly different in this globalised, post-modern moment? I'm inclined to answer, 'Yes, and no.' The problem in the localities where my study is based is that young people's lives today are not connected in any *direct* way to that past – a fact contributing to the chagrin, and sometimes even despair, of the locally originating adults who now work with them. The kids *know* very little of the past. In the words of one 17-year-old, Dave, 'I've only seen Billy Elliot,' or, as ASBO Jonnyo said, 'Nobody talks about pit down Longthorne any more,' or, as Sarah testifies, 'Strike? Never 'eard on it.'

This 'luminous' (Katz, 2001) paradox is at the heart of my study. Trapped, even after the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the strike, in a still problematic silence, young people in this richly historical space are undoubtedly cut off from *and tied firmly to* their own history. By some 'transmission of affect' (Brennan, 2004), they seem strangely able, even ambitious, to dance its spectral, contradictory 'old nature' [8] choreography – where an unreconstructed patriarchal sexism and a sharply reflexive critical awareness of class and its injuries sit tensely side by side.

Herein lies my hesitantly conditional 'Yes, and no.' The past impacts as a familiar, socially remembered repository of refusal, sometimes militant, sometimes – as Samuel (1986) signally recognized – undoubtedly conservative in its aspiration. If we look at some examples in the ethnographic data generated by today's young people we can see not only that the same tangled threads are evident, but, moreover, that some of the more novel, locally idiosyncratic refusals appear to combine the patterns of resistance outlined above with a freshly improvised renewal of a resistant space that has a variety of moods – sometimes dark, sometimes playful.

Not Takin' No Shit

One of the most obvious refusals continues to occur in the classroom, where it manifests as 'stickin' up for yersen [yourself]', 'not takin' no shit', 'being a little fucker' or, in the case of the girls, 'being a cunt' rather than 'being plastic' [9] or 'a pussy':

There were odd few in year who, like, 'd think: bollocks to ya! I'm not tekkin nowt [nothing] off you! Know worra mean? An' it's 'ow you get brought up really, in't it? I got brought up to not take no shit! (Karl, aged 17, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

[I'd] just walk out lessons. Walk in lessons late. Just don't do nowt. Just sit there ... I told 'em [emphatically] *I'm not doin' what nobody says!* (Josie, aged 16, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

I'm not getting treated like crap! (Lianne, aged 16, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

Resisting the imposition of a set of alien class values is key:

They pick on us 'cos, well, we speak us [our] minds. Beldover people speak their minds. If they get a bang, they get a bang. If they get put in 'ospital, they get put in 'ospital ... Teachers don't like that. Like, you say what you think ... you 'ave to fight back at 'em. (Sophie, aged 15, Beldover)

What is more, in a context of poverty this struggle is sharply instrumental, having its own bitter political economy:

I've 'ad teachers say to me: You're a waste o' space. You're not gonna get nowhere. They don't like kids from round 'ere, I don't think. They're just stuck up. All they're bothered about is

getting their wages: 'I get £20 an hour!' [Incredulously] Up your arse! Alright [alright], then. That's *bull!* [nonsense] They [the teachers] say: *We can sit 'ere all day and do nothing. We'll still get our wages.* (Samantha, aged 15, Beldover)

I don't know. [The teacher] just thinks she's reight [right] good, an' she said that none of us are gonna get qualifications, none of us are gonna get jobs an' things like that. An' she used to say: Yeah, an' you think *you* can live off *your* Daddy's money for rest o' your life! An' things like that. An' teachers wonder why I got mad wi 'er ... she knew we'd 'ave a go [fight back]. (Josie, aged 16, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

They used to just, like, look down at you cos, oh, I'm higher than you so you do this and you do that ... Teachers? They not bothered really about you. They just want to ... get their money. (P-J, aged 16, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

In more than one instance, both boys and girls in my study have refused even to collect their GCSE results, challenging the credentialist valuation that they represent:

[*Emphatically*] No, I don't! I don't! I don't need me – what you call 'em? – GCSE grades, to get where I want to get. Like your teachers – what's it called? – [*in whining voice*] 'You know you need them grades to get that job and y' need this. You'll never get anywhere you won't, and stuff. [*In a strong voice now*] And I *don't* need 'em. Do you know what I mean? I can *prove* to them I don't need 'em. I know meself. You know what I mean? (Lianne, aged 16, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

This resistance is embedded in peer and family culture, as we see in this exchange among the members of the Cavs Lasses Group [10]:

Nicky: Me mum told teacher to 'Kiss my arse!'

Samantha: She's a legend, her mum!

Nicky: She's just like us... if you get me. She just 'as a laugh.

Samantha: She's sound. But she can be a bitch.

Nicky: Me mum's not bothered cos o what 'appened to 'er in past. Me mum and dad split up and she got someone else an' 'e used to beat 'er an' everything'. An' me an' me sister seen it all. An' I think from then it just learned 'er to stick up for 'erself.

Samantha: She's crazy, in't she Nic?

Nicky: I think I've got like that ... cos there's no point being pally [friendly], in't [is] there, now?

Samantha: School don't like it cos we speak our minds and that's what they don't like. Look at Ruby, she's a little rebel, she is.

Ruby: I'm on report cos I stick up for mesen [myself].

A number of strategies are ranged here against the processes that Savanna believes try to reduce girls like her, 'with spots and stuff', to 'plastic' conformity. At school,

... if you're not plastic you're not worth it ... Basically, if you're not spoilt, [the teachers] are not bothered [interested] in you. (Savanna, aged 15, Cavs Lasses Group, Beldover)

In an active appropriation from transatlantic popular culture the girls talk of how it is essential to refuse the pressures to become plastic, resisting the temptation of inclusion in the group of spoilt teachers' 'favourites' whose makeup is flawless, who are 'too far up their own arses' and who have 'got everything'. Far better to embrace 'having nowt', which, it seems, is tantamount to having what really matters: strong family bonds and enduring friendship loyalties forged on your own patch. As against the plastic girls, they conjure, instead, a vision of femininity that is toughened by knowing reality as it's lived 'at the end of the day', in the final analysis, when the niceties of middle-class manners are no longer relevant. Against lasses who are plastic, they counterpose the virtues of 'soundness', 'being a bit of a bitch', and even, if necessary, like Beth – who stridently occupies the *persona non grata* position, well beyond the pale of even residual respectability – of 'being a cunt' (see, of course, Skeggs, 1997, to get a feel for the power of *this* refusal):

Beth: I think I'm invincible. I think no one can touch me. I'm amazing ... I'm a cunt basically, but I don't care. I'm mouthy. I'm not bothered what people think about me ... [To her two friends]

Oy, you two, what do you think about me?

Nicky and Samantha: [in chorus] You're a cunt!

Nicky: [In a funny, high-pitched, sing-song voice] I think you're a beautiful cunt! Ha, ha, ha! [Aside] You brown nose her, then she tells ya you're a cunt! [In a clipped, 'posh' voice rising to a crescendo] She's alright, Bethy babe, when she wants to be, but when she thinks she's invincible, well! [Whispered aside] That's Nicky talkin', by the way. [Naturally, now] Na, she's alright [alright]... we'd miss her.

Beth: I don't want [teachers] to think I'm a pussy. I do want 'em to be intimidated of me.

'It's Fuckin' Rough Dahn [Down] Theer! [There]' – claiming a present dystopia

There is a space in the contemporary moment of these localities where three things – the fallen position of coal-mining communities in the liberal imagination; the traumatic end of the industry and its ruined utopia of collective progress through nationalisation; and the present everyday 'othering' of young people's meaning-making – seem braided together in a kind of colluded dystopia. Villages like Coalbrook, Cragwell, Longthorne and Beldover are positioned as realms of a 'broken Britain', as what happens when the grand narratives of modernity fail. While liberal estates like the academy turn their face firmly away from what is now imagined as a dangerous redoubt of white working-class brutality, some educators, youth workers and police officers locally meanwhile enjoy the frisson of the 'no-go' areas on this damaged front line:

Coalbrook was always known as a fighting town. Coalbrook in general was a violent and vicious town ... It were renowned. If you came to Coalbrook you gorra good hidin' [got beaten up]. It were renowned as a fightin' village. When I first started I walked up, come out o' police station went up Model Village an' this bloke dint recognise me at first but I'd actually worked with 'im in past [undecipherable] An' e' says 'Were tha goin' youth?' I says, I'm goin on Model. He says 'They'll fuckin kill thee.' He says 'Nobody's walked up there since 1984.' I says 'There is today!' ... Two years ago [2005] An', er, it weren't accepted, you couldn't walk round there. But it's like Model Village! ... [it was linked] [t]o miners' strike, yeah. Oh yeah. (Chris Stevens, former Coalbrook miner, now a community Police Support Officer in Coalbrook)

Remarkably, and in a way that is relevant to our topic, this 'feral dystopia' – as much as it is received as either a set of social facts about poverty or a as a romance of the margins – is also being 'made' and re-made *from below* by young people on an everyday basis. Young interviewees have often talked animatedly and proudly of 'livin' in a shit 'ole'. They grandiosely re-name their villages 'the Bronx' or 'Beirut' and seem, in this fabrication of 'outsider' status, to have developed a subtle mechanism for both feeding the voyeuristic interest of the outside world and at the same time somehow undermining and transcending it – as if by greedily embracing the status of a victim, this might offer the very means of escaping it.

In its lighter forms this 'counter-victimisation' is celebrated through humour. Sometimes this is a hyperbolic and viciously self-denigrating humour of 'roughness':

1st voice: Tell thee what, youth, [I'll tell you what, mate,] it's fuckin' rough dahn theer [in Coalbrook]! Did tha [you] 'ear abaht [about] wor [what] 'appened in Drum [a pub] other neet [the other night]?

2nd voice: No, wor 'appened?

1st v: Some fucker threw a petrol bomb through window!

2nd v: Fuckin' 'ell! They din't, did they? It *must* be rough!

1st v: Aye they did. And does tha [you] know what's fuckin' worse? Well, one o' regulars [customers] picked it up, blew it out and supped [drank] what were left o' fuckin' petrol![11]

Writing up the findings of a school-based survey involving participant observation of education in a south Yorkshire mining community, Dubberley (1993) noted an ongoing conflict that existed

... between the imported culture and values of the majority of school staff and the local culture of most of the pupils, particularly the working-class pupils from the mining community. (Dubberley, 1993, p. 75)

Such refusal, he argued 'reflect[ed] the way the total community, men and women, old and young... generated an entire culture around the digging of coal' (Dubberley, 1993, pp. 75-76). Central to that culture was a resistant humour – supremely evident in 'pit talk' and 'pillocking' [12]

– that acted out elements of a collective and strongly territorial usurpation of middle-class knowledge forms constituted as ‘softness’ [13] and ‘daftness’.

It is this same humour, trawling more often than not a visceral physicality, that is still available as part of a repertoire of refusal for the kids of Beldover, and they are adept at using it to ‘remind’ even local and accepted support workers that they might be ‘getting too far up their own arses’. In a rather gentler exchange than the above, two girls from the Cavs Lasses Group, Samantha – a comic virtuoso – and her friend Heartbreaker, pillory youth worker Stacey’s naive and misguided attempt to ‘get a bit of youth work in’ when she, first, falls foul of their mockery, and then dares to remind them about the need for ‘correct language’:

Samantha: [Sharply, but with good humour] Tell ma [my] mother! And tell ma mother she’s a ‘fanny fringe’, an’ all!

Stacey: I bet I’ll say that! Oh, y’ child’s dying words were... You’re a what?

Samantha and Heartbreaker [simultaneously]: A fanny fringe!

Stacey: A fanny fringe?

Samantha: She’s a reight [right] laugh! Don’t tek it ... Ma mum ... ‘ow *bad* is ma mum, Heart?

Heartbreaker: *Bad!* [laughing. ‘Bad’ means ‘great’ here]

Samantha: She ‘as her fringe straight across, like. Well, I just call ‘er on purpose an’ she just goes psycho.

Stacey: I love workin’ wi’ you lot, I do, cos I learn summat new every time. You wear fanny fringes nah [now]?

Samantha: She just goes psycho!

NGB: I missed out on that. What’s a fanny fringe then?

Samantha: When you have it cut *straight* across?

Stacey: So that if I go to hairdressers and say ‘Can I ‘ave a fanny fringe?’ they’ll know what I mean?

Samantha: [laughing] *No!*

Stacey: [in mock anger] Well, *don’t lie to me* then!

Samantha: It is a fanny fringe ... but they’re not gonna call it ‘fanny fringe’, are they?

Stacey: [continuing in mock anger] If I go to hairdressers an’ I ask for *that* I’m gonna look a [pause] idiot, aren’t I? So *don’t tell me lies!*

Heartbreaker: [incredulous] Hairdressers wain’t [won’t] know what you on about if you say that!

Stacey: See, that’s what I mean ... if you don’t use *correct language* an’ I go an use it somewhere else I’m gonna look a prat, aren’t I?

Samantha: That’s why [very slowly and with heavy irony] you ... *don’t ... use ... it!* You *dummy!* [laughter]

Stacey: [feigning, and showing, frustration] Oh, you know ... *you lot!*

In its darker moments we see counter-victimisation performed as a threatening and gratuitous intimidation spilling over from school into community, as here:

A few o’ us knocked about at night together. Just used to mess about. We’d just ... I don’t know ... used to be little bastards really. Used to get chased. We’d just find a bloke that were massive or summat and just run by ‘im an’ slap ‘im on back o’ head or summat ... Oh, I don’t know ... or just chuckin’ eggs at people. Just do daft stuff really. Or go through supermarket on a motorbike, or summat. (Dave, aged 17, *Go 4 it!* Coalbrook)

Sometimes it reverses what is a common nostalgic urge by reworking the conflicts of the past in such a way that threatens to reveal them as unfinished and consequently still dangerous. This can be seen in the following extract from field notes recording an educational trip to a Cragwell video-making facility by the Coalbrook *Go 4 it!* Kids.[14]

After little more than half an hour or so the level of tension in the room, the relentless ‘Can we g’ f a fag, Chrissie?’ leads to a break being called. We head up the main street towards the Model Village Stores. The lads move in a loose group that knots into a huddle then loosens again, then again tightens and draws close like a muscle flexing. These are Coalbrook lads in Cragwell, and they know it. This is ‘scab land’. Passers-by watch them and can’t quite figure out what they embody, though groups of young men moving with lithe aggression and energy lodge firmly in the collective memory. Everybody knows unknowingly what this bespeaks. The group moves in

a kind of animal trot, loud, watching how they're watched, staying just the right side of marauding. Paul, the outsider, follows as if he's on a long wire direct to the group's energy, a foil strip of fuse ready to arc. He jay-walks right up the centre of the main street, actually stopping a jeep with a couple of hard looking men in it. They gawp at him, incredulous. High on the buzz, he launches himself up onto the wall outside the Model Village Stores, then clammers to the top of a signpost banging it loudly with the flat of his palm. *Fuck ooooooooo!* he shouts at the top of his voice and at nobody.

Non-servile Virtuosi in an Insubordinate Space?

So, let's come back to *autonomia*. Can it really help us make sense of this variegated repertoire of disparate – and desperate? – refusals that we see here being invented from the muddy 'below' of a local, classed culture at a moment when 'profound processes of re-structuration and de-traditionalisation... are eroding the certainties of previous transitions and inherited cultures, as well as inciting them to re-establish themselves in new forms' (Willis & Trondman, 2000, p. 6)? I think so, to an extent. To locate the elements that are relevant we need to come back to the literature. As we've noted already, writings on Italian *operaismo* and the later *autonomia* movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s have become much more available, particularly in the wake of the successful publication of Negri's *Empire* in 2000. It is now possible to trace a genealogical line between archive material from the time (see, for example, Tronti, 2007; Bologna, 2007) and more recent developments in the work of some key figures (Virno, 1996a, b; Agamben, 2000, 2008; Hardt & Negri, 2001, 2006, 2009; Beradi, 2009).

Interest in this literature has grown as part of something like a generational reappraisal of the nature of anti-capitalist politics after the large scale anti-globalisation protests of Seattle. In the light of that reappraisal, the direct but dispersed, decentralised, *from below* character of the Italian movement with its 'refusal of work', its 'joyous and invigoratingly concrete... idea of paying only what you thought was just for rent, bills and food', and its 'practices of mass illegality' (all references Power, 2008, p. 52) can be seen as tactically innovative and instructive. At a more analytical level, a flourish of conceptual elaboration impelled by a theoretical urge to understand the phenomenon of *autonomia* as it occurred has offered up a new framework for understanding integral aspects of capitalist political economy and the social composition of forces opposed to it. The tactical modes of *autonomia* are not unlike the rank-and-file oppositional practices of coalfield history or those tactics of refusal employed by contemporary youth. Some of the technical concepts are illuminating, too.

To return specifically to Virno. At the risk of oversimplifying a dense and sophisticated piece of political theory that ranges from Hobbes to Marx to Aristotle to Arendt, I'll try and summarise the key points from *Virtuosity and Revolution: the political theory of exodus* that are relevant here. Reflecting on the development of capitalist production in post-war Italy, Virno identifies it as 'post-Fordist' in character. Central to Virno's account is the notion that in post-Fordist production, '[w]ork has absorbed the distinctive traits of political action' (Virno, 1996b, p. 189) in a changed productive setting of 'general intellect, global social knowledge [and] shared linguistic ability' that 'demands virtuosity' (Virno, 1996b, p. 193), but where 'virtuosic activity comes across as universal *servile labour* [original emphasis]' (Virno, 1996b, p. 195). The key to political action in this setting is *flight*, a third possibility avoiding the binary of protest or subjection.

This is the idea of *exodus* in Virno, where radical disobedience 'consists of the social conflicts that manifest themselves not only and not so much as protest but most particularly as *defection*... not as voice but as exit. Nothing is less passive than flight' (Virno, 1996b, p. 198). Here, in flight, virtuosity is recovered as *non-servile* and re-politicised. Re-visiting classical ethics, Virno employs the Aristotelian distinction between 'intemperance' and 'incontinence' to capture the critical, *offensive* aspects of *exodus*. In Aristotle, both intemperance and incontinence are forms of vice. Virno reinterprets this distinction, driving a wedge between the two, thus:

Incontinence is a vulgar unruliness, disregard for laws, a giving way to immediate appetite.
Intemperance is *something very different* – it is the opposition of an intellectual understanding to given ethical and political standards. (Virno, 1996b, p. 199, my emphasis)

On the basis of such a distinction, intemperance is repositioned as the ‘cardinal virtue’ (Virno, 1996b, p. 199) of *exodus*. Indeed, the historical moment of *autonomia* – where ‘a youthful workforce, contradicting all expectations, decided that it preferred temporary and part-time jobs to regular jobs in big factories’ and where ‘pre-established roles were deserted and a “territory” unknown to the official maps was colonised’ (Virno, 1996b, p. 198) – thus becomes, for Virno, the quintessential example of *exodus* and thereby of refusal as *virtuous* intemperance.

Conclusion

So, let’s ground this back in the empirical everyday of Derbyshire’s coalfield. My data certainly attest to complex continuities between contemporary school refusal and a local historical culture distinguished in the broadest terms by sharp contestation, social and political challenge, and forms of refusal having at least some key features in common with autonomism. That much is fairly clear. The interesting question is, of course, whether the repertoire of refusals that we’ve met with here is about flight – *exodus* – in Virno’s sense. The answer to that question, as Virno’s argument proceeds, seems to hang on whether refusal is conscious of itself or not. And *that*, in the particular context of my research, seems to depend on whether a ‘voice in here’ – like Stacey’s voice in the epigraph to this piece – constitutes the utterance of a collectively transmitted, socially remembered political consciousness or not. And I think it might, given the particular power of socially transmitted memory in these localities and in other places like them.

I would argue in conclusion, therefore, that the vocabulary made available by theoretical appraisals of Italian autonomism is useful in that it helps us frame an enduring question in a new way. Indeed, it enables us to entertain the idea that disaffection from school and the educational project as a whole might – if not *always*, then at least in *some* settings – be part of a ghosted, continuing and constantly re-invented oppositional project of ‘bottom-up’, agentic *virtuosity* transmitted in the manner whereby ‘children negotiate schooling not only directly through their own experiences but also through the sedimented experiences of parents or even grandparents’ noted by Reay (2009, p. 27). As such, we might model it, after Virno, as a form of *virtuous intemperance* rather than as the *incontinence* of a feckless and undifferentiated underclass.

Rethinking school disaffection in this way might allow us to avoid two common misunderstandings currently dominating the debate. The first of these is rooted in a middle class imaginary which views disengagement as a pathological failure of aspiration and ‘behavioural difficulty’ as evidence of a congenital tendency to violence. The second emerges from a body of scholarship that veers too easily between lionising and loathing the affective jolt of young people’s refusal.[15] Thus recouped, ‘exodus’, ‘flight’, ‘refusal’ ‘disaffection’ – however we care to label it – might yet be articulated as a dignified process of *non-servile* challenge from below. Such a reinterpretation seems to me to be, *prima facie*, a worthwhile progressive project – even if it does require a rather unlikely journey from Beldover to Bologna, to the Athenian Academy, and back again.

Notes

[1] Names of people and places have been changed.

[2] These terms refer to the mix of Victorian housing (built by coal companies like the Beldover Coal Company) and post-war housing (built for the National Coal Board after nationalization). The NCB housing built in the 1950s was usually painted white, hence ‘white city’, a term that is still used. The ‘Cavs’ estate in Beldover is an example.

[3] ‘Twoccing’, i.e. stealing. From TWOC, itself derived from the police charge category of ‘taking without owner’s consent’.

[4] ‘Ragging up’ is a term for ‘wild cat’ pit-based, rank-and-file trade union action, usually over domestic issues.

[5] Coalbrook is an example. A major development, World of Leisure – funded significantly by regeneration money – occupies a site on the old colliery area in the heart of Coalbrook colliery model village and employs a majority workforce of East European, mainly Polish, economic migrants.

- [6] Played truant.
- [7] All terms for the wilful avoidance of work ('glassback-ing' or idleness, that is to say, demonstrating a weak – or 'glass' – back). These particular terms are local to Sheffield (20 miles from the research locality), where I worked as a furnaceman and trade union lay official in the steel industry from 1975 to 1980, and where there was fairly common migration between work in the steel and coal industries. Everyday stories at that period in these settings commonly narrated an uncomfortable stand-off between management and workers, where the aim of the worker's day was to avoid any meaningful production through an extensive repertoire of avoidances, ruses, feigned stupidities and sometimes – in my direct witness – sabotage of machinery.
- [8] A phrase used by a Beldover lad, Cocker, for the ways of the past.
- [9] I am indebted to my colleague Sarah Dyke at the Education and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University for pointing out the link to popular culture here via the film *Mean Girls* starring Lyndsey Lohan. The protagonist resists and subverts the dominant model of feminine perfection and success in the school with her two geeky friends. The friends are attracted to the belligerence she directs at a group of sorority contenders known as the 'plastics'.
- [10] An informal, after-school, girls-only youth group on the Cavendish Estate in Beldover.
- [11] I was told this joke in the 'Beater's Wagon' while observing a group of Cragwell, Coalbrook and Longthorne men and youths working, cash in hand, as beaters on a pheasant shoot in Lincolnshire in the winter of 2007. Beating (flushing birds from cover to be shot) – a rare continuation of an almost exclusively male space of transmission – is a common way of earning illegal 'fiddle money' in the rurally situated former pit villages. The overused swearing is essential to the rhetorical form which employs tropes of profanity and outrageous exaggeration to frame a story believable only to gullible, middle-class 'outsiders' who are therefore set up as the butt of the joke.
- [12] The scurrilously ironic coal industry argot. See Griffiths, 2007.
- [13] The attack on 'softness' here should not be seen as a rejection of the feminine by machismo but as indicative, rather, of a refusal of a 'school knowledge and learning' that is not robust enough to withstand the hard empiricism of lived working-class experience. As we can see, the girls are just as capable of challenging such softness and 'daftness' (foolishness).
- [14] Coalbrook pit was a largely striking pit during 1984-5, Cragwell a largely working pit. Cragwell was also the site of mass picketing by many young miners from Yorkshire and subsequent heavy policing.
- [15] An anonymous peer reviewer has suggested the example of the 'Bourdieu–Passeron divorce' which 'was related to Passeron's view that working class culture (including violence) needed to be understood as "productive" rather than simply submitted (and responding) to symbolic violence'. S/he cites Grignon & Passeron (1982) in evidence.

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11

‘It’s not a factory!’ Performativity in education and support provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a UK former coal-mining community.

N. Geoffrey Bright

Introduction

The last ten years or so has seen extensive and illuminating exploration of the impact of performativity in a variety of education settings nationally and internationally (for examples focussing on different sectors and from different perspectives see: Troman, 1996, 1997; Ball, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003; Gewirtz and Ball, 2000; Mahony and Hextall, 2000; vWoods and Jeffrey, 2002; Brehony, 2005; Webb and Vuillamy 2006; Troman *et.al.*, 2007; Strain, 2009; Wilkins, 2011). In general, the emphasis of work following Ball’s broadly Foucauldian inquiry has not been on the merely practical character of performance cultures but more widely on the way that performativity can be seen as a key discursive component of what Ball has called a ‘*generic global policy ensemble*’ (Ball, 2008, 39). That ensemble ‘rests on a set of basic and common *policy technologies*...that work to bring about *new values, new relationships and new subjectivities* in arenas of practice’ (ibid.: 40, all original emphases). Performativity is implemented through one such policy technology which itself has three strands: a pervasive culture of targets and auditing; a regime of regulatory mechanisms such as inspection; and a general marketisation of the environment. As such, it insinuates the key aspects of the neo-liberal economic project into everyday life right across the public sector and in so doing reconstitutes institutional and individual worlds.

Within education research, the majority of work on performativity has tended to interrogate the shaping of subjectivities among ‘professional’ practitioners – teachers, lecturers – and has generally been situated as a response to issues arising out of an established literature on professionalism. Consequently, there has been less of a focus on the impact of performativity on para-professionals, support staff and the variety of ‘multi-agency’ practitioners working outside the school system, or indeed among children and youth themselves – even though all of these groups might be seen as ‘policy actors’ in Ball’s terms. Indeed, while the picture of performativity as thoroughly embedded within mainstream settings such as schools is now well developed – with Wilkins (2011) recently assembling preliminary evidence of the emergence, even, of a ‘post-performative teacher’ – the

grip of performativity in the marginal, ‘poor relation’ settings of alternative out-of-school provision, youth support and ‘foundation learning’¹ is less well researched.

In light of that, the discussion presented in this chapter seeks to develop our understanding of how performativity reaches into the lives of those situated in that sector; not only the ‘tutors’ and support staff, but also the young people who find themselves on the margins of the system simply because, in the words of one of my participants, they ‘either *couldn’t* or *wouldn’t*, perform’ in school. It does that, also, in a very specific context of marginalisation: that of the now post-industrial UK coalfields.

A Coalfield Ethnography

The data drawn on here originates from a doctoral intergenerational ethnography of education and youth transitions among ‘marginalised’² young people, mainly in four former pit villages – Beldover, Coalbrook, Cragwell and Longthorne³ – in a coalfield area of Derbyshire, England. The study was conducted between 2006 and 2011 and attempts an ethnographic project aiming at a set of objectives that are, hopefully productively, in some tension with each other. First, in ‘analysing the disputed and contested policy and practice space around young people “put at a disadvantage”’ (Smyth, 2010: 4), it proposes what Smyth identifies as a ‘critical policy ethnography’. As such, it concerns itself with ‘a broad social and educational policy arena as it is being enacted, rolled out, experienced and re-worked through the lives of a particular category of young people’ (ibid.). Such critical policy ethnography obviously draws on Ball’s ‘policy sociology’. There, attention is given to ‘policy rhetorics and discourses, looking at the way they ‘work to privilege certain ideas and topics and speakers, and exclude others’ (Ball, 2008: 5) and how they are ‘contested, interpreted... inflected, mediated, resisted and misunderstood...’ (Ball, 2008: 7) when implemented locally. Tracing such discursive contestations is, thus, central to the ethnographic project as I’ve envisaged it.

Secondly, in a post-industrial context *par excellence*, the study seeks to interrogate the ‘dialectics of discourse and the everyday’ in Dorothy Smith’s phrase (Smith, 1987). It does so by way of an interpretive approach exploring the relationship between ‘discourse-in-practice’ operating at meta (institutional, cultural or policy) level and as locally enacted, situated, ‘discursive practice’ operating at a micro (interactional) level. It looks, therefore, at the ‘myriad *hows*

1. Foundation Learning is learning provision for those currently below UK ‘Level 2’. Level 2 is, for example, the minimum level for entrance to apprenticeship training.

2. My study focuses on those either excluded from school, ‘at risk’ of exclusion or – being over the school leaving age – finding themselves ‘NEET’ (not in employment, education or training) or in the ‘foundation learning’ sector.

3. All names of places (at a level lower than county) have been changed as have the names of all persons.

and *whats*' of everyday life, oscillating between 'bracketing' the one level – say, the meta – and then the other – the micro (Hollstein and Gubrium, 2007, 496).

Thirdly, the ethnography attends to processes of local, classed, cultural production, seeing the *locally enacted* as occurring within an affective frame something like a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1975, 1977) or similar, perhaps, to Thrift's 'spatiality of feeling' (Thrift, 2008); that is, as having a very significant *affective* aspect. In light of that, the study seeks, overall, to work the troublesome edge between policy discourse, material cultural practice and the 'bloom-spaces' (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010: 9), 'transmissions' (Brennan, 2004) and 'atmospheres' (Anderson, 2009) of affect that are so obvious in the embodied choreography of '*dis*-affect' as it presents in the locality. Thus, it aims to come at locally textured fieldwork 'data' in a manner approaching that canvassed recently by Lawrence Grossberg whereby the local remains situated within a broader historical conjuncture but the affective, as 'feeling', is admitted 'as part of [the] study' (Grossberg, 2010: 335).

What follows from this for the purposes of *this* discussion, is that it will look at the impact of performativity on a group of practitioners and young people whose lives are *affectively* related either directly and knowingly, or atmospherically and unknowingly, to socially remembered or unconsciously embodied resistant histories, notably of the miners' strike of 1984-85 and the subsequent campaign against pit closures. Even though the local economy in the area studied has changed enormously, these histories still echo into the present. Indeed, they are more resonant now as the current conjuncture (an apparently intractable crisis of globalised capitalism) impacts in the locality through a tougher culture of performativity within the ever diminishing public sector and as rising unemployment and immiseration outside it. In the light of this, the argument will be made that the responses to performativity outlined here can't be fully encompassed by the kind of discussion focussing on the relationship between performativity and 'professionalism' that occupies much of the literature. Even a professionalism conceived as constructed, contested and fluidly shifting can't quite accommodate the particular complexities of historicised meaning-making considered in this chapter.

A common touchstone of defiance: the setting

I have described the characteristic nature of the coalfield area in which my study is set in detail elsewhere (Bright, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). Nevertheless, that description bears some repetition again here because, as I hope to show, it affects the way that performativity – arising as a phenomenon of globalised capitalism – is internalised and resisted. I've noted before, for example, that while the former

coal mining villages have been energetically ‘rebranded’ as increasingly desirable ‘historic market towns’ since the pits closed in the 1990s, the now non-existent industry still casts a shadow and the coalfields remain blighted by severe socio-economic problems relating to unemployment, long-term sickness and poverty. Beldover, Coalbrook and Cragwell all saw their pits close in within a couple of years of each other in the early 1990s. Twenty years later the wards around the sites of the former collieries still exhibit levels of deprivation that remain among the 1% most deprived nationally and, generally, more than a third of the working age population are still ‘inactive’ due to illness, disability or caring responsibilities. Unemployment is increasing, particularly among young people, and more than 50% of the population possess no qualifications. Basically, deprivation in these localities – described by one participant as ‘villages Santa Claus forgot’ – reaches the very worst urban levels, a decline described by another participant as a fall from ‘model village to brown [heroin] city’ (for accounts of coalfield decline see Beatty *et.al.* 2005; Bennett *et.al.* 2000; Gore *et.al.* 2007; Murray *et.al.* 2005).

I have also pointed out before how coalfield communities have been viewed as exceptional in different disciplinary literatures and have argued that such exceptionality operates on the formation of contemporary social identities in a number of ways: first, directly, in the material impoverishment to which I’ve just referred; secondly, indirectly, by means of ‘sedimented’ local and family histories (Reay, 2009: 27), and, thirdly, in an atmospheric transmission of what Hardt has called ‘affects of trauma’ (Hardt, 2007: xii) relating to the end of the industry. Coal mining communities such as Beldover, Coalbrook, Cragwell and Longthorne have been modelled as paradigmatic of working class ‘community’ in modernity (Dennis *et.al.* 1956; Bulmer, 1975; 1982), as ‘archetypally proletarian’ (see Lockwood 1966) and as characterised by ‘a very clear sense of the past as struggle [which] constitutes a memory that goes back at least a century’ and that has the strikes of 1926, 1972, 1974 and 1984-5 as a ‘common touchstone’ and ‘the imagery of the strike as defiance of the state [as]...a constant one’ (Fentress and Wickham, 1992: 115-6). (See also the trade union histories – Page Arnot, 1961; Griffin, 1962; Williams, 1962 – studies of the 1984-85 strike – Samuel *et.al.* 1986; Waddington *et.al.* 1991; Richards, 1996 – well as work on women’s roles in the characteristic coalfield ‘geography of gender relations’ – Massey, 1994; Seddon, 1986).

All of this adds up to what Strangleman has usefully called a ‘context of singularity’ (2001: 255) that not only relates to a unique history of industrial development and rapid, politically orchestrated decline, but also to a tradition of workplace and community resistance that I’ve argued continues to shape the disengagement – even ‘counter aspiration’ (Bright, 2011a; 2012) – of a group of contemporary coalfield youth even though it is more than twenty years since

the pits closed. I would also contend that the same singularities influence how the group of locally originating staff who work with those young people both see themselves 'professionally' and respond to performativity in education, as we'll see here. As to what we might expect given the surge of individualism and disembedding from class (Giddens, 1991; Beck 1992) that has arguably taken place in the period separating the two generations considered here, there are, nevertheless, some strong continuities. Before we move to consider these matters in detail, however, a note about the doctoral fieldwork will be helpful.

Fieldwork

Given that ethnography is, distinctly, a repertoire of methods characteristically involving *direct* and *sustained* social contact with participants, the research project from which I'm drawing material here has been grounded in concentrated fieldwork taking place over a four year period in a variety of settings, some of which have changed and evolved during that period. Sites have included formal – but out-of-school – youth education projects, informal education and youth work venues, youth clubs, a community youth house, private homes, a miners' welfare club and the street. Research in two key sites, however, has generated the bulk of the data relevant to this chapter. Firstly, by means of a sustained link (2007-2009) with staff and learners at a community based 'pre Entry to Employment' programme – *Go 4 it!* – recruiting 14-16 and 16-18 year-olds from the local communities who are either still at school but at 'risk of becoming NEET' (not in education, employment or training) or who have finished school and are NEET. This programme, with some staff changes, has now evolved into a 'foundation learning' project funded through a different route and referred to below as *Move4ward*. Secondly, through a similarly sustained (2009-2010) participant observation of staff and young people involved with local authority 'detached' and club-based youth work provision such as the *Cavs Lasses Group* – a girls only, after-school group on the Cavendish estate, Beldover – and *Bus Stop* – a mobile youth support service, are two examples.

The former generated a series of semi-structured and unstructured interviews with young people and staff, as well as a series of short participant observation opportunities in classrooms and on 'visits'. The latter generated frequent observations over a sustained period, spontaneous conversations, and semi-structured and unstructured interviews with groups and individuals. For the preparation of this chapter, follow-up discussions were also carried out with 'Christine', the education manager who first facilitated my research at *Go4it!* in 2007, and new conversations were had with two staff members 'Maggie' and 'Pat' now working for the *Move4ward* foundation learning project. Moreover, and in

general, it should also be noted that the ethnographic project referred to here itself grew out of my own lifelong connection to the localities as a member of a pit family, as a worker, as a political and trade union activist and for the last twenty five years as an education 'professional'.

Participants

In moving towards the crux of the discussion, there are some general points that need to be made about the group of participants and how they are situated in relation to one of the most surprising paradoxes evident in the data I've accumulated: namely, a peculiarly enigmatic *simultaneous presence and absence of history* in the coalfield localities studied. Now, these localities, as we've already noted, have always been *characterised* by a particularly high awareness of history transmitted through a century-long collective social memory of 'struggle' culminating in the locally bitterly divided 1984-85 strike. So, the fact that this history, an unspeakable but ever present 'elephant in the room', is both readily available and, at the same time, foreclosed – accessible to the older generation but not the youth – is significant. Indeed, the intergenerational aspect of my work brings out this difference, showing how the collective memory of resistance and upheaval remains a conscious reference point for the *staff* with whom I've spoken, while at the same time only being available through affective transmission to the young people. It should not be assumed to be having a lesser impact on them because of that, however, as, oddly, they still play out its conflicts. Signally for our purpose here, this 'hidden in plain sight' legacy of the conflicted demise of the coal industry influences the way in which both staff and young people respond to the encroaching embrace of performativity.

Now, education and support for marginal youth is itself a marginal sector in many ways. It is uncertainly related to the professional structures of mainstream schooling, special education and further education; has been shunted between different funding regimes and managed in different ways through frequently changing, temporary contractual relationships – as 'community education', as 'work-based learning', and now as part of the adult education sector but branded as 'foundation learning'. This sectoral uncertainty – registered as a feeling that 'you do expect shit to happen in your job, every day' (Maggie) – has been an issue for the staff participants that I've worked with, all of whom have been required to modify their professional identities at least once during the period of the research. Equally, though, it's worth noting that the margin – in the locality of my research at least – is also a productively liminal space where relationships and networks are often semi-formal and fluid and where a group of locally originating, and largely female, staff have adeptly negotiated their way by surprising routes from

voluntary and sessional employment as youth or community workers into roles as tutors and managers.

The staff

The staff involved originally around the *Go 4 it!* project and now with the *Move4ward* foundation learning group – Christine, the manager; Maggie and Pat, the ‘tutors’; Karen, a classroom support assistant; Stacey, a youth worker; Chris, a police community support officer (PCSO); Frank, a community tutor and Ray, a senior manager in the district – all originate in the local working class communities and have all had non-traditional, mature student, routes into the roles they now occupy. Prior to gaining a mixed and occasionally disparate portfolio of qualifications in youth and community work, adult teaching qualifications, access diplomas and part-time degrees, they worked variously in hairdressing, catering, factory work and clerical work. Two of the men were coal miners and another worked in coal by-product manufacturing and construction. All had a family background in coal mining and all but Pat and Maggie had been actively involved – Karen and Stacey even as young girls – in the miners’ strike of 1984-85, the campaign against pit closures or trade union and labour politics. Most of the sessional youth workers supporting the mobile *Bus Stop* project and the *Cavs Lasses Group* around the Cavendish estate in Beldover, all sites of participant observation, also share a similar background.

In being linked organically to the same communities as the young people with whom they work, they are quite distinct from the professional layers of staff that one would find in a school. They also have a particular attitude towards their role, seeing the young people on their programmes as the casualties of a malignant legacy of conflict and pit closures that continues into the present, and their own work as ameliorative in very direct ways:

I could just see it [recently] totally snowballing and being roughly in that culture that there was in the strike, you know, they were coming up and they were saying, Stace, have you got anything to eat, I’m starving? And I was going and buying bread and cheap loaves or beans, because the only meal they had had that day was at school because they had free school meals. (Stacey, youth worker).

What we might note here, really, is that in this sector of the education system and in this particular locality, the ‘policy actors’ negotiating the reach of performativity are a distinctive, even idiosyncratic, group in some interesting ways. The staff directly supporting *Go4it!*, *Move4ward* and the various local

youth work projects, see themselves as working out with the official project of schooling. What's more, they view their role as an almost impossible one of cleaning up after the official project's failure to meet the needs of those left on the margin twenty years after the end of the mining industry. Seeing things in this way, they retain a specific and actively *affective* connection to that 'common touchstone of defiance' noted above which they carry as a reference narrative – Frank and Ray explicitly as 'socialists' – alongside, but affectively prior to, any professional discourse in which they find themselves. Even as the provision in which they are involved – often generated initially from a local campaigning, do-it-yourself culture going back, one way or another, to the 1984-85 strike – has become increasingly incorporated into Local Authority structures they see the changing cohorts of young people as 'the same group of kids.' Consequently, their socially reparative practice – based in a characteristic, local collectivist ethic that still sees knowledge and knowledge relations as essentially *social* in character – goes on. Indeed, they talk of their own work as a kind of last bastion against what they know is 'really' happening: that is, a still unfolding 'grand plan', aimed at finally dealing with the remnants of the coal mining 'enemy within':

It's part o' the grand plan in't it, eh? [bitterly and knowingly] I do wonder if, like, in ten years time we're gonna be almost back in Victorian days... an' all benefit's getting chopped. You know is it part o' this grand plan o' this Tory government and now they're in they're gonna make it that. You know, there's that sector o' community that's got fuck all basically, there's them in middle that's got a bit, but there's these up 'ere that's got everything and to me I see it all around, there's people that's got nothing, really got nothing. I mean, I nip down Coalbrook market, say Wednesday, to get a sandwich or something and you see some o' faces, Geoff, o' people, and you think, oh, my God, what a life you lot have had! Poverty and anxiety...people just look so ground down, and ill, and tired...in last two or three years, you know, in Beldover. (Christine, *Move4ward* manager).

One might reasonably expect, then, that the self-positioning deployed by these staff – broadly espousing the 'organization, cooperation and older forms of collective relations' (Ball, 2003: 219) to which performativity runs counter – will be particularly problematic in relation to the 'intensive work on the self' (Dean, 1995, p. 581) required by performativity's 'system of "terror"' (Ball, 2008: 51). And it is, but not straightforwardly.

Young people

But what of the young people – Karl, Dave, P-J, ASBO-Jonnyo, Cocker, Lianne, Beth, Heartbreaker, the ‘Cavs lasses’; the ‘Model crew’ and the many others – that I’ve sat with, talked with and listened to over a five year period? How are they positioned in the discursive frame of performativity? What’s more, how do they position themselves? These are young people who describe themselves as from ‘round here’, from places that are ‘not exactly *tough* tough, but [have]got a name’ where ‘[e]veryone just knows everyone’, ‘[where] it’s a bit rough and that...’, ‘[where we] just all stick together really’ (Dave). They see themselves as ‘a bit rough, but not idiots’ in Cocker’s terms. They can be ‘little fuckers’ (Karl) or a ‘bit of a bastard’ (Dave) or, like Beth – who refuses the ‘plastic’ identity of girls who ‘are in with the teachers’ – ‘a cunt, me’. They are the young people who thirty years since according to Liz, a sessional youth in Beldover would have quickly been absorbed into the local economy, ‘Lads’d ‘a been at pit. Lasses’d ‘a been in knicker factory’.

According to the categorisations of the multi-agency services that work with them, these young people ‘are, or are at risk of’ becoming teen parents, becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training), being involved in catastrophic drinking and drug use, and ‘offending’. As far as the facts are concerned, they have commonly been permanently or temporarily excluded from school, subject to ‘managed moves’ or ‘invited not to attend’. After exclusion, a number have been subjected to anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) and acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) after trouble with the police. More seriously, some have had custodial sentences in Young Offender institutions and have, subsequently been electronically tagged and placed under curfew on release.

Remarkably, every single young person involved with the doctoral project – around a hundred or so that I’ve spent some time with – is familiar, *as a matter of course*, with some combination of the following: family breakdown; long term unemployment; chronic disease; disability; alcoholism; sexual abuse (including rape); overdose related death; arrest and strip search; parental imprisonment; suicide or accidental death; eviction; domestic violence. Referred to sneeringly in some professional canteen discourse as part of a ‘hillbilly’, ‘RAF’ (‘rough as fuck’), culture of the ‘in-bred’, these young people are supposedly without aspirations and are commonly positioned as prone to the embrace of the racist right.

What can be said with accuracy is that they almost exclusively come from families that were involved with the coal mining industry who, subject to what Beverley Skeggs has described as ‘spatial apartheid’ (Skeggs 2004: 180), still live in the ‘pit rows’, ‘white city’ estates and ‘colliery model villages’ of former pit housing in the denigrated space that I have previously described as ‘the Model’ (Bright, 2011a). They are working class youngsters, basically, whose lives are

similar in many ways to the early lives of the staff who now work with them – a phenomenon that is as common in this sector as it would be unusual in schools and which somehow draws staff and learners together in a symbiotic, sometimes collusive resistance to performativity.

The reach of performativity: ‘I’m thinkin’, God, we must be bloody mad!’

The foregoing description of the participants and their characteristic relationship to their roles notwithstanding, it’s important to acknowledge, nevertheless, that most of the elements ordinarily noted in research on performativity in schools are discernible to some extent in this sector, too. Among staff, the ‘regress of mistrust’ recognised by Power (1994) is clearly visible, extending here even to the self in this fascinating conversation with *Move4ward* tutors Maggie and Pat, which is worth quoting at length:

Maggie. We were youth workers. [...] *that* was the job that I went into [...] All of a sudden to then just put the pressure on staff [to change] ... It’s now ‘functional skills’ and we were told: you’ll be delivering functional skills – ‘cos you don’t have to be *qualified* to deliver functional skills. But we’ve still got to get them to the same Maths and English certificate that, before, previously, *qualified* literacy and numeracy tutors were come in, bought in, like, externally to deliver that for us, ‘cos *we weren’t* qualified! When it changed to functional skills, all of a sudden, overnight we *became qualified* to deliver! It didn’t make any sense to us, ‘cos we still had to get ‘em to the same point.

GB. “So how did you feel about that?”

M. We were a bit pissed off to start wi’, weren’t we?

Pat. Then we just sort o’ accepted it [lengthy pause] ...you know, talking about it now I’m laughing ...cos...

M. It’s funny when you look back in’t it?

P. You think to yourself, blinking ‘eck! What? How did this happen? I came in ...You know, as Maggie says, we came in as youth workers!

M. [laughing, to Pat] See you’ve forgotten, an’t you?

P. I just put things behind me...I'm laughing now, thinking oh my God, would anybody else put up wi' that? You know, would anybody else?

M. Teacher training! We had to do that!

P. Teacher training! Do that, or lose your job!

NGB. Was there clear pressure to do that? Not 'you can do it if you want'?

M. No, we had to do it. That became part of the job description overnight.

P. You know...but the thing is, the young people that we're working with are still them difficult young people that need that personal development side of it. You know, why are they cramming to get done in three month what school hasn't done and family hasn't done in the last 16 years? And they want us to get it all in, to get 'em up up to a level 2 [...] But I'm thinking ...and talking like you've just gone through all that... I'm thinkin' 'God, we must be bloody mad!'

M. You know, they can't read and write and they want us to be able to get 'em to read and write wi'in space o' three month. I'm saying: *what?*

There is much in this about the doubtful character of professional identities in the sector; about the haphazard, illogical shifts of status between being qualified and being unqualified; about having one's identity shaped by the technical-bureaucratic apparatus of the job description 'overnight'. There is also something of the 'institutional schizophrenia' noted by Blackmore and Sachs (1997) as well as what Ball sees as the 'potential 'splitting' between the teachers own judgements about 'good practice' and student 'needs' and the rigours of performance (Ball, 2003: 221).

Troman and Woods' (2001) research in the primary education sector, as well as remarking a similar progressive erosion of trust, also notes the 'security-seeking' tactics that are attendant upon it, here evident in the same conversation with Maggie and Pat:

Maggie. I *make* her change, 'cos I'm adaptable. I say come on, a change is good and then she's alright, 'cos Pat's one for getting a bit unsure and saying 'I don't think I can do this' and I go 'course you can, you're doin' it already...

[E]xistential anxiety and dread', again identified by Troman and Woods (ibid.), is particularly sharp in this extract from Frank's long, bitter and troubled condemnation of the symbolic violence of performative culture:

But what's actually changed me [...] what I've actually found out in the last 10 years, 15 years, is that this area of work is the...we *should* be the *most* open, honest. This is what we portray, as tutors, teachers, learners, facilitators...is that were honest, open and as transparent to colleagues as we can be. Well, *it's the biggest back-stabbing, two-faced, under-handed, I'll-get-one-over-on-you organisation I have ever worked in my life!* I do regard it as that. It is so two-faced. We say one thing, we mean another. There's always someone now trying to put their foot on your head, and not to try to drive it into the soil, [but] to actually try to bloody drown you with it. You know, to keep it on, to further their own games, their own needs. That's the culture now in this [...] It's all about: am I satisfying my boss? Is my boss satisfied with what I'm doing? I'll shit my britches if [not]! (Frank, Community Tutor).

Among the key, 'mechanics of performativity' (Ball, 2003: 220) is that of a general intensification of pressure, something again pretty obvious in the data here as the hard arithmetic of outputs is linked to 'draw down' of funds in a way that increases the possibility of sudden punitive sanction for failure to perform:

Yeah, at the end of the day if you don't meet those outputs, and you don't get your funding, bottom line is: no funding, no job, and we've seen that 'cos other teams have gone. That's a real reality for people, that. If this year you're the team that's underperforming you might be the next for the chop. Every so often that can raise its head, like we're coming to the end of the year, we're under performing as a whole team... (Christine-Education Manager).

For Christine, the 'data base', supported by somebody 'coming out to see me every week and look over my shoulder' works as the Foucauldian panopticon:

X [the manager] has wanted it uploaded every week. Every week: every unit every kid's done. So at the end of the teaching week, which is Wednesday, on Thursday Maggie and Pat look at sorting folders out. Tick it all on a sheet and that goes to K and she has to load it all electronically...*then ...then...*when they've got three units that ticks *another* box. That then, it's a tracking system, ticks another box, you know, that you've earned £50. So that, at any one point, the manager [at county HQ] can look how many

units we've delivered and how many kids we've got [and] how much *money* we've earned. (Christine).

We are looking here, of course, at the pressures to fabricate performative selves, a project that is evident in 'day-to-day social relations and practices' (Ball, 2003: 226) within these various youth support projects but remains, though these pressures are far from negligible, stubbornly incomplete among staff in my study. 'Ethical practices' noted by Ball as a 'casualty' of performativity, in fact, generally remain robust – certainly in the fundamental area of relationships with learners – precisely because they are not articulated to any jeopardised professional ethics but rather to class and local culture. Among the staff, responses to performativity are broadly resistant, varying from working the spaces purposefully left in their lesson plans, to jumping through the hoops if need be, as Maggie canvasses here:

I call it 'the hoop', you've got to jump through the hoop and then you can get your dollars at end o' day can't you? But that's something I don't agree with. But what do we do, Geoff, when we want to get paid? (Maggie, Tutor).

In this, there is clearly some ethical discomfort, but it is more about what one has to do in a classed world to make 'a dollar' than it is about compromising the partisan ethic of collective care which remains the core of the practice that I've observed. Indeed, if there is any ethical elasticity among practitioners on projects such as *Go4it* and *Bus Stop* it is rooted in that very partisanship and exercised in favour of the young people. There are, of course, momentary instances where what appear to be the beginnings of fabricated performative identities are discernible, where some pleasure is felt in the controlling power of the data base; in the status of a new, incorporating, job title such as 'senior co-ordinator'; in the mastery of making a difficult adaptation:

Christine. But the tracking X set up is fantastic in that respect! And, I mean, we go on it. Me and K go on it and look at where we all are and we've had spread sheets at team meetings.

GB. So you can see your performance at a glance?

C. Yeah, at a glance every week, in the early days this academic year K 'd say it went from like 'Oh, look we're up to three thousand, Ooh, look five thousand' And she even said yesterday, she inputted some units and

she said 'our team's so far earned fifty five thousand' 'cos it's that accurate.
(Conversation with Christine)

I do like change [...] I know wi' other project, when ever anything goes off they all panic, they all just panic, but I just sit back and think 'Oh, new challenge. I like that! [...] I get a little bit 'boredom threshold'! (Maggie – Tutor)

While these processes can here, again, be seen to be 'folded into complex institutional, team, group and communal relations and [to] penetrate mundane day-to-day interactions' (Ball, 2003: 223) the fabrication of new subjectivities still stops short. In a field note, I have Maggie contemplating the benefits that might have accrued to her in embracing the requirements of performativity, particularly in taking on a teacher training qualification:

I do look at it like you've got qualified in another area [as a tutor]. I feel quite confident to apply for a job in a school.

The telling surprise here, though, is that the school role she imagines herself now potentially applying for is not that of a teacher but of a classroom assistant, not because her qualification leaves her ineligible (though the move wouldn't be straightforward) but because she cannot imagine herself crossing the social class divide between teaching assistant and teacher (for which 'professional status' is a proxy) and which would therefore compromise her relationships with 'the kids' and threaten her own working ethic and jeopardise her local identity.

The young people

Moving back again to the perspective of the young people, it's equally the case that phenomena noted in school-based research looking at learner responses to performativity, are clearly visible – though, with these young people responses are presented as if in negative image. After all, what distinguishes Dave, Beth, Rianne, Heartbreaker and the others is, quite simply, their *persistent failure to meet the performance standards*, whether of 'strong' or, in Jeffrey and Troman's terms, 'weak' performativity. Jeffrey and Troman's work (2009), again in the Primary sector, has drawn attention to the fact that by age 11 '[l]earner's understanding of performativity is acute' (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 8) as:

[t]he construction of performative learning identities [which occur] during the educational and social practices of performative teaching

and learning and the discourses used exemplify that construction but at the same time ... confirm and embed those performative practices in daily practice and therefore contribute to the formation of performative identities. (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 24).

Jeffrey and Troman provide, indeed, a powerful picture of a performative project almost complete in its success: one whereby prevalent discourses of improvement (ibid.: 9), of 'effort' (ibid.: 11) – embedded as 'doing your best' – and of 'responsibility' (ibid.: 12) supported by regimes of 'performative stratification' draw learners into 'playing the game' in a way that propels the conclusion that:

[t]he influence of these educational and social practices upon young people from 7-11 is both extensive and significant. They have absorbed the values of aspiration, continual effort and improvement as a way of life; they have a view of knowledge as that which can be tested; an awareness of the significance of differentiation and stratification and they have learned to fabricate their educational practice to further performative objectives. (Jeffrey and Troman, 2009: 24)

Now, the very existence of groups of young people like the excluded youth of Beldover, Cragwell and Coalbrook is profoundly problematic for the performative project. They stand out, after all, as the blatant, embodied evidence of the project's less than complete success.

'If you do anything wrong you go in there': Dividing practices in 'isolation'

Looking at the school careers of these young people we can see that performative stratification facilitated through ever harsher 'dividing practices' (Rabinov, 1984) within school becomes indispensable as 'best effort' and 'self-responsibility' fail to gain any purchase. So-called 'learning support units' play a very significant role here. Staff such as the *Go4it!* staff know this, as do the young people. Indeed, Christine was well aware that the school 'unit' had been *the* significant recruitment link in terms of the *Go4it!* programme, allowing local secondary schools – pressed by increasingly performative cultures and, in two cases, eager to recover reputations after special measures – to offload, or 'dump' in her terms, non-performing learners:

So they sent them [a group of young men]...but *en bloc* [...] I got this [impression] that all they wanted, was them out of school and as long as they were doing something, and whenever we took them out on trips, I

think we could've taken them to the moon, but they wouldn't have cared. There was no interest [...] We invited them several times: if you ever want to come down and have a look. But nothing. I think they were just glad to get rid of them. (Christine, *Move4ward* Manager).

This phenomenon was immediately apparent to Christine and her staff, as they recognised how exclusion within schools was being achieved through learning support structures which were supposed, obviously, to be *supportive*, but were, in fact, anything but:

Well, we went up to Beldover, to visit the new intake of pre-16s. Well, yeah, I was a bit surprised. We walked in the first morning and the students [in the Learning Support Unit] were sat reading comics, and when I asked the staff [member] who'd been working in schools for a number of years, she said that's what happens in most learning support units. They just give them a comic to read, or a book that they might be interested in. They don't really get any structured learning, some of them all day, not just a few hours. They just put them there to keep them away from the rest of the class. That's generally what happens. (Christine, *Move4ward* Manager).

The young people themselves see such 'support' as a sham and view being 'sent to the 'unit' as punitive. More importantly, they are aware that it is about removal from the classroom as a step, if need be, towards removal from school:

...cos we'd got like this room where you go in. If you got done they put [you] in.[...]. (Rianne, young person, *Go4it!*)

[You] just sit and copy stuff [...] [They] Gi' y' a piece o' paper like this one 'ere, tell you to write that down an when you've finished tell you to write it again. An' I used to get to third line and stop 'cos I never used to like it...Well, if you do anything wrong you go in there and then if you, say, do anything wrong in there you get excluded. If you do summat too bad before you go in there you get excluded anyway. (P-J, young man, *Go4it!*).

Being placed in learning support serves neatly both to exclude young people from the classroom *de facto* and at the same time construct them as 'at risk' of exclusion ('attendance in learning support' would, for example, be seen as contributing to a formal assessment of 'risk' which would then help justify their potentially permanent removal from school 'in their own interest').

A double dynamic

Basically, then there is a kind of double dynamic operating here, bringing these particular staff together with these particular young people in the developing frame of performativity. As a way of bringing this out, I'd like to focus on the cases of Christine, the *Go4it* and more recently *Move4ward* manager, and Karl, one of the NEET youngsters previously permanently excluded from school.

As for Christine, her own biography is notable. The daughter of a coal miner and married to mining engineer who himself had progressed from face work to colliery under manager, she had been active in the campaign against pit closures and was linked to community-based projects in Coalbrook and around the other communities in the north of the coalfield. Over a period, she undertook part-time qualifications enabling her to teach in post-compulsory education, finally completing a part-time degree in education in which she gained first class honours. She had been employed in a number of project manager roles on fragile contracts since the early 2000s.

Now, at risk of simplifying the material that discussion with Christine has generated – a rich fabric of complex, extensive, interwoven ruminations on gender, class and community as they impacted on a woman from a pit family – it's noteworthy that a key, recurrent and evidently troubling theme is that of 'staying and leaving' (Bauman's, 2001, 'paradox of community'). Christine has reflected in depth – her speech and comportment ebbing and flowing between the accents and mannerisms of the 'local' and the 'professional' – on the challenge of simultaneously performing roles that both stay within (as mother, wife) and move beyond (as worker, manager, 'professional') the gender conventions of the community. In this, she is acutely sensitive to the dilemmas provoked by the embrace of performativity and passionate about the damage it causes in education:

But you know this thing – performativity? – it's happening in all public sector in't it? I think it's just getting to a lot o' people now that it's year in, year out. You've got outputs to reach, you've got less money but you're still gettin' same people [...] But how can you have an output system wi' people that you're caring for? It just does not make sense [...] It's not a factory! We're talking about people here, aren't we? Just everybody's upset, fed up of targets, outputs, and I think that just generally gets people down. People are being squeezed, really being squeezed. You're not working wi' iron and met.al. and coal, you're working with human beings that have got skin and feelings and brains'. (Christine, education manager).

The conflict is not merely between a set of *professional* ethics (based on notions

of education as a public good) and the requirements of performativity, indeed it perhaps owes least to that. It is, rather, about a conflict between a class ethic rooted – problematically, certainly, as it is shaped in the patriarchal, coalfield ‘geography of gender relations’ (Massey, 1994) – in transmitted classed and gendered notions of collective care, ‘the tenderness’ as PCSO ‘Chris,’ formerly a Coalbrook miner, put it. Indeed, it is interesting how Christine’s spontaneous rhetoric places the ‘factory’ of performativity in the brute, masculine, and now redundant, domain of ‘iron and met.al. and coal,’ demarcating it firmly from the affective work with ‘human beings that have got skin and feelings and brains’ which is now the necessary post-industrial emotional labour of residual solidarity carried out in this locality largely by women such as herself.

Karl, on the other hand offering a young person’s perspective, was aged 17 when first spoken to in 2007. Bright and alert, he was easily ‘spun out’ by anyone who displayed an air of authority. He had been permanently excluded from Coalbrook school in year 9 after periods in ‘learning support’ and short term exclusions for a series of infractions of school disciplinary codes that he called ‘taking no shit’. After that he had been supported by the ‘behaviour support service’ for excluded pupils but left ‘unofficially’ before completing the programme. At the time of our conversations, Karl was ‘sorting his sen out’ after a protracted period of heavy drinking and amphetamine use funded through petty crime. Like a number of the young people, he wasn’t living at home, but between his ‘mates’ and his ‘Nan’s’ homes. He had been among a large group of boys excluded together from Coalbrook school as the school took measures to improve its image after a poor inspection ‘performance’. Karl said he struggled to understand why he couldn’t ‘do owt right’ at school, particularly as other support staff that he came across later saw him in quite a different way from the way in which he felt he was viewed at school:

So when I went to [behaviour support] they said to me...both o’ women... they says ‘I can’t see why your sat ‘ere in this room wi’ us, cos y’ must be one o’ nicest lads I’ve ever sat an’ spoke to...Says ‘I can’t believe any o’ this stuff I’ve read about in your school report. An’ I says, ‘Well, all depends ‘ow y’ get tret. That’s it. If y’ gonna get tret like shit, then your gonna treat them like shit aren’t you? (Karl, Coalbrook).

Indeed, he sensed performativity in school as an unidentifiable, malevolent force:

I don’t know, it were, like, I ‘ad to get away from summat⁴ but there were

4. See glossary of local terms (after References)

nowt theer. It were like I were tryin' to hide from summat but there were nowt theer to hide from. You know wha' I mean? (Karl, young person, *Go4it!* project, Coalbrook).

This puzzling, constant pressure of hiding from 'summat theer' when there 'were nowt theer to hide from', testifies to the normalising aspect of performativity in Karl's school which, at the time, had the highest level of exclusions in Derbyshire. Karl is plaintively aware of his inability to perform appropriately for the mainstream but internalises it as being difficult to 'handle':

Yeah, I think it would 'ave been better if I could 'ave gone somewhere else, not into a mainstream school. Where I could 'a just sat there, could 'ave done summat wi' like people who knew 'ow to 'andle. It were more because people never used to listen or even if you'd not done nowt [nothing] wrong they used to gi' y' all this an' all that. An' that's what ya used to do more. Used to think, why are ya not listenin' to me? Why bother? (Karl, Coalbrook).

Permanent exclusion was a 'terrible big thing', precipitating him into a downward spiral:

An' that's what got me down as well 'cos I'm thinkin', well, sempt everything were all on top on me... thought on'y way to ger out o' it were jus' take drugs... (Karl).

In his view, all he'd done, in line with the local culture ('it were way I were brought up') was, like many of the other young men and women, to 'fight back at' (Sophie) an urban middle class culture imposed by people 'higher than you' (P-J) who 'like, all come from these, like, posh estates where nowt bad goes off' (Dave) but who have no legitimacy, originate from an elsewhere of 'Chesterfield or Sheffield, or somewhere' (P-J), don't understand the 'old nature' (Cocker) of pit village culture and don't know what it was like to 'live in a shit hole' (Dave).

I think it's because they've come from, say, like a different background to what most people 'ave in Coalbrook as well. To grow up in Coalbrook it is, well, it is a bit rough when you grow up young. When you don't 'ave a lot o' shit y' appreciate shit more, you know worra mean? An' I think it's because they've come from a different area. An' in a different area it's a totally different ball game, innit? (Karl, Coalbrook).

The tortuous reverse symmetry between Christine and Karl and between the staff and the young people generally lies, I would suggest, in this: just as the essentially *classed* thrust of performativity in school excludes working class boys and girls like Karl, Beth, P-J, Lianne, Dave, Sophie, Cocker from its domain – pushing them out under the more directly disciplinary gaze of the ‘new architecture of regulation’ (Ball, 2008: 41) of CCTV-swept streets and curfewed neighbourhoods – so it generates the very need for projects such as *Go4it!*, *Bus Stop* and the *Cavs Lasses Group*. Yet, as those projects develop and succeed in providing a locally meaningful space in which the young people can get ‘back on track’, the overflow of performative pressure from the mainstream steadily squeezes the space of ethically driven, community based, semi-formal support provision, requiring ‘harder’ outcomes – work readiness, measurable ‘functional’ skills of numeracy and literacy – than it is possible to achieve within the severely time limited programmes. Thus, it jeopardises the *classed* reparative project of the staff, leaving them unable to develop what is effectively a *nascent* critical pedagogic project into anything that might be linked to the resistant histories of the locality.

In my observation of the *Go4it!*, *Move4wards*, *Bus Stop* and the *Cavs Lasses Group* projects, young people invariably thrive in atmospheres of ‘relationality’ (Smyth, 2010) where the core ethics of those histories are transmitted. Inevitably, though, in small scale, uncertainly professional settings with no structures of collegiality or collective organisation, the sheer pressures of performativity prevent the emergence of any meaningful activist practice (Sachs, 2003 and Avis, 2005). Thus any pedagogic critique of the double dynamic of performativity as it works to both exclude the youngsters and terrorise the staff, remains undeveloped.

Conclusion

We have seen, then, how an ethnographic study of the educational margin in a marginal area reveals a picture of a performative culture steadily but unevenly encroaching from the mainstream sector. Though what has become the ‘foundation learning’ sector has never been thoroughly professionalised – or, alternatively, comprehensively *deprofessionalised* as has, say, the further education sector – aspects of performativity are, nevertheless, clearly visible among the informal vigour of such projects as *Go4it!*, *Move4ward*, *Cavs Lasses Group* *Bus Stop*. The effects of an audit culture of ‘outcomes’ and ‘targets’ is plain to see, meets with much resistance, some compliance and generates a mixed group of victims and survivors in its wake. Also evident is a cruelly instrumental funding regime of ‘no outcomes, no funding; no funding, no job’. Regulation through formal inspection, meanwhile, is less common than in mainstream settings. However, observation –

‘going through the data base’ – is a function regularly carried out by more senior managers from county hall and is both welcomed and resented.

Indeed, most of the effects noted by Ball (2008: 52) and others are part of the changed everyday culture of the different types of provision brought together as foundation learning and youth support. Increased pressure, intensification of work, more paperwork, intensified surveillance – all of these are without doubt having an impact on the staff and young people. Changes in social relationships, however, are probably less complete. While there is a vague air of competitiveness creeping into the everyday culture of projects such as those observed here, it is still novel enough to be seen as funny. As to the gap between senior staff and teaching staff noted by Ball (*ibid.*) the situation in a typical foundation learning project is not really comparable with a school given the a much smaller scale of operations. There is mistrust to be sure, but what is more common – and no doubt healthier in the long run – is an unwillingness to be impressed by ‘managers’ that is part of the working class culture in which staff grew up. Similarly, local history bequeaths a stubborn refusal to be terrorised by instrumental reminders of ‘no funding, no job’. This is, after all, a setting where the collective memory is of uncertain, episodic employment; strikes; lock outs and the wage vicissitudes of the ‘butty system’⁵. This brings me to the key point I want to bring out of this discussion.

We’ll remember that ‘policy rhetorics and discourses’, while they are incorporated and fabricated into new subjectivities are ‘...contested, interpreted and enacted in a variety of arenas of practice and ... inflected, mediated, resisted and misunderstood...’ (Ball, 2008: 5,7). That contestation occurs, of course, within specific spatialities/structures of feeling. While cultures in the foundation learning and youth support sector are increasingly performative in character, projects like the ones referred to here, do seem able to avoid the full discursive weight of performativity for a number of contextual reasons. Such projects are, to be sure, short term, small scale, and float around the sectors of the education system because ‘nobody wants [them]’ (Pat). More importantly, though, in the area of this study at least, they are staffed by a group of locally originating staff who – while they are ‘encouraged to think about themselves as individuals ...calculate about themselves, “add value” to themselves, improve their productivity, strive for excellence and live an existence of calculation’ (Ball, 2003: 217) – are in the main bound to an unspoken ethical commission with their learners that is both genuine and a defence against the professionalism from which they are still themselves excluded. Indeed, that commission is not part of a professional code

5. The traditional payment system in coal mining in this area where by colliers would be paid not directly by the coal company but by the ‘butty’, a kind of charge hand.

but is more to do with an affective affiliation to 'community' that only makes complete sense in relation to the touchstone of shared collective memory which stands counter to any 'ethical re-tooling' required by performativity.

This ethical dimension, still obdurately drawing on unfashionable practices of solidarity and modernist grand narratives such as social justice, refuses the 'thorough exteriorization of knowledge' noted by Lyotard as a requisite of the post-modern condition (Lyotard 1984: 4). Because of this, working lives in projects like these don't seem so troubled by the 'ontological insecur[ity]' (Ball, 2003: 220) that has been observed elsewhere. The various education and support projects that I've observed over the past five years all seem to retain a place for what Smyth *et.al.* (2000: 140) call the 'primacy of caring relations in work with pupils and colleagues', an affective atmosphere in which many serially excluded young people seem to thrive.

Even if those working in this enclave are prevented by the very drive of performativity from developing fully critical forms of practice, they do manage to stay loyal to pedagogies of social progress through collective care while at the same time 'performing performativity' with, as they say round here, their 'fingers crossed behind their backs'. They respond to performativity neither as 'incorporated', nor 'empowered', nor as 'activist' professionals. And they are certainly not 'post-performative' in Wilkins' (2011) sense. They perform performativity at arm's length without espousing the project of 'resourcing the entitled middle class self' (Skeggs 2004: 135) that is an inherent part of the professionalism about which they remain ambivalent and which is hard to take seriously when you have uncertain professional status, 'live 'ere' and are rooted in marginal communities with resistant histories. For the time being, they manage to 'do' performativity somehow *alongside their lives*, which are significantly bound to those of the youngsters with whom they work and with whom they have much in common. Their commitment is, therefore, as Christine says, to a 'long haul' reparative project. Quite *how long* they'll be able to work in this way, though – particularly if their practice remains unarticulated to a wider critical pedagogical project – remains to be seen. As youth support becomes incorporated into larger, ever more outcome-driven structures and as these staff find themselves working alongside others from much more thoroughly performative settings in centrally managed multi-agency teams, their room to manoeuvre around the spaces of the margin will inevitably be reduced. Consequently, retaining the powerfully affective commitment to 'benefit[ing] these kids and really improv[ing]' their lives – a principle deeply sedimented in the local culture but increasingly jeopardised by deindustrialisation and deepening economic crisis – will not be easy.

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Glossary of local terms

The Model – Specifically the ‘colliery model village’ housing in Beldover, Coalbrook and Cragwell built by the Beldover or Coalbrook Coal Company in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Sometimes the term is used more broadly to designate a space/place of ‘roughness’ or potential ‘trouble’.

The Cavs – The Cavendish Estate in Beldover. A ‘white city’ estate of the type built by the National Coal Board in many Derbyshire pit villages after the Second World War. So called because of the white painted prefabricated material from which the houses were built.

Aye – Yes

Gi’ – Give

Nowt – Nothing

O’ – Of

‘ole – Hole, as in ‘shit hole’

Owt – Anything

Summat – Something

Theer – There

Wi’ – With

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‘Sticking together!’ Policy activism from within a UK coal-mining community

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This article reflects on some aspects of a doctoral ethnographic study of young people disaffected from schooling in a post-industrial space of ruin in a former coal-mining community in England. It considers how their experiences of resistance and refusal of schooling can, in the relational ethos of non-school support settings, come to speak back to hegemonic policy, particularly around ‘aspiration’. Focusing on the example of a young people’s film project, data are assembled showing how a local culture of ‘resistant aspiration’ – itself affectively linked to sedimented traditions of insubordination – forms a site of activist possibility. In this site, the ground-level resistance of the young people and the more strategically informed interventions of a group of locally originating staff come together in a moment of policy activism that displays both scope and limitation.

Keywords: aspiration; post-industrial; youth policy; resistance; ruin

Introduction

With the ‘promised eternity’ (Berardi 2009, p. 207) of globalised neo-liberalism currently being stalled in crisis and ‘austerity’, the street is more obviously the main theatre of activism than at any time in 50 years. Indeed, activism as a contemporary global and primarily *urban* spectacle is much discussed, often in a manner reprising the language and style of the 1960s. In such hyperbolic times as these, those less dramatic actions that challenge vested power in smaller ways and form the classic repertoire of policy activism can easily be overlooked.

Resisting such a temptation, this article focuses instead on small-scale activist phenomena in a peripheral site some considerable distance removed from the occupied squares of the urban centre, a site that is very much ‘a place by the side of the road’ in Stewart’s (1996) memorable phrase. Drawing on an intergenerational ethnographic study of young people and schooling in a

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rural post-industrial coal-mining area in England, the discussion presented here considers how these young people's resistance and refusal – commonly derided as pathological hooliganism – can come to speak back to dominant and powerful policy frameworks and thus be conceived of as meaningful policy activism.

By way of developing this discussion, I first outline the methodological ambitions of the ethnography that I have undertaken over the past six years and quickly detail the fieldwork carried out. I then introduce the notion of policy activism that I intend to work with before moving on to sketch out the key strand of UK policy on which I focus. Going on to a description of the post-industrial coal-field in which the research is based, I also introduce some of the key contributors. Next, at the conceptual fulcrum of the article, I attempt to make a coherent outline of an idea of 'intergenerational affective transmission' – whereby the past is ghosted into the present in ways that impinge on educational experiences – which I have been developing in recent published and unpublished papers. I then spend some time looking at how that idea plays out empirically in a specific project that brought young people and practitioners together as 'policy actors' (Ball 2008) in an extended moment of policy activism. Finally, I touch on some of the wider implications – positive and negative – of that project. First, though, I focus on the ethnography.

Methodology and fieldwork: an intergenerational ethnography of school resistance

The material referred to here is derived from an educational ethnography carried out between 2006 and 2010 (see Bright 2011a, 2011b, in press). Overall, the central research question addressed in that work focuses on the links and disjunctions between school resistance among young people and the insubordinate, 'activist' histories of the communities in which these young people are growing up. Notably, the study is intergenerationally framed, that is, it is a study of a space occupied by two sets of people – a generation apart in age – brought together in local youth support settings. The two groups in question are made up of young people positioned as socially excluded and living in four former pit villages – Beldover, Coalbrook, Cragwell and Longthorne – in Derbyshire, England, and of adults who work professionally with them and originate in the same working-class communities.

Methodologically, the research pursues two inter-related aims. At one level, in 'analysing the disputed and contested policy and practice space around young people "put at a disadvantage"', it attempts what Smyth *et al.* (2010) identify as 'critical policy ethnography'. As such, it has an eye to the impact of discourse on the everyday. At the other level, it considers school resistance as mediated by class, gender, ethnicity and social environment (Russell 2011, p. 13) but *within a circulation of affect*, a circulation of affect that occurs, moreover, at *a specific historical moment or conjuncture*. From this twofold

perspective, then, the study argues that young people's resistance to schooling needs to be understood as *situated* in something like an expanded 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1975, 1977) where discursive production of policy, collective transmission of affect and historical particularity of conjuncture are mutually enfolded.

As regards the specific fieldwork carried out, the variety of sites and methods of data collection employed has conformed to the rubric associated with ethnography of education (Walford 2008). Sites have included out-of-school youth education projects, informal education and youth work venues, youth clubs, a community youth house, private homes, a miners' welfare club and the street. One particular site, though, has generated most of the data relevant to this particular article: a year-long participant observation of a local authority 'detached' mobile youth project, *Bus Stop*, in one of the villages, Beldover.

Working with policy activism

Now, in the introduction to her 1998 collection, Yeatman (1998) acknowledges the conceptual separation of *policy* activism from *political* activism as originating in Heclo's (1978) work but situates her own position as a 'long way' (p. 5) from Heclo's focus on the machinations of Washington policy networks. Instead, she proposes a notion of policy activism that takes in, 'the varied and dispersed forms ... that are implicated in the complex and extensive terrain of public sector work' (Yeatman 1998, p. 6). Her interest is in 'a type of activist work that has been relatively unrecognised' and which is, 'located within an interventionist and democratic state which provides legitimacy and direction for a robust public sector' (Yeatman 1998, p. 9). Basically, Yeatman (1998) articulates a *normative* definition of policy activism whereby:

... a policy activist [is] anyone who champions in relatively consistent ways a value orientation and pragmatic conception of policy which opens it up to the appropriate participation of all those who are involved in the policy process, all the way from points of policy conception to delivery on the ground. (p. 10)

The tactical repertoire of this policy activism – how it is carried out and at what point in the policy process – is, of course, varied. For my purposes here, I work with Yeatman's definition but include, as Brennan (1998) suggests, 'ground-level resistance' as a legitimate mode of policy activism. I also focus on just two key points in Yeatman's (1998) seven-phase schema representing the relationship between activism and the phases of the policy process (p. 11). These are policy *implementation* and policy *delivery*.

Aspiration: a key policy context

In general, two policy relays have come to dominate the UK 'youth support' setting: one concerning a supposed failure of 'aspiration' among learners and

the other aimed at establishing more performative regimes for staff (Ball 2008). In reality, they interweave and overlap considerably. However, having recently explored the role of performativity in the youth support sector (Bright in press), I focus here on the first of these: aspiration.

In the UK, it is clear that policy on education and training emerging from the Coalition Government (DBIS 2010, DfE 2010) has, in all but name, continued the emphasis on raising young people's 'aspirations' that was increasingly discernible during the last decade of the Labour administration's tenure, a period when aspiration had already become 'a key educational policy driver . . . at the heart of education policy' (St Clair and Benjamin 2011, p. 501).

Since that time, the language used by the Coalition Government has evolved towards a rhetoric of rather more naked 'ambition'. This terminological shift notwithstanding, discourses of aspiration that imply a deficit model of disadvantaged communities and fail to address fundamental issues of the power relations that create and reinforce disadvantage remain hegemonic (Burke 2006). It is a policy and media commonplace that those young people unable to find employment at a time of record youth *un*employment are themselves to blame for their predicament. Post-industrial areas such as Beldover district, the former centre of Derbyshire's coal-mining industry, suffer 'low educational attainments' and are consequently targeted as prime sites for interventions aimed at 'raising aspiration'.

A resistant space of ruin

In many ways, Beldover district is typical of the residual character of the former British coalfield (see Bennett *et al.* 2000, Beatty *et al.* 2005, Gore and Smith 2001, Murray *et al.* 2005). After 20 years of regeneration initiatives, the impact of rapid de-industrialisation remains evident. A review of Coalfields Regeneration (CRRB 2010) presented to the Coalition Government as recently as 2010 noted the continuing tendency for such places to be more isolated than non-coalfield areas, have a higher mortality rate than the average for all districts of England and suffer a double jeopardy whereby the health of older generations is affected by their former work and that of younger people is equally as affected by poor employment opportunities and low expectations. Additionally, the report noted overall deprivation and unemployment to be greater than the average for all districts of England. Signally, more young people were 'NEET' (not in employment, education or training) than the national average.

Coalbrook, Cragwell, Beldover and Longthorne fit squarely within this profile. All saw their pits close within a couple of years of each other in the early 1990s. Longthorne Colliery had closed, with effects lasting into the present, as early as the 1970s. When my research commenced in 2006, wards around the sites of the former pits still exhibited levels of deprivation among the 1% most deprived nationally. Additionally, more than a third of the working-age population were 'inactive' due to illness, disability or caring

responsibilities, and more than 50% of the population possessed no qualifications. Basically, levels of deprivation in these *rural* localities matched the very worst urban levels. Not surprisingly, the situation has worsened as the current economic crisis has deepened. According to recent figures (DCC 2011), unemployment in Beldover district has shown the highest rate of increase (17%) in Derbyshire, itself a rate of increase very much higher than the national rate (10%). Unemployment among those under the age of 25 has increased at a rate of 24% within a year and now accounts for 38% of all unemployment in the district.

This socio-economic picture also needs to be seen alongside the manifold and contested representations of coal-mining communities in cultural production. In the sociological literature, they have been constructed as paradigm cases of working-class community in modernity (Dennis *et al.* 1956, Bulmer 1975, Kamanka 1982). In terms of social and labour history, the dominant historiography has emphasised their subaltern aspect (see the general trade union histories – Page Arnot 1961, Griffin 1962, Williams 1962 – and studies of the 1984–1985 strike – Samuel *et al.* 1986, Waddington *et al.* 1991, Richards 1996), while a feminist literature has critiqued a narrow proletarian patriarchy locked in a rigid ‘geography of gender relations’ (Massey 1994, see also Campbell 1986, Seddon 1986). In popular culture, they have been situated as sites of ‘caverns of night’ (Thesing 2000), as places of communist conspiracy, of homeliness and of redemption. They have their own language (Griffiths 2007), their counter-framework of humour (Dubberley 1993); even their own insubordinate psychology (Douglas n.d.). Isolated in rural backwaters, they yet have a unique history of international links through strike support networks (Saunders 1989). Most importantly for our purpose here, they have been described in the work informed by memory studies as sites of collective memory characterised by, ‘a very clear sense of the past as struggle [which] constitutes a memory that goes back at least a century’ and that has the strikes of 1926, 1972, 1974 and 1984–1985 as a ‘common touchstone’ and ‘the imagery of the strike as defiance of the state [as]... a constant one’ (Fentress and Wickham 1992, pp. 115–116).

Suffice it to say that these ruined Derbyshire ‘model villages’ – the site of some of the worst conflicts in the 1984–1985 strike (Richards 1996) – are marked by an insubordinate history that runs back at least to Luddism (Thompson 1963), that extends beyond the workplace into the community, that has a gendered, do-it-yourself, activist character (Beaton 1985) and that indirectly affects both the young people and the adult staff who find themselves brought together in the youth support sector locally. Basically, this history tends to shape the young people’s resistance and refusal around a counter-value framework that I have called ‘resistant aspiration’ (Bright 2011a) – a layered, affective melange of gendered solidarism, radical conservatism and autonomous social improvisation which sustains an ongoing imaginary of local class values. The same resistant aspiration also influences how locally

originating staff members respond to policy interventions by maintaining, first and foremost, a culturally rooted ethical bond with the local young people – even in the teeth of increasingly performative expectations. But I will come back to that, shortly. Meanwhile, I will introduce the personalities around the *Bus Stop* project.

Intergenerational participants

The young people who are supported by the twice weekly, mobile youth project, *Bus Stop* – Cocker, Kandy, Richard, Heartbreaker, Samantha, Beth, Nicki, Ruby, Jimjam and the others – describe themselves as from a place that is ‘a bit rough’, even the ‘worst estate in world’ (Cocker) but where ‘[e]veryone just knows everyone’ (Nicki) and ‘stick[s] together’ (Heartbreaker). They position themselves as ‘no angels’ and ‘little rebels’ (Samantha), as a ‘bit of an arsehole, me, Geoff’ (Cocker) or, like Beth – who refuses the ‘plastic’ identity of girls who are ‘in with the teachers’ – as ‘a cunt’. Overall, they canvas ‘fighting back’ against school in general and teachers specifically as representative of a system that is only interested in ‘wages’ (Sophie).

According to the formal categories of the multi-agency services that work with them, they are ‘at risk’ of manifold dangers: becoming teen parents, becoming NEET, being involved in catastrophic drinking and drug use and ‘offending’. Hence, they are the focus of ‘targeted provision’ such as *Bus Stop*. Not uncommonly, they have been permanently or temporarily excluded from school, subject to ‘managed moves’ or ‘invited not to attend’. After exclusion, a number have been placed on ASBOs (anti-social behaviour orders) and ABCs (acceptable behaviour contracts) after trouble with the police. All, as teenagers *per se*, are subject to a blanket 9 p.m. curfew that covers the depressed estate of the former National Coal Board housing where they live.

As for the staff around this and similar local projects, they tend to have a background in the local activist culture. Christine, project manager of a Coalbrook-based project, *Go 4 it!*, is the granddaughter, daughter and sister of coal miners who had been active in disputes and strikes ‘since 1926’ and she had, herself, played an active role in the movement against pit closures in the 1990s. Ivy, a pension-age community activist in Cragwell – whose family was split during the 1984–1985 strike, with one son striking and one working – is the daughter of a Ruskin College, Oxford-educated National Union of Mineworkers activist. Stacey, more immediately involved with *Bus Stop*, had previously single-handedly set up youth provision in Coalbrook and comes from a pit family whose involvement in the strike had taken them to London where her striking father drove for a film crew. Karen, who had volunteered to support Stacey in the Coalbrook youth project, had been on the picket line as a girl and her family’s strike Christmas had been the subject of a BBC documentary. Chris, now a police community support officer, was a

striking miner as a young man at Coalbrook pit and had been in violent conflict with the police. Ray, a senior manager in the district, had worked in construction and coal by-products, started ‘reading a bit of Marx’, was educated initially through trade union distance-learning and was a left-wing Labour councillor prior to taking up his senior position. Among a wider group of participants, Shula had been involved in picketing in 1984–1985 as a teenage punk rocker and Bibi, Angela, Sue and Tony – the sessional youth workers covering Beldover, Coalbrook and Cragwell – were all from families that had been involved at various levels during the strike.

Basically, then, almost all of the staff originate from the local working-class communities, have links to local activism and have traversed non-traditional, mature student routes into the roles they now occupy. Trade union, community and residential adult education had played a part for most in their ultimately gaining a mixed portfolio of qualifications in youth and community work, adult teaching qualifications, access diplomas and part-time degrees. In my observation, all of them have continued to espouse relationality (Smyth *et al.* 2010) as the core of their practice and see a need to act against current policy imperatives that seek to reduce their work to the output-driven instrumentality of a ‘factory’ (see the comments of ‘Christine’ in Bright *in press*). Equally, all of them function relatively consistently as public sector policy activists in Yeatman’s sense, though their responses are interestingly gendered. The women are more inclined to distance themselves from masculinism and emphasise the affective aspects of their labour (Hochschild 1983): ‘You’re not working wi’ iron and metal and coal, you’re working with human beings that have got skin and feelings and brains’ (Christine) – while the men tend to mobilise a rhetoric of ‘struggle’ as they position resistant aspiration against the dominant aspirational discourse of ‘resourcing the middle-class self’ (Skeggs 2004):

... aspiration is [really] like the old clause four of the Labour Party – to secure by, hand by and by brain etc! So it’s not about getting *money*, it’s about you as an individual, growing and developing as a person. It’s all about being the best person you can be and having a bit of self worth, but living *here* [...] we’re socialists here, so from that perspective something’s got to give, something’s got to change, but from a Marxist perspective you get that tension and conflict and such, so I think that’s what we’re looking at here, so it’s up to me, in my position to get the best outcome for young people and families, and I use it from a socialist perspective [...] The *heart of your role*, is *about* raising aspiration. (Ray, senior manager)

So, how does all this come together in practice? In answering this question, it is necessary to think about the complex ways in which this local context circumscribes the policy activist space in which these groups of staff and young people relate to each other. To do that, I need to revisit the issue that prompted my research in the first place.

Sedimented affect

The question that drew me into the ethnographic field had initially arisen out of my own experience as a practitioner working in the Derbyshire coalfield with young people permanently excluded from school. Talking to, listening to and observing these young people on a day-to-day basis, I was struck by the fact that they were almost exclusively from pit families and were, literally, the children of the strike of 1984–1985 and its aftermath. Being frequently around them and others who worked with them, one became increasingly aware of how hostilities between individuals and groups seemed to be related to the complex and conflicted history of the communities. Others commonly recognised this too. This account by Ivy, the pensioner activist who independently developed youth provision in Cragwell, is just one example among many:

... at Coalbrook [we had] a Christmas ‘do’ up at Coalbrook youth club, but they just invited the Cragwell crew [...] so there was just Coalbrook and Cragwell [...] and as soon as my kids walked in there, there was a group of these Coalbrook lads and they started. [...] one of my kids had got a pie in the face, and these Coalbrook lads started throwing the food about [...] and I said to our kids, right that’s it, out! We’re goin’ home! [...] I had all my kids on the pavement outside, and these were coming out and going around and throwing stuff at my kids, coming up behind. I’d got a 12 year old lad who lives across here, and there was a lad of 19 come up from over the fence, come up behind him and he strangled him till the kid passed out. 12 year old and he was 19 [...] And this was kids. This lot din’t know anythin’ about the bloody pit. Yeah, you’re dad’s a scab! Quite a lot of ‘em said that to our kids. And I said, hey, some of their dads have never worked at the bloody pit! (Ivy, Community activist, Cragwell)

In the local setting, inter-village gang fights apparently reflected the geography of the 1984–85 strike and other local coal industry antipathies running back to the 1930s. Indeed, two of the local secondary schools were placed in special measures, with pupil attitudes to authority being cited as linked to strike-related civil unrest in one of the inspection reports (OFSTED 1999). Some young people in conversation with me certainly talked of teachers as part of a punitive regime of ‘coppers’. At the same time, graffiti in the college where the excluded pupils’ project was based often pilloried ‘scabs’, with particular hostility directed against students from Ivy’s village, Cragwell, where the majority of the workforce at the local pit had worked during the strike.

The interesting thing, however, was that the youngsters almost without exception seemed – as Ivy notes – not to ‘know anythin’ about the bloody pit’ and displayed very little, if any, conscious knowledge of the strike, their own communities’ recent history or their family’s involvement in it. Colleagues and other practitioners, however, commonly claimed witness to a widespread sullen anger and general malaise rooted in the experience of conflict and

rapid de-industrialisation: ‘... deep down, if they’re honest it’s back to miners’ strike’ (Stacey, Youth worker, Beldover).

Indeed, the data that I gathered when once involved in formal research frequently reiterated such narratives. In these accounts, the post-strike generations were seen as no longer being in receipt of that orally transmitted collective memory of ‘struggle’ noted by Fentress and Wickham (1992), but only of its affective residue of conflict. Of course, there is a great deal happening in these narratives. Cultural representations of the ‘coal-mining community’ are, as we have seen above, profoundly contested and carry very significant affective freight. That said, I think that it is possible to work with an extended version of Reay’s (2009) notion of ‘sedimentation’ to think about what is happening here and how it continues to impinge on the ways in which local young people are positioned – and position themselves – in relation to policy discourses such as aspiration.

Hidden in ruins

As my thinking on this matter has developed, I have worked with Reay’s (2009) argument that, ‘children negotiate schooling not only directly through their own experiences but also through the sedimented experiences of parents or even grandparents’ (p. 27) and that education generally takes place in a national context which is a ‘result of a century of class domination’ (p. 24). I have also found her suggestion that young people’s responses to marginalisation are ‘infused with [a] sense of the righteous indignation that once underpinned a strong working class politics’ (Reay 2009, p. 27) a productive one.

More recently, I have considered how this sedimentation might be affective, collective and somehow ghosted or hidden. Walkerdine’s (2010) recent work has helped throw some light on this matter, specifically in relation to the kind of post-industrial community that is the focus of my own work. Walkerdine has examined the place of affect in community relations and how it relates to trauma in a working-class community following the closure of a steelworks in the South Wales valleys in 2002. Coming out of a psychoanalytic perspective that locates trauma in injury to psychic containment, she has developed the notion of: ‘a containing skin [which] provides a feeling of ontological security for a community beset by uncertainty and insecurity’. This skin, she suggests, is created through a range of affective relations and social practices particular to ‘traditional communities’ such as steel or coal-mining communities. In the event of a community trauma such as the closure of a works (or pit), the painstakingly fabricated skin can be jeopardised in such a way as ‘to cause *a lack of safety and fear of death* (my emphasis) within the inhabitants’ (all references in this passage are to Walkerdine 2010, p. 93).

Bringing Reay’s and Walkerdine’s insights together, a picture of a classed and powerfully affective, even *vital*, intergenerational sedimentation process starts to emerge. Working additionally with the notion of the ‘ruin’ evoked in

Edensor's (2005) recent work in cultural geography, it is possible to mobilise a notion of cultural transmission which is particularly pertinent to post-industrial settings and makes sense of the kind of narratives such as that presented by trainee youth worker Stephanie, herself a child of the 1984–1985 strike, when she notes '... a kind of haunting that's going on'.

Edensor conjures the industrial ruin as a place where oral modes of remembering are truncated to facilitate 'the commercial search for continuity amongst the threads of discontinuity'. One consequence of which is that the 'spaces of working-class political action [are] eradicated ...' (Edensor 2005, p. 132) and much remains hidden:

Hidden in ruins are forgotten forms of collectivity and solidarity, lost skills, ways of behaving and feeling, traces of arcane language, and neglected historical and contemporary forms of social enterprise. (Edensor 2005, pp. 166–167)

In the quest for rehabilitation, there is a:

... smoothing over of space [which] involves the erasure or commodification of the past ... and, in so doing, there is a forgetting that things might be otherwise, that elements of the past might have conspired to forge an alternative present. (Edensor 2005, p. 141)

Trenchantly, alongside this 'not yet' of residual utopic energy (Bloch 1995), Edensor notes a remnant *excess* of the semiotic in ruins, whereby: '... ruins are rampantly haunted by a horde of absent presences, a series of signs of the past that cannot be categorised but [are] intuitively grasped' (Edensor 2005, p. 152). What is more, ruins are places where stories are 'inarticulate but are suffused with affect' (Edensor 2005, p. 163), a place where 'counter-memories' can be articulated (Edensor 2005, p. 164) – but not through conventionally demonstrable knowledge forms:

The knowledge that emerges out of the confrontation with these phantoms is not empiricist, didactic or intellectual but empathetic and sensual, understood at an intuitive and affective level. (Edensor 2005, p. 164)

Coalbrook, Cragwell, Beldover and Longthorne are classic spaces of this kind: both absent *and* present ruins. 'Smoothed over', in Edensor's term, the disappeared 'pit' remains as an erased space of ongoing meaning in the middle of a remnant habitation of signs – colliery housing, bath houses, waste tips, abandoned railway lines – that are read bodily as a collective sensual knowledge transmitted at the level of affect and intuition. It is this knowledge, particularly in a context of trauma such as that Walkerdine identifies, that I would suggest is sedimented in the experiences of the two intergenerational groups that I have studied. It determines the particular character of their relationship and both energises and limits the range of their activism.

Policy activism in ‘sticking together’

I want to look now at the film project initiated and carried out by some of the young people from the Cavs Estate in Beldover. The film, which aimed to ‘say summat’ about young people being positioned as a ‘waste o’ space’ (Cocker), is called *Sticking Together*. It was made in 2009 and came out of the experience that a couple of youngsters had earlier had as extras in a locally filmed feature film that was made by a film company led by an internationally acclaimed radical film director. This film, grittily focused on lives blighted by negative educational experiences in a post-industrial setting, had used local homes as a location and had the director and ‘star’ actor recruiting local youths for small parts. Cocker had been among a group who responded to a leaflet seeking extras and, according to the director, had shown ‘enormous natural talent’ at audition. Other local young people had also been involved.

Having been inspired by that first experience, the young people in touch with the *Bus Stop* project raised the question of making a film of their own. Recognising the fact that the world seemed interested enough in Beldover to turn up on their doorstep and make a feature film, they wanted to seize the opportunity to say something about themselves and about life as they experienced it:

It’s, like, if *nobody* cared about estate, they woun’t a’ made a million pound film would they? They made film for pit an’ lot. You think to yoursen: a million pound on a film! In Beldover? A lot o’ money, in’t it? (Cocker)

Assisted by practitioners, the *Bus Stop* group developed a bid for funding, which was secured by the district senior manager, Ray. As a result, a group of young people aged between 12 and 18 eventually scripted *Sticking Together* from the fabric of their own lives and then acted it over a couple of days with the professional support of the director of the original feature film.

The short film is remarkable. Running for about 10 minutes, *Sticking Together* effectively conjures into being – in miniature, as it were – the very ‘community skin’ which Walkerdine’s work describes. The ‘community’, a gaggle of about 10 noisy teenagers – one, Roxy, bullied and abused by her alcoholic father – play truant and hang out together, look out for each other. They drink from large bottles of cider ‘up the woods’, swing over a stream, chatter, swear hard, slowly grow up. As the dark tale unfolds, Roxy goes missing after witnessing her dad crashed out drunk again. Hidden away in a derelict farm building, she tries to kill herself by swallowing drink and pills. Searching for her, her mates find her before her father does. In a tense scene, two of the older lads confront him. There is a tussle. ‘Wanker!’ they scream at him, ‘Y’ not gonna hurt ‘er no more!’. The father backs off. In the final scene, it is three months later and they are all hanging out again, heading for the woods, swinging the big plastic bottles. They are still all together, doing the same stuff. Roxy is with them. But when the bottle goes round, she does

not take a drink. Instead she smiles. Within this raggle-taggle community, she has all she needs, enveloped by the tender skin of a collective membrane strong enough to protect her against the existential peril of being alone.

After completion, the film was used as a centrepiece for a district-wide initiative that involved it being shown to all secondary school students with the support of the – at that time – Labour council cabinet member for education. It was also distributed to a number of international film festivals. Both Stacey – who suggested in conversation that the film ‘was maybe about me, really’ – and Ray were instrumental in this piece of activism that successfully reclaimed the discourse of aspiration from its hegemonic form. But it was shaped in activist partnership with the young people, too. As such, it articulates – via the ‘inarticulate’ (Edensor 2005) language of film – the collective aspiration for that ‘holding community skin’ (Walkerdine) which is the affective legacy of both the adults *and* the young people. When I spoke to some of those who had played key roles in *Sticking Together*, they animatedly recounted how the experience of being able to speak back to power through the film had ‘changed’ them, causing them, like Heartbreaker, to see things ‘from another perspective . . . You’re a different person, I reckon’. Cocker, who had ‘never done drama, I fuckin’ ‘ated it’, wanted to ‘talk abahit it all day’:

None o’ us kids in this film were angels. To watch it back, it looked like a different person. Y’ thinkin’ to y’sen, I’m *not* mysen. I’m *somebody else* today! As soon as I watched that film I thought: I’m a different person. It’s changed every single one on [us].

Jimjam, Cocker’s sister, recognised the power of this film – being ‘shown all over world, now’ (Heartbreaker) – to potentially change things and, in doing so, validate the circumstances of her own life:

It is showing *all over!* We used to be in a reight big gang. Yeah, it’s changed everybody that were in it because, like, we’re showin’ this film an it’s *showin’*, like, Roxie’s dad’s an alcoholic and *my* dad’s an alcoholic an’ it’s, like, if *my* mum died that’s what could happen to *me!* So, really, it’s changed me.

Working ‘like mates’ with the staff during a short, intense residential when the film was being made allowed growth of that trust that Smyth *et al.* (2010) remark is characteristic of relationality:

We got a good atmosphere when we were filmin’ cos, like, nobody were *bothered*. They’d not go on a mardy. (Jimjam)

In such a setting, these young people were able to develop and use a voice they felt to be their own – ‘We dint ay [have] scripts cos it din’t sound reight, so we spoked our own mind’ (Jimjam). Through the film’s ‘showing’, they felt able to challenge received descriptions of the post-industrial setting in which they live – ‘It’s a rough area, yeah, it’s a . . . well, it in’t *really*’ – and to

resist their positioning as ‘idiots’ who have no aspirations when in fact they know the local economic realities very well:

We’re not idiots. At end o’ day, I know it’s a big world out theer. But I’ll tell y’ summat now, even it’s ‘ard for me lookin’ for a job. Nobody wants anybody.

Through the experience of collectively collaborating with the staff in the production of *Sticking Together*, they also recognised the transformatory power of limited individual agency when it is multiplied through collective action and broader allegiance:

Even if y’ get *one* person out o’ every ‘undred people to do *one* thing it could change their life. (Cocker)

Conclusion

Developed in the 1990s, Yeatman’s work on *policy* activism came out of a conjuncture where the ever harsher style of neo-liberalism was beginning to constrain opportunities for *political* activism. In effect, her contribution opened a more capacious conceptual space in which to think about how public sector activists opposed to the new economics – their backs increasingly against the wall – were using:

... guile and cunning, commitment and passion, imagination and vision, good management skills and a capacity for strategic networking in their pursuit of their own distinctive policy agenda. (Yeatman 1998, p. 3)

Fifteen years later, most of these qualities are visible in the group of staff and young people whom I have discussed here. In fact, Stacey, Ray, Cocker and the others – tactically audacious, committed and passionate, popping up periodically as both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, able to focus the group’s ragged ground-level resistance – look pretty much like policy activists, but evolved for even harder times. Without doubt, the ‘public’ sector is a less coherent policy domain than it was in the late 1990s – ubiquitous private finance initiatives have seen to that. As Ray attests, staff are increasingly forced to work ‘by stealth’ in what is now a much riskier employment culture. Consequently, activism around policy has, of necessity, become more maverick, improvisational, less a matter of strategically pursuing ‘a distinctive policy agenda’ and more about pragmatically seizing opportunities as they arise. Realistically, the kind of ‘hit-and-run’ intervention achieved by the *Sticking Together* project is probably about the limit of what one might feasibly get away with in the ever more performative culture of the youth support sector. As such, it certainly deserves a dignifying sobriquet. But is it really ‘policy activism’ in any really definitive sense? Well, yes, to all intents and purposes. The project does, after all, collaboratively activate a voice that speaks back to the hegemonic discourse of

aspiration from a resistant marginal space (hooks 1990) where they do not ‘ay scripts’. And that in itself is no mean achievement.

From another point of view, however, there is a potential problem in working with a notion of policy activism so broad as to accommodate practice that – irrespective of the rhetoric employed by individual practitioners – remains episodic, un-theorised and essentially non-strategic, as does that of the group around *Sticking Together*. What is more, the notion of policy activism emerging from Yeatman’s work is one that models activist interventions as fundamentally rational. As such, it neglects affect and must inevitably remain blind to the link between the lived experiences of those involved in *Sticking Together* and the painstaking affective fabrication of that community skin that holds the promise of their community’s collective past as ghosted tenant of its ruined present. Policy activism misses, that is, the tie between action and ‘structure of feeling’, potentially leaving activism adrift from its situated affective circuit.

Critical and oppositional pedagogies (Freire 1974, Giroux 1983) have always stressed the importance of teacher/learner activists being *conscious* in their role as generators of collective, critical, emancipatory knowledges – a point recently reprised by Smyth (2011). As we have seen, the adventurous, if haphazard, activism of the *Sticking Together* project gets close to this, but more by drawing intuitively on a seam of activism rooted in sedimented affect rather than in any consciously worked-out framework of criticality. In doing so, the project reaches the limit of its critical scope and will probably prove unsustainable in a period of imminent cuts to youth support provision. Potentially, that leaves young people affectively energised but at the same time isolated, disappointed and resentful, stuck out in the rural periphery a long way from any conduit to the urban heart of contemporary activism. And there is grave danger in that.

In Beldover – and we need to be very mindful of this – some other, rather differently motivated ‘activists’ are well aware of the affective remnants slewing around the ruined coalfields and are shrewdly targeting local residents with their emotive right-wing propaganda. In fact, the last time I saw Cocker’s sister, Jimjam, she was talking about standing for the estate committee, having been inspired by her experience in *Sticking Together*. Surrounded by an audience of teenage girls in the community house on the Cavs estate in Beldover, she launched into a loud diatribe about ‘doing summat about state o’ village’, her speechifying anchored almost exclusively in the xenophobic ‘solutions’ then being canvassed by the British National Party and directed at the local scapegoat population of migrant Poles.

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A Practice of Concrete Utopia? Informal Youth Support and the Possibility of 'Redemptive Remembering' in a UK Coal-Mining Area

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ABSTRACT At a moment when individualised and de-historicised notions of 'aspiration', 'resilience' and 'wellbeing' are proliferating in policy discourse shaping informal youth support practice, this article argues, instead, for a critically historical focus. In reviewing material from an intergenerational ethnographic study of young people in contact with youth support teams in a former coal-mining community in Derbyshire, UK, the case is made for understanding how young working-class people's experience of education is situated within historical geographies of collectively transmitted affect. In the particular coal-mining locality considered, these classed spatialities of feeling have been shaped through traditions of political, trade union and community resistance and mutual aid established over a 200-year period and culminating in the locally bitterly divided national miners' strike of 1984-85. Beginning from an ethnographic field note, the article outlines how such insubordinate community histories – particularly those imagining a radical reconstitution of society – can be silenced when a collective psycho-social space once redolent with hope becomes a space of ruin as a result of politically orchestrated de-industrialisation. Noticing how this compounds young people's experience of marginalisation and leaves them at once adrift from the 'illegitimate' histories that are their legitimate 'heritage', and at the same time subject to the traumatic affective legacy of those same histories, a critical counter-practice in informal youth support is proposed. Drawing on Blochian readings of Freire, the article calls for a form of intergenerational 'redemptive remembering' – a practice of 'concrete utopia' – capable of recovering 'unspeakable' community histories for a collective remaking of resilience and aspiration beyond the received confines of the neoliberal imaginary.

Introduction

During the period of New Labour government, 1997-2010, policy discourse in the UK focusing on youth emphatically highlighted a supposed failure of 'aspiration' among working-class young people. The idea that youth simply reproduced the 'low aspirations' of their pathologically 'workless' communities rather neatly made them responsible for their own predicament as youth unemployment started to rise. At the time, a growing number of programmes aimed at *raising* aspirations were established and even the most informal youth support settings were performatively re-engineered to the tune of this discursive refrain (Bright, 2012a). While the language of failed aspiration quickly hardened to a vocabulary of 'ambition' as early policy on education and training emerged from the Conservative-led coalition government (DfE, 2010; DBIS, 2010), the core theme remained audible, even as the worsening economic crisis impacted on youth transitions as increasing NEET [1] figures and unprecedented graduate unemployment. Remained audible, that is, until – in the aftermath of fairly widespread and severe urban rioting in the UK in the summer of 2011 – it shifted almost imperceptibly to a different hortatory chorus as the volume

lowered around aspiration while being notched up around 'resilience'. Young people, their aspirations now shattered by some kind of 'natural' economic disaster apparently falling from the sky, were positioned as suffering from a failure of resilience. Above all else, it seems, they needed to be able to 'bounce back' in such a 'period of economic downturn' (Young Foundation, n.d.).[2] Now, this simplistic discursive ensemble – employed willy-nilly in a range of iterations from Conservative defence policy (Conservative Party, 2010) to the 'think pieces' of the Young Foundation – is troubling enough in its own right and rightly beginning to attract a critique (Harrison, 2012). Worryingly worse, though, is the traction that such an ahistorical, apolitical and asocial explanatory repertoire is gaining in some practice contexts.

Thankfully, there are small but important voices articulating a 'practice otherwise', and I seek to add to them by arguing here for a determinedly *historical* and resolutely *collective* orientation in critical community-based, informal youth work. Beginning from an ethnographic field note generated by the passing round of a photograph, I outline how insubordinate community histories – particularly those imagining a radical reconstitution of society – can come to be silenced and their situation rendered literally 'unspeakable' when a collective psycho-social space once redolent with hope becomes a space of ruin. In developing that point, I will review material from my recent ethnographic study of young people 'targeted' by integrated youth support teams in a de-industrialised coal-mining community [3] and summarise the case I have made for understanding their experiences of education as situated within historical and spatial circulations of affect (see Bright, 2011a, 2012a). Noticing how the sometimes incomplete nature of such affective transmissions can leave young people both adrift from 'illegitimate' histories that are their legitimate 'heritage' and, at the same time, subject to the traumatic affective legacy of those same histories, I will proceed to canvass for a co-constituted, intergenerational counter-practice in informal work with youth. Drawing on some Blochian readings of Freire, I'll reiterate the call made there for a pedagogy of 'redemptive remembering' rooted in Ernst Bloch's (1995) account of utopia, suggesting that such an approach is not only relevant but also timely, given the development of new social movements drawing on similar ideas. Basically, I argue for the importance of community youth support being equipped to help speak 'unspeakable' community histories, thus making them available for a re-envisioning of aspiration, resilience and wellbeing in a way that challenges the received confines of the neoliberal imaginary. Mindful of some controversies around terminology (Levitas, 1997), I choose nevertheless to follow Bloch in *The Principle of Hope*, and call the proposed practice a 'practice of concrete utopia' (Bloch, 1995, p. 17). But first we need to look at the photograph and the field note.

An Iconography of Collective Utopian Longing

Field Note, The Spot, Beldover [4], October, 2011

The girls – Heartbreaker, Jimjam, Milly, Samantha – and a couple of the lads – Cocker and Big Matt – do their polite best to concentrate as a photo is passed round the group of teenagers gathered in the sparsely furnished front room of *The Spot*, a community support house on the Cavs [5], the old pit estate, in Beldover.

- What do you reckon this is? What do you think's goin' on in this picture? I ask.

- Fuck knows! Is it a party, or summat? I don't know, says Nicky.

Milly challenges:

- I think it's a *fair*, in't it? Like on o' them fairs they use to 'ave. What they call 'em? Like a festival, or summat?

-Hey! shouts Cocker, recognising the background to the shot – It's in fuckin' Belder! [6] It's up at top o' village! Look, there's White Horse! [a pub]

There's a rapid flurry as they jostle each other to get a look at the photo that now, suddenly, has something to do with them. It was taken in their village, after all, so it must be to do with them.

Then, just as quickly, their interest evaporates. They want to move, talk about something else. They are starting to shuffle, reaching for mobiles, rushing to share a smoke outside the door. In an instant, almost, they've gone. Samantha, however, hangs back. She's a funny, quick-witted girl who's recently been subject to a 'managed move' from Beldover school for 'feightin' wi' a teacher'. She takes my 'research' very seriously, wants me to write about her, and, as usual, tries to tell me something 'sensible' before she breaks off into her usual role of clown to the 'Cavs lasses'. She looks at the photo again with studied scrutiny:

-Is it, like, some kind o' *protest*, Geoff? she asks quietly.



Figure 1. 'Beldover' National Union of Mineworkers banner, circa 1972. Permission granted.

The photograph that I had passed around [7] on this occasion dates from sometime in the early 1970s – the period of two national miners' strikes in the UK – and was taken in the market place at Beldover, the large coal-mining village in Derbyshire where *The Spot* is now situated. It shows a small group of people gathered around the large, wheel-mounted banner of the Beldover branch of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The banner depicts 'vesting day' on 1 January 1947 – for which it had been commissioned – when the British coal industry was taken into public ownership.[8] In the classic style of a British trade union banner, it carries the name of the branch in a heraldic scroll above an oval pictorial window showing a significant event, underneath which there's a smaller scroll carrying a motto. In this instance, the oval frame captures a powerfully symbolic exchange. Shown to one side in the valley below Beldover's hill-top castle is a figure representing the coal owners – a plume-capped, moustachioed aristocrat, dressed as a seventeenth-century Royalist 'cavalier'. At the other side, below the overshadowed pit near to the colliery model village, is a helmeted, shirt-sleeved collier who has something of the English civil war Parliamentarian about him. Both, looking each other square in the eye, reach to the lower centre of the image and execute this long-overdue transaction – coveted by one partner, dreaded by the other – with a cool, formal handshake. Framing this historic transfer of a fundamental means of production, a light-giving miner's lamp hangs in each of the tasselled drapes of acanthus that tumble either side of the witnessing oval. The motto below reads: 'Our Heritage'.

Now, there are a number of reasons why one might argue the potential importance of such an image as this to the young people hanging around at *The Spot*. At the simplest level, they may well have relatives pictured here. At another level, though, the image presented – of a trade union banner surrounded by its attendants – is central to an iconography of collective utopian longing that has framed the broadly anti-capitalist ‘aspirations’ of coal-mining communities such as Beldover for well over a hundred years (see Gorman, 1973). It is therefore a key text in the young people’s own class history. However, despite their conjectures, Samantha, Cocker and the others struggle to read it – something which is remarkable in a coal-mining culture characterised by ‘a very clear sense of the past as struggle [which] constitutes a memory that goes back at least a century’ and that has the strikes of 1926, 1972, 1974 and 1984-5 as a ‘common touchstone’ and ‘the imagery of the strike as defiance of the state [as]... a constant one’ (Fentress & Wickham, 1992, pp. 115-116).

In terms of critical education practice, moments like this potentially problematise notions of aspiration, heritage, wellbeing and resilience in ways that can be richly productive. Indeed, a set of crucially important issues are enfolded here. They touch on identity and belonging in a globalised world; on the meaning of class and family in contemporary lives; on gender; on how community has been imagined and might be re-imagined; on the erasures of unofficial histories; on values, dreams and remembrance. So, how – in a culture of memory – has this hiatus come to exist between the contemporary lives of a group of teenagers from coal-mining families and their own recent collective past? Does it simply indicate that the past is no longer relevant in liquid modernity? Or is there something else going on?

Historical Geographies of Collectively Transmitted Affect

In recent publications, I have been working with a number of ideas to explore the ways in which a conflicted past might become unspeakable and how that might impact on the educational experiences of young people in various ways. Drawing fairly eclectically on work by Brennan (2004), Reay (2009) and Walkerdine (2010; Walkerdine, & Jimenez, 2012), I have suggested that *collective* transmissions of affect are significant in this process. In developing this view, Diane Reay’s idea that disengagement from school is related to aspects of historical class experience has been a rich starting point. Employing the geological metaphor of ‘sedimentation’, Reay has drawn our attention to how a general ‘sense of powerlessness and educational worthlessness’ is transmitted *intergenerationally* as ‘children negotiate schooling not only directly through their own experiences but also through the *sedimented* experiences of parents or even grandparents’ (Reay, 2009, p. 27, my emphasis). She has argued further and vigorously that this is a *classed* process. As a ‘result of a century of class domination’, she identifies a ‘historical legacy of working class children being the inferior “other” that resonates in the present’. What is more, this legacy is ‘infused with [a] sense of the righteous indignation that once underpinned a strong working class politics’ (Reay, 2009, p. 24). It is classed and historical, therefore, but it is also laden with *affect*.

This idea is a powerful one. It provides a way of contextualising the anger evident in many working-class young people’s responses to education and moves beyond the limiting framework that positions school disaffection as primarily a matter of individual pathology. Furthermore, it also links disengagement positively to unfinished ‘aspirations’ that open up questions of property, power, representation, democracy and education. Working with and extending this notion of sedimentation, I’ve argued that it is *generally* the case that much of what is labelled as disaffection can only be properly understood as situated in locally specific historical, cultural and class contexts. However, the idea needs supplementing in the case of particular settings – such as the coalfield – where post-conflict ‘affects of trauma’ (Hardt, 2007, p. vii) are a complicating factor. In earlier work (Bright, 2010) I tried to bring this out by focusing on the way that unacknowledged social, political and labour histories have shaped local attitudes to education through class memory. More recently, I responded to the ‘affective turn’ in social theory (Clough & Halley, 2007) by examining *historical geographies of collectively transmitted affect*. That is, I’ve been inquiring into the way that the embodied *feelings* rooted in those social, political and labour histories continue to circulate through something like ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams, 1975; 1977), ‘spatialities of feeling’ (Thrift, 2008), or

'ordinary affects' (Stewart, 2007) *even though* the traditional intergenerational narrative transmission has been stalled by a series of silencing practices that have come to operate.

In making sense of those silencing practices, I have followed a lead from Valerie Walkerdine's recent work (Walkerdine, 2010; Walkerdine & Jiminez, 2012) and have been thinking about how the collective psycho-social impact of de-industrialisation – transmitted collectively via some kind of atmospheric process (Anderson, 2009) – can impact on community in ways that link to disengagement from school. Walkerdine, arguing that sociological approaches to community thus far show a 'poor handling of relational and affective aspects' (Walkerdine, 2010, p. 93), examines the place of affect in community relations and how it relates to trauma in a working-class community following the closure of a steelworks in the South Wales valleys in 2002. She works from approaches that stress the importance of the skin as 'bodily container' and 'psychic envelope' in individual infancy and extends that idea to the *community* 'body', investigating 'how a sense of a containing skin provides a feeling of ontological security for a community beset by uncertainty and insecurity' (Walkerdine, 2010, p. 93). This skin – created and maintained through a range of affective relations and practices – can be punctured in the event of a community trauma such as the closure of a works (or pit) in such a way as 'to cause a lack of safety *and fear of death* within the inhabitants'. The survival practices that Walkerdine identifies include practices of 'speaking' and – very significantly for my own work – '*silence*' (Walkerdine, 2010, p. 93, my emphasis).

I have also incorporated Tim Edensor's notion of post-industrial ruins as 'places from which counter-memories can be articulated' (Edensor, 2005, p. 164). As a cultural geographer interested in the aesthetic and material implications of industrial ruin, Edensor has conjured a space where

[h]idden in ruins are forgotten forms of collectivity and solidarity, lost skills, ways of behaving and feeling, traces of arcane language, and neglected historical and contemporary forms of social enterprise. (Edensor, 2005, pp. 166-167)

Post-industrial locations by this account are sites 'in which the visible and the invisible, the material and the immaterial, intersect', where 'ghosts often barely present in the traces they left, stimulate the construction and transmission of stories which are not merely inarticulate but are suffused with affect' (Edensor, 2005, p. 163). In such places, traces remain of 'things [that] *might be otherwise...* elements of the past [that] *might have conspired to forge an alternative present*' (Edensor, 2005, p. 141, my emphasis). They are haunted, that is, by what Bloch called *spuren* [traces] of hope (Bloch, 1969).

The Deindustrialised Coalfield: a resistant site of ruin

So how do these theoretical accounts, taken together, play out empirically in the Derbyshire coalfield? In answering that question, it's necessary to get a feel for how this particular site of industrial ruin is constituted socio-economically, culturally and affectively. That the coal-mining industry still casts a shadow in social and economic terms is obvious from a few basic statistics. Coalbrook, Cragwell and Beldover all saw their pits close within a couple of years of each other in the early 1990s. Twenty years or so later, the wards around the sites of the former collieries still exhibit levels of deprivation that keep them among the 1% most deprived nationally and, generally, more than a third of the working-age population are still 'inactive' due to illness, disability or caring responsibilities. Unemployment is currently increasing rapidly, particularly among young people, and more than 50% of the population still possess no qualifications. Basically, deprivation in these essentially rural localities reaches the very worst urban levels. (For accounts of coalfield decline, see Bennett et al, 2000; Beatty et al, 2005; Murray et al, 2005; Gore et al, 2007).

Culturally, the ruination of the coalfield has been filtered through a set of increasingly negative and neglectful representations. Conventionally, the picture of coal-mining communities oscillated between two viewpoints. They were seen, alternatively, as either the home of heroic Stakhanovite labour or as the seed bed of what Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister during the 1984-85 strike, called the 'enemy within'. In the period of de-industrialisation, however, the dominant representation has become one of disdain, even disgust. The residents of the pit estates in places like Beldover, Coalbrook, Cragwell and Longthorne have finally been abandoned to an amorphous and dangerous 'white working class' left behind at the dystopian – and, in the case of coal, polluted – end of history. Once loved, but now loathed as fallen occupants of a contemporary grotesquery (see Hudson, 1995, and the review of Hudson by Samuel, 1998), pit families have

disappeared from the social account and are largely forgotten. Mining villages are places, now, where only the 'mad' would work [9] and, presumably, where only the hapless or hopeless might find themselves a habitation.

The affective legacy is obvious in many ways too, but difficult to specify. In my ethnographic work it is clear that the situation just described has affected the *self*-representations of both of the groups – the young people *and* the adults who work with them – on which my study has focused (see the discussions of 'resistant aspiration', 'refusal' and 'performativity' in Bright 2011a, 2011b and 2012a, respectively). In the Beldover area of Derbyshire, where the resistance history (see Page Arnot, 1961; Griffin, 1962; Williams; 1962) has been more fraught and conflicted (Richards, 1996) than in other coalfield areas, the affective residue of the bitterly divided 1984-85 miners' strike and the subsequent pit closure programme is still highly significant, though not straightforwardly discernible. It remains, in fact, hidden, cloaked in silence, unspeakable. Nobody talks, but everyone *knows* – as Frank, a former coal miner and now community worker, illustrates:

I know that we're the lowest nationally... Go out somewhere in the area and ask anybody in the street, and we're the lowest. They'll be able to tell you: the normal community worker in the village, your normal worker, your Joe Bloggs, Joe public. They'd be able to tell you that we're the lowest of the lowest nationally... Yeah, I mean, what's the big secret? It's obvious, you know. I did a survey in the village. I think there's a thousand people in Longthorne, something like that. I think I put out a thousand questionnaires, like you do when you're doing research... I think I got eight back, out of a thousand. But that actually *told* me something... I think they just distrust everything, you know, to do with paperwork or anything like that. It's like an electric bill, put it at the back of the clock and forget about it ... Never *say* you've come to the bottom! That's the worst thing you can say, because you end up falling even further then, don't you?
(Interview, 4 June 2008)

Beyond this generalised fear of worse to come, there are common ethnographic references to 'things' always 'going back to the miners' strike' even 'though people don't know it' and 'nobody says owt [anything]'. Frequently, too, there are narratives of a 'kind of haunting going on'.

A Kind of Haunting Going On

Combining Reay's original insight with Brennan's contribution on the collective transmission of affect, Walkerdine's work on community trauma and the notion of 'ruin' evoked by Edensor, it becomes possible to mobilise an idea of how sedimentation works in traumatic post-industrial situations. Here, a knowledge that 'is not empiricist, didactic or intellectual but empathetic and sensual, understood at an intuitive and affective level' (Edensor, 2005, p. 164) leaks from the psycho-social ruins that hide it and continues to have an affective impact. This idea helps make sense of fieldwork material I have that shows young people apparently acting out the traumatic past of their communities – in internecine territorial conflicts and resistance to outsiders, for example – even though they have no *conscious* knowledge of that past. It also throws light on the way that locally originating practitioners position themselves as exclusively privy to febrile circuits of affect that the young people embody.

Stephanie, herself a child of the 1984-85 strike, now a mature trainee youth worker, articulates this here:

There's a kind of haunting that's going on. Yes, that's a good way of putting it. I think that's the right way to explain it. I don't know if you can [lay ghosts]. I don't know if you can. It's the past. It happened. It's part of... it's part of who we are for those that was involved and those that was affected... *and* for those I guess that wasn't... Like I said, I've had conversations about do you think the miners' strike has an effect on young people today? How do you make that out, they say. So I've had this chat. For those that *wasn't* affected [the idea is] a *load of crap!* For those that *was* affected, *they* agree: 'yeah, I *really* do!' ... You *do* know what's a matter with [the young people]. That's the whole point. (Interview, 1 February 2011)

Significantly, among the group of adults I've observed – including youth support managers, classroom support assistants, youth workers, a police community support officer (PCSO), community tutors and a miscellaneous group of sessional youth workers – almost all had a family

background in coal-mining and were involved one way or another in the miners' strike of 1984-85, the campaign against pit closures or trade union and labour politics. Consequently, the key events of that time continue to provide an implicit context for the strong relational content of their work. PCSO Chris Stevens, formerly a striking miner at Coalbrook colliery, sees himself as 'a *dad* to kids in Coalbrook' (my emphasis) who can bring the 'tenderness' of coal face 'snap times' [10] to his role. In a similar vein, National Union of Mineworkers full-time officer Gary Charlesworth views aspects of local lived culture, such as the protective and educative role once carried out by the union, as almost parental in nature: 'the pit and the union were like their *mother*, that's what I used to say to 'em' (my emphasis). Furthermore, this affective residue is inscribed in the very environment, as the following field note shows:

Field Note, Coalbrook

Coalbrook Miners' Welfare. At the bottom of the Model Village opposite the police station that got ransacked during the strike. There are adverts for the usual pub tribute bands: 'Beef Loaf' and, we are assured, the 'original' Fourmost. There's a 'cage fight day' to come soon, too. In the Welfare there are two sparsely decorated concert rooms. One is huge. A formidable gig, no doubt. In the smaller room there's a framed photo of AJ Cook (the miners' leader in the Twenties) above Idris Davies' General Strike poem: 'From the Angry Summer'. The caption reads 'Presented by Danford NUT, Bethnal Green, in March 1985 on the anniversary of the heroic struggle to defend jobs and communities'. I'm in the office. Today is the NUM surgery for the local ex-mining community. In this room is a framed version of another of Idris Davies' poems 'Do you remember 1926?' Visiting the men's toilets before leave the club later, I notice that someone has scrawled 'National Union of Mineworkers, 2006' in felt tip alongside 'Man Utd' on the bare plaster wall above the urinal – but the pit shut in 1993 and there's no longer a single mineworker in Derbyshire.

This materially embedded, affective counter-knowledge – transmitted atmospherically to the local young people and available as a consciously lived framework of meaning for the group of professional and para-professional workers – constitutes a shared spatiality of feeling in which practice occurs. As such, the bonds between young people and workers are remarkably strong. Only occasionally, though, do moments of co-constituted criticality or significant policy activism occur (see Bright, 2012b). Inevitably, one wants to ask how such productive experience might be recovered and put fully to work in an explicit interrogation of the flimsy but nevertheless hegemonic discourses that currently surround contemporary youth practice. Such a question takes us, first, into the terrain of critical pedagogy, and then, by that route, via Freire back to Bloch.

Critical Pedagogy and Historicised Knowledge

I do not intend to get tangled in long-standing debates that have preoccupied critical pedagogy about the legacy of Freire, or the role that Marxism or liberation theology plays in that legacy. Nor do I want to get tied up in vexed questions about the constitution of any critical pedagogic canon. Contributions to the field in recent years have thankfully tended more towards inclusivity than towards sectarianism (see McLaren's foreword to Allman [McLaren, 2010]). They have also united in resisting the reduction of critical pedagogy to mere *method*, arguing that it must remain, in McLaren's, words a 'challeng[e to] imperial capital and [a] struggle for critical consciousness' (McLaren, 2010, p. xvii). For the purposes of this discussion, I am happy enough to settle for a 'philosophically heterogeneous' critical pedagogy (see Darder et al, 2003). That is, one that sees 'all pedagogical practices [as] constituted within regimes of truth, privileging norms, and ruling social arrangements' (McLaren & Tadeu de Silva, 1993, p. 53), and that identifies 'school knowledge as *historically* and socially rooted and interest bound [as] the product of agreement or consent between individuals who live out particular social relations (e.g. of class, race, and gender) and who live in *particular junctures of time*' (McLaren, 2003, p. 72, my emphasis).

In this account, knowledge is always multiple and always *contested*. Some knowledge circuits appropriate more power and legitimacy than others, and they do this in significant part by colonising knowledge by means of *history*. Consequently, some knowledges are constantly remembered while others are forgotten, even erased. As McLaren goes on to argue, 'critical

pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated while others clearly are not' (2003, p. 72). As critical pedagogy has emphasised – from Freire's (1970) foundational work through Giroux (1983) and McLaren's (1995) key contributions, to the most recent input of, say, Smyth (2011) – the recovery of sedimented counter-knowledge is essential to the cultivation of a '[c]ritical [h]ope that aims to counter "the crippling fatalism of neoliberalism"' (Smyth, 2011, p. 1, original emphasis). This point takes us straight back to Bloch.

Redemptive Remembering and Back to Bloch's 'Not Yet'

I will now consider some material from the reconsideration of Bloch's 'neither outdated nor out of place' version 'of "warm" utopian Marxist critique' (Daniel & Moylan, 1997, p. viii) which began in the 1990s and caught the eye of critical pedagogy theorists because of its 'important impetus in radical cultural work' (Zipes, 1997, p. 3). In general, Bloch's dense and difficult work 'develops a philosophy of hope and the future, a dreaming forward' (Kellner, 1997, p. 81) by offering

a dialectical analysis of the past which illuminates the *present* and can direct us to a better *future*. The past – what has been – contains both the sufferings, tragedies, and failures of humanity – what to avoid and redeem – and its unrealised hopes and potentials – which could have been and can yet be. For Bloch, history is a repository of possibilities that are living options for future action; therefore what could have been can still be. The present moment is thus constituted in part by *latency* and *tendency*: the unrealised potentials that are latent in the present. (Kellner, 1997, p. 81)

For Bloch, as Anderson has noted relatively recently, 'utopic processes are immanent to a world that *contains* "something that has not yet realized itself"' (Anderson, 2006, p. 691, citing Bloch, 1986). Noting Bloch's re-definition of the 'utopian as a type of process', Anderson argues for an 'immanent utopianism that follows from a dynamic, open conception of utopia' (Anderson, 2006, p. 691). Interestingly, this Blochian conception of utopia as an immanent but always incomplete *not yet*, rather than an as ultimate goal or *telos*, is currently feeding into radical social and political theory in a variety of ways. Various, it influences work presenting geography as concerned with spatialities of the possible (Anderson, 2006; Anderson & Fenton, 2008); critiques of capitalism that mobilise 'anti-power' (Holloway, 2002, 2010); elaborations of postwork imaginaries harnessing hope as both cognitive faculty and affect (Weeks, 2011); and 'post-anarchist' (Rouselle & Evren, 2011) considerations of utopia as practice rather than an end that are informing contemporary anti-capitalist social movements.

Two articles from the initial reappraisal of Bloch's work remain, however, particularly relevant to my purpose here. Both of these (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993; Giroux & McLaren, 1997) mobilise a Blochian reading of Freire and an engagement with aspects of poststructuralism, and both, in my view, still deserve attention. In *Paulo Freire, Postmodernism, and the Utopian Imagination: a Blochian reading*, Giroux and McLaren cite Freire and Bloch as equally important 'dialecticians of the concrete' and consider specifically how the neglected utopian imagination in Freire can be developed through Bloch's 'formally developed philosophy' in conjunction with a politicised 'resistance postmodernism' anchored in 'critical utopianism' (Giroux & McLaren, 1997, p. 138). Working with Bloch's 'ontology of the "not yet" or "anagnorisis" [whereby] one can ascertain figural traces of the future in the remnants of the past' (p. 146), they focus on the term 'concrete utopia' as referring to 'the real, material conditions necessary to make utopia possible' and propose a practice that develops the faculty of 'hope' as 'a form of cognitive intentionality, of ontological assertion, and of anticipatory consciousness' (p. 146).

In the earlier article *Decentering Pedagogy: critical literacy, resistance and the politics of memory*, McLaren and Tadeu de Silva had already developed 'a poststructuralist and postcolonialist reading of Freire' (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993, p. 48) and embraced Freire's 'provisional' utopian thinking, working with it in relation to what they call 'redemptive remembering'. To that end, they contrast *provisional* utopian thinking – which 'invites a constant promotion of alternatives to present asymmetrical distributions of power' (p. 48) – with 'categorical' utopian thinking. This latter freezes process into teleology, 'locks one's vision of the future in blue-print' (p. 48), and is best eschewed as framing exhausted modernist notions of progress. In the notion of provisional

utopian thinking, there is a link being made from Freire to Bloch. For McLaren and Tadeu da Silva, 'Freire's notion of *critical reflection can be compared to a form of redemptive remembrance and social dreaming*' (1993, p. 69, original emphasis). It is an actively *present* way of 'reading the world critically', in Allman's phrase (Allman, 2010, p. 3), and is

always already a form of Utopian dreaming. It not only demystifies the present by allowing us to recognise ourselves from a critical/historical perspective as, disproportionately, oppressors and oppressed, but it also carries traces of future possibility in its reconstruction of the present moment. It is... a passing into the *not yet*. (McLaren and Tadeu da Silva, 1993, p. 69, original emphasis)

Redemptive remembering, then, is a form of 'counter memory', an 'emancipatory mode' of remembering through which 'history is engaged as a *lived discourse*' in '*a dialogue with the past*'. It is a critical space where remembering '*in a critical mode*' means 'confronting the social amnesia of generations in flight from their own collective histories – the subjugated knowledges of the marginalised' (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993, p. 75, original emphasis).

Conclusion: for a practice of concrete utopia

It is this idea of working the utopic element of experience – the already present, dynamically critical, hopeful, always *active* process of *not-yet* – that I want to propose as a model of future youth support practice in settings similar to the UK coalfield. In moving now towards a conclusion, let me recap the argument presented here. First, I noted how disciplinary discourses around youth support depend on the promiscuous use of a hortatory vocabulary of terms from which all historical meaning has been evacuated. I suggested, further, that such discourse is gaining purchase in practice settings – a fact that calls for a resolutely historical and collectively co-constituted counter practice if the received limits of the neoliberal imaginary are ever to be effectively challenged. Starting from an empirical example, I tentatively theorised how stalled affects of trauma still circulate in post-conflict settings such as the 'ruin' of the Derbyshire coalfield, impacting on young people and locally originating practitioners alike as their insubordinate histories are made unspeakable through complex practices of silence. I then briefly developed the re-reading of Bloch, and its potential application in critical pedagogic practice.

Where does this leave us? Well, redemptive remembering certainly seems a useful way to approach the task of making the unspeakable speakable. We have already noted how insubordinate histories implicitly inform the work of the Derbyshire youth practitioners, so the basis is there. But I want to make a plea for a 'practice otherwise' that goes further than that. One that might interrogate policy notions such as aspiration and resilience through the *explicit* recovery of sidelined, but still hopeful, 'knowledges otherwise'. As we know in the light of Bloch's account, such a counter-heritage can point straight to the 'not yet' of economic, social and educational possibility that remains immanent as the past's trace in the present. The simple question of ownership of the means of production raised by the Beldover banner is starting point enough for that. For the young people from the Cavs estate, acquaintance with that banner even as a circulated photograph potentially carries what Bloch would call the past's 'utopian excess' into the present. It does so, moreover, in a way that might frame those young people's sense of themselves – and their aspirations – afresh.

So how do we work with that 'utopian excess'? Presently, there is an increasing number of intergenerational projects taking place that will inevitably open up multiple histories if they are carried out critically. Such developments should be seized upon as a laboratory for the kind of work envisaged here. Suffice it to say that it is vital to develop *criticality* in memory-based work with marginal groups. Such work, if uncritical, potentially perpetuates division and dominance, leaving received notions of the 'given' world unassailable. Working in critical dialogue with the past for redemptive recall opens up the utopian content that lodges in the present, and it is in that opening, as Anderson reminds us, that 'new possibilities or potentialities are named' (Anderson, 2006, p. 704). Understanding the process whereby sedimented meaning is both transmitted and stalled in excluded communities is vital. Co-constituted networks of critical intergenerational inquiry – mobile beyond the boundaries of conventional educational institutions – are key to

showing how *situated* forms of ‘aspiration’, ‘wellbeing’ and ‘resilience’ can challenge inequalities that appear to be perpetual.

Heartbreaker, Jimjam, Milly, Samantha, Cocker and Big Matt certainly need new possibilities to be named, and they need to be equal parties to their naming. We need to start working out in dialogue with *them* just what a ‘practice of concrete utopia’ might look like as it emerges from unspeakable histories latent in artefacts like the Beldover photograph. In Bloch’s elaboration, utopia is a process, not a blueprint destination, anyway – so the details will have to follow. They can’t be programmatically set. The first step is to *begin* – wherever and whenever we hear the vacuous constructions of neoliberalism’s exclusionary discourse. Just begin, first, by going back. For, as Bloch counsels, ‘those who would help must absolutely go back, yet be there anew’ (Bloch, 2000, p. 233).

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Notes

[1] NEET – Not in Employment, Education or Training.

[2] Notice how the language constructs political economy as beyond the realm of choice.

[3] Overall, my research looks at various continuities and disjunctions between the resistant history of an area of the British coalfield and the structures of meaning shaping young people’s responses to education. Unusually, for an educational ethnography, the study is *intergenerational*. It focuses on two groups: young people currently on the margins of education in these now de-industrialised communities, and adults from similar backgrounds who now work with the young people in various capacities and experienced education in the same locality at a time when the coal industry was thriving. The fieldwork element of the research was carried out in four former coal-mining villages – Beldover, Coalbrook, Cragwell and Longthorne – in Derbyshire, England during 2006-2011. The villages were chosen because of their front-line position in the 1984-85 miners’ strike, and a variety of settings were studied: formal but out-of-school youth education projects; informal education and youth work venues; youth clubs; a community youth house; private homes; a miners’ welfare club; and the street. In the main, though, sustained contact with two sites generated the bulk of the data. In one case, a link was maintained over a two-year period with staff and learners at a community-based ‘pre Entry to Employment’ programme called *Go 4 it!* In the second case, a year-long participant observation took place with staff and young people involved in local authority ‘detached’ and club-based youth work provision in the four communities. The *Cavs Lasses Group* – a girls-only after-school group on the Cavendish estate Beldover – and *Bus Stop* – a mobile youth support service – are examples.

[4] All names of people and places (at sub-county level) have been changed.

[5] The Cavendish estate, shortened always to ‘The Cavs’.

[6] The local name for Beldover.

[7] I’m indebted to the former secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers at Beldover for kindly giving me a copy of the photo (and permission to use it), as well as a postcard of the ‘old’ Beldover branch banner. The banner was ‘lost’ after the 1984-85 strike when the Nottinghamshire NUM offices came under the control of the non-striking Union of Democratic Miners (UDM). ‘They probably burned it,’ my contact told me.

[8] The demand for nationalisation in coal-mining trade union politics – and therefore community life – was of enormous significance, not only promising an end to chaotic and exploitative private ownership but, by virtue of that, also safeguarding life and limb in a dangerous industry.

[9] ‘If I see somebody, an’ they say, oh, where do you work? I says, I work at Coalbrook. I tell ‘em wor I do. They’ll say: are you *mad?*’ (Police Community Support Officer Chris Stevens).

[10] The refreshment break taken underground.

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*Part 2. Candidate statement: Overview of
thesis*

2. 1. Research Questions

In this section, I will specify the key research question and main supplementary questions that my doctoral inquiry has explored. Before doing that, however, it will be useful to offer a reminder of the original social puzzle that first generated my doctoral work. I'll then move on to give a simple account of how the emphases of my research questions have changed during the lifetime of the project, how the fieldwork element has been extended and rethought as a result of that, and how the final focus has progressively emerged. The provision of such a summary at this point will allow me to develop a more elaborated account of the research subject as a whole in the section that follows (see Research Subject, below).

In terms of the idea of an originating 'social puzzle', I have referred to Willis's articulation of that matter in at least one of the articles presented here. Nevertheless, it is worth repeating.

Research, for Willis, is initiated by one's being:

...so moved with curiosity about a social puzzle...that you are seized to go and look for yourself, to see 'what's going on' ...Physical and sensuous presence then allows observation and witness (Willis, 2000; xiii)

In the case of my research, the original puzzle was presented to me quite starkly in my own professional practice during 2000-2002 when I ran a project in a further education college for young people who had been permanently excluded from school. The 'Special Programme' that I led offered provision on behalf of the Derbyshire Behaviour Service for 14 to 16 year olds excluded during years 10 and 11 of the school system. From the outset, certain common features were apparent among the young people being referred. First, it was noticeable that, while the reach of the Behaviour Support Service was county-wide, referrals tended to be from the coalfield villages in the north of the county and from two neighbouring

communities, Coalbrook and Cragwell, in particular. Second, most young people tended to be from families that had historically made their livelihoods in the, by then, non-existent coal-mining industry and that had lived through the 1984-85 strike which had been bitterly contested locally (Coalbrook was a largely striking pit; Cragwell a largely working pit).

Excluded from local schools commonly struggling in, or on the edge of, 'special measures', most of these young people had formal statements of special educational needs for non-specific 'emotional and behavioural difficulties', were often 'on medication', and had been in varying degrees of trouble with the police. As was apparent from their notes, they were literally the children of the miners' strike and its aftermath (being 14 to 16 in 2000 and, hence, having been born between 1984 and 1986) They lived in the very streets where the conflict between the striking coalfields and the largely working Nottinghamshire coalfield had flared and had been, consequently, so heavily policed. In their sullen demeanour and sudden outbursts, these young people, girls and boys alike, seemed to carry some very specific 'invisible injuries of class' (Sennet and Cobb, 1972) which they acted out in ways that pointed back directly to the experiences, conflicts and language of the strike and its perceived betrayals. Most significantly though, in almost all cases, they *knew* nothing about the history that to me – and to many others working in the area, I might add – seemed so obviously to shape the 'affective geography' that they inhabited. My original social puzzle, then, was this:

Why were so many young people from pit families getting excluded and why did they seem to embody and act out conflicted aspects of their own history that they themselves knew nothing about, yet that was otherwise present everywhere and nowhere in the lives of their families and communities?

Having mulled this question in an exploratory way as an aspect of a Masters degree dissertation completed in 2005 (Bright, 2005), I sought to focus on it more closely and commenced doctoral studies in 2006; initially conceiving the doctoral study as having an exclusive gender focus as an investigation of *Educational disaffection among young men in an ex-coalfield Area of Derbyshire*. Picking up a thematic of the time, I imagined that the key aim would be an exploration of the intersection between *boys'* lived experiences of education and aspects of class, gender, community and culture particular to former coal-mining communities, particularly local historical patterns of conflict and resistance such as had been evident in the 1984-85 miners' strike. At the outset, the idea was to contextualise the core study through small-scale supplementary research among other community members and by giving some methodological attention to my own biographical experience of growing up, living and working within one of the research localities. The initial focus was, nevertheless, unambiguously framed in a gendered geography of the 'margins' (Shields, 1990)

Now, with hindsight it's possible to see that the intellectual and policy climate around 'disengaged' youth was actually on the cusp of a shift when I began my project in 2006. The popular moral panic of the early twenty first century had focused strongly around bands of supposedly 'feral' working class youth – emphatically male – who, having abandoned or been excluded from education, were supposedly terrorising the 'broken' communities of Britain in increasingly dramatic ways (see references throughout the collected articles). A surprisingly bipartisan political and media coalition existed around the perennial issues of 'family', 'community', 'values', 'authority' and the debate about young people becoming and remaining NEET ('not in employment, education or training') focussed on the problem of the

recalcitrant, and largely male, ten per cent of youngsters described as ‘NEET churn’ who dominated the ‘evidence-based’ research agenda.

In short, there was a discursive construction of ‘anti-social behaviour’— and what has come to be called ‘school disaffection’ – as an aspect of a generalised ‘crisis of masculinity’ that shaped the explanatory framework of even the most trenchant academic work on identity after de-industrialisation, from Weiss’s early study *Working-class without work: High school students in a de-industrialising economy*. (1990) through to McDowell’s (2003) *Redundant Masculinities: Employment change and white working class youth*. By 2006, however, class had made an emphatic reappearance. Still hygienically absent from policy discourse, it remained ‘undead’ in Diane Reay’s words, was once again stalking schools (Reay, 2006) and was adding a different inflection to new research on the fringes of sociology of education. Gillian Evans’s anthropological work on youth and class in South London (2006) even briefly gained something of a celebrity profile in the quality press.

Suffice it to say that by the time I commenced actual field work in 2007, it was becoming strongly apparent that the gender focus I’d initially considered was inadequate: it was shaped too much by the discursive tenor of the previous period, conformed to a construction of de-industrialisation as primarily a problematic of masculinity, and seemed too simple to accommodate the complex gender dynamic that was noticeable in the data I was gathering. As a result of realising this, the first change I made was to extend the scope of the inquiry to include women and girls and renegotiate field access to include sites where I could work with both mixed and female-only groups.

The second set of adjustments – a further widening of the scope and a sharpening of methodological frame of the study – again emerged in a grounded way from ‘luminosities’ (Katz, 2001, 2002) in the empirical materials that I was gathering. I was becoming increasingly aware that the key original aspect of the study was its focus on the *lived experience* of education across a *generational* period of de-industrialisation that had occurred locally between 1985 and 2005 as the deep-mined coal industry had been dismantled. My work needed, then, to have a generational spread. It also needed to be carried out from a methodological position that was characteristically attuned to those:

...profound processes of re-structuration and de-traditionalisation...[that] were eroding the certainties of previous transitions and inherited cultures, as well as inciting them to re-establish themselves in new forms. (Willis and Trondman, 2000: 7)

Two changes seemed to be necessary. First, it would be productive to develop the *intergenerational* element of the research – initially employed (somewhat naively) as a means of contextual ‘triangulation’ – into a formal element of the inquiry. I therefore, once again, extended the range of participants to include locally originating *adults* – men and women – from similar backgrounds to the young people; the idea being that this would amplify any cultural changes and continuities across the generational moment of de-industrialisation that I wanted to investigate. As a consequence of that decision, I arranged to carry out research with adult men and women in the following groups: those involved in the planning and delivery of community-based learning provision serving young people; young people’s parents, grandparents and other family members; and other significant adult members of the local working class communities: community workers, councillors, trade unionists and such like. Accordingly, access to a wider spread of sites – project staff rooms, service delivery venues, homes, miners’ welfare institutes, for example – was negotiated.

Secondly, my initial methodological approach – a multi-method qualitative inquiry – was proving inadequate to the type of data that I was gathering and needed to be developed in line with the wide-ranging cultural inquiry that was emerging. As Willis and Trondman had argued, the methodology *par excellence* for studying a moment of cultural change is ethnography, a point extended into an educational context by Walford’s view that ethnography is best placed methodologically to study how a “...particular culture works – how it maintains itself and adapts to changing circumstances” (Walford, 2009: 273). Indeed, when Willis had made the point above about the ‘social puzzle’, it had been in the context of describing not just *any* research impulse but specifically the “*ethnographic* impulse” (Willis, 2000: xiii. My emphasis). Translating all these points into the broad, community-based ‘education’ context of my study hence required me to shift from a rather vaguely conceived qualitative inquiry to something like an extended educational ethnography, a *modus operandi* that I’d stumbled into, anyway, through my practical emphasis on observation over other conventionally employed qualitative methods. At something of a turning point, then, I began to characterise the study as an intergenerational educational ethnography, describing the core research question in the following terms.

Research Question

What is the lived experience of school disaffection among marginalised working class young people in four coal-mining communities in the Bolsover District of the Derbyshire coalfield and how does it relate to generational continuities and discontinuities of class, gender, place, and the history of conflict and resistance (particularly of the miners’ strike of 1984-85) through a period of intensive de-industrialisation?

Supplementary research questions

Of course, other supplementary questions have had to be framed in response to the empirical materials I've collected and as the global, national and local context has changed so rapidly in the years after 2006. In terms of the data, the key hot spot has continued to be around that phenomenon that I had first noticed with the 'special project' youngsters in 2000: their apparent affiliation to an affective geography determined by an intergenerationally transmitted class history that had ostensibly exhausted itself before they were born, yet which remained emphatically present, if unspoken. This phenomenon quite quickly became the heart of the study and generated the following supplementary questions:

Is such an intergenerational transmission of class knowledge/memory related to general processes of de-industrialisation or specifically to the mining industry? Is it related in particular ways to the locally *highly conflicted* setting in the 'front line' zone of the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border?

In what ways does this transmission impact on young people's lived experience of the education system?

If this transmission was characteristically an oral transmission (Fentress and Wickham, 1992) then by what means is it taking place within post-conflict social practices of silence? Is it a collective transmission of *affect*?

How might awareness of such processes of collective transmission of affect help our general understanding of some young working class people's lived experience of education as 'disaffecting'?

How can such a collective transmission of affect be theorised?

What are the methodological implications of attunements to affect for social research in general and educational ethnography in particular?

How might models of emancipatory practice – critical pedagogy, for instance – be developed in the light of such phenomena?

In terms of context, there were major developments in local policy and provision through 2007-2010 to which my research had to respond. These included the establishing of a Children's Trust in Derbyshire; the creation of integrated youth support service management structures within the local authority; the delegation of Connexions Derbyshire's statutory responsibilities to the local authorities in Derbyshire and Derby City and a major policy focus on 'raising aspirations' as a response to coalfield 'worklessness'. However, these local shifts pale into insignificance when compared to the advent of globalised and national economic crisis with associated increases in unemployment – particularly youth unemployment – the emergence of new movements of protest, and a change of the UK government that meant the drying up of 'coalfield money' almost overnight. In the early stages of the coalition government, changes once again hit the research locality. Connexions Derbyshire (a key youth support agency) was closed and the local authority youth service very significantly reduced and 'refocussed' (though not without local protest). All of these changes again had

an effect on both the general setting of the project and on the lives and professional roles of individuals, sometimes affecting their capacity to participate in the research project as envisaged. As a result, the original research was adjusted to include a set of second order research questions as follows:

Are the local affective geographies changing in relation to other changes and if so, how?

How do identifiable changes affect the forms of resistance and refusal among young people and how does that impact on the relationship between the two generational groups in the sites studied?

How are changes and responses classed and gendered for the young people, and for the adults? How can this be theorised in terms of the legacy of resistance theory and recent re-thinkings of the politics of refusal.?

How are hegemonic notions of ‘aspiration’ being produced, reproduced, resisted and implemented through policy and practice frameworks – by young people, by practitioners, by both?

How do these developments influence the character of youth support work practice in the light of increasingly performative cultures in both schools and the youth support sector? Are new subjectivities being formed?

What are the implications for youth support practice of working with such powerfully classed and gendered affective geographies?

In addition to the empirically driven adaptation of research questions that I've just described, I'd like to mention a further, unexpected, factor that has influenced the formulation of my research questions and that relates specifically to the PhD by Article process. Though I make a similar point elsewhere in this thesis, it is worth pointing out again here that the production of a thesis in such a format influences the shape of a doctoral study in ways that are not applicable to the conventional monograph. In the case of a PhD by Article, the research questions are inevitably steered – and to a not insignificant degree – by the academic writing, submission, reviewing and editing process. For example, four out of five of the articles submitted here were canvassed by academics editing special issues of journals. The other was commissioned as a chapter of a commissioned book. In all cases then, the topics – and the research questions they explored – were driven by emergent priorities in the world of education research publishing relating to geographies of education, questions of agency, the debate around performativity, the question of policy activism, and the development of new models of practice. They were *not* driven exclusively by the inherent logics of my own inquiry. In truth, I doubt that I would have explored my ethnographic materials through the lens of policy activism, for example, had I not been asked to submit an article to the *Journal of Education Administration and History* special issue on the topic by the guest editor, John Smyth. In the event, the process of working with that idea was particularly fruitful. Nevertheless, there was a certain degree of artificiality in the process and the tension between the production imperatives of a PhD by Article and those involved in writing a monograph need to be kept firmly in mind in reading the material I've brought together here.

2. 2. Research subject

...ruins are rampantly haunted by a horde of absent presences, a series of signs of the past that cannot be categorised but intuitively grasped (Edensor, 2005: 152)

That life is complicated may seem a banal expression of the obvious, but it is nonetheless a profound theoretical statement – perhaps the most important theoretical statement of our time. (Gordon. 1997: 3)

At one level, these two quotations – one from Tim Edensor’s *Industrial ruins*, the other from Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological Imagination* – could, taken together, be said sum up my doctoral project. Over the seven years of its production, that project has steadily evolved into a multivalent and divergent attempt to think about just how – with reference to classed experiences of education – that “horde of absent presences” noticed by Edensor adds a very significant layer of complication to the complicated problem of living through a moment of “our time” and the complicated task of theorising it. But, as one might expect, that’s a complicated matter. As such, I’ll leave it troubling us here for the time being and come back to it below.

For the moment, though, I want to emphasise how, at another level, the central ambition of my inquiry has always been very simple. The project has focussed on young people aged 14-19 who have been displaced from a disaffecting and disaffective¹ formal education process (particularly in the UK secondary school sector) and has asked how their marginalised identities, attitudes, aspirations, resistances and refusals relate to *context*. That is to say, it has wondered how their lived experiences and imaginings of education and schooling are related to aspects of class, gender, community, culture, place and memory in their local communities and has assumed that the answer to that question might be relevant to policy and practice

¹ I’m using a similar reversal to that made by John Schostak in his *Maladjusted Schooling* (See Schostak, 1983) and positioning *schooling* as *disaffective*, rather than *young people* as *disaffected*. Any reference to ‘disaffection’ made in this thesis should be taken in this sense.

Further, and only rarely within in the literature², the study has problematised that contextualisation by way of an *intergenerational* perspective gained through a simultaneous study of local adults having a similar background to the young people. The key original contribution has really been to situate apparently individual responses to educational ‘precarity’ within a concretely geographical, historically particular and affectively distinctive intergenerational setting and to suggest that those responses – often powerful, sometimes violent – have social, historical and collective political meaning.

In that the study has focussed on experiences of disaffective education in four pit villages on the border of the north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire coalfields that constituted the front line of the 1984-85 miners’ strike, it has linked those experiences to politicised aspects of collective and individual affects relating to traumatic social change, building out from early material on that topic (see Sennet, 1972, and Kleinman and Kleinman, 1994) to offer a theoretical framework situated in relevant contemporary cultural, social and psychosocial theory (see Literature Review below).

Staying with the (relative) simplicities of context for the moment, we can see how the articles presented here have progressively developed a description of that multi-layered context at the moment of its being hit by a politically orchestrated crisis of de-industrialisation. All of the articles have drawn attention to the way early sociological work positioned places like Beldover, Coalbrook, Cragwell and Longthorne as exemplary cases of ‘working class community’, shaped by identifiable solidarities arising from a particular form of industrial production. They note not only specific events, but also the political colouration of the historiography in which those events have been positioned. They also note how the ‘miner’

² Yvette Taylor’s (2012) work, *Fitting into Place*, is similarly based on an intergenerational study.

and the 'pit village' have been imagined and storied during a hundred year period of cultural production: as once god-like – now broken – victims of the 'machine' in D.H. Lawrence's oeuvre; as idealised but still disgusting proletarians in Orwell; as socialist realist, autodidact heroes of their own 'green valleys' in the worker literature of the 1930s; as animalistic grotesques in the relatively recent dystopian gothic of, say, Hudson (1995) or as retrospectively constructed victims of a vicious State conspiracy in Peace (2004). They register, too, how – unlike any other group – miners and mining communities have been so ardently courted, so passionately embraced and so peremptorily dumped from the left intelligentsia project of "staging the people" that Rancière has so effectively deconstructed (Rancière, 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

The later articles, which make use of Walkerdine and Edensor, also begin to recognise contradictory varieties of discursive *self-production* within coalfield culture. On the one hand, a cursory acquaintance with the texts and iconography of 'struggle' related to 'official' coal-mining labour history (see Gorman, 1973; Scargill and Heathfield, 1989; Williams, 1980) reveals a group actively represented – principally by its own internal elites – as both long-suffering victim of Capital's diabolic eschatology and as disciplined vanguard of collective redemption. On the other hand, ethnographic materials – the "broken, polemical voices" (Rancière, 2011: 12) that I tried hard to hear in the article "*Non-Servile Virtuosi*" in *insubordinate spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield* – hint strongly towards a small but significant celebratory internal counter-culture inventing the coalfields as a wild, intuitive and dangerous domain that remains undisciplined by the disciplinary project of modernism (even in its collectivist form). All of these aspects are present in any thoughtful account of the contemporary context in which young people's experiences of education in the de-industrialised coalfield are situated. Or more accurately –

as the articles show – they are present *and* they are absent. And it is at the point of recognising *that* that my work suddenly gets complicated in Gordon’s sense.

Why? Well, because the realities behind this picture of the ‘coal miner’ and ‘pit village’ had largely disappeared by the time my work commenced in 2006. De-industrialisation was, to all intents and purposes, complete as all of Derbyshire’s large pits had closed by 1995.

“Traditional working class community” (Day, 2006) was positioned as a terminally exhausted category, theoretically sidelined by new thinking that comprehensively problematised the notion of community (Agamben, 1993; Bauman, 1998, 2000, 2001; Esposito, 1998; Nancy, 1991; Touraine, 2000) and refocused attention resolutely away from the local to networks, globalisation and virtual community (Delanty, 2003). To be sure, structural change was plainly evident in the locality of my study. The local economy was exemplifying key characteristics of a post-industrial, “programmed” society (in Touraine’s 1988 term), as employment became increasingly casualised, feminised and affective. A number of my women participants had more than one part-time job: one youth worker, for instance, having significant, hourly- paid, youth work commitments as well as a factory job and a job as a school cook.

At the very same time, however, the imaginary of the ‘traditional’ coal-mining community continued to proliferate, flourishing beyond its time not only in the rhetoric of policy interventions – the Coalfield Communities Campaign being a case in point – but in the ‘just talk’ (Stewart, 1996) of people around the learning project and youth work sites of my study. Indeed, one might say with Stewart that the “barer the life became, the more its worldings proliferated and accrued” (Stewart, 2010: 3) feeding a kind of cultural poetics of ongoing *community longing* that one could see being performed in the embodied narratives of both the

adult workers and the young people taking part in my study. In my observation, this longing commonly drew together an affective weave of shame (Probyn, 2010), melancholy, anger and cruel optimism (Berlant, 2010) that included real and imagined pasts, presents and futures as bodily suffered but as rarely *uttered*, their articulation foreclosed by post-conflict practices of necessary silence. As I'll now try to illustrate through the device of an extended field note that encapsulates the point, this phenomenon – which I started to think of as a ghosted affective transmission of some kind – steadily moved towards the centre of my work, requiring me to recognise layers of complexity that were unimaginable at the outset of the project and that required a retuning of methodology and a re-imagining of writing practices.

Writing in-bye and out-bye: A poetics of ghosted affect

Field note: December 9th, 2012

I drive into Longthorne up the wooded sweep of the main road by Longthorne Manor – now, of course, a nursing home – coming into the village past the 300 year old Bentinck Arms in front of which the little River Coulter bifurcates the village green, sparkling in the low winter sun. Passing a couple of old farms – one still occupied but half derelict – and the cluster of ‘desirably refurbished’ cottages glinting in their pale sand blasted stone, I park, self consciously, at the bottom of Pit Hill. This is why I drove out here this morning: to photograph the street sign at the bottom of Pit Hill.

Over the last couple of years, I've noticed that the ‘Pit Hill’ sign has been the subject of its own small drama of identity whereby the word ‘Pit’ has periodically been carefully painted over to read ‘[] Hill’ and then just as carefully repainted to read emphatically once again: ‘Pit Hill’. I was thinking about this last night and it struck me that this quiet, persistent contestation of a street name – occurring for who knows what reason – somehow epitomises the quarrelsome, oscillating semiotic absences and presences that simultaneously occupy and flee the affective cartography that this doctoral inquiry has tried to inhabit. Here, pit villages that have been re-invented – and re-signed as ‘Historic Market Towns’ or ‘Pre-Norman villages’, are wilfully back-named ‘the Bronx’ by locals; colliery waste tips become ‘country parks’ but are still called ‘the pit’; signs are painted over and re-painted. While young men in hoodies and cammo gear who have “never heard o’ pit” still course dogs over the “pit tip” after hares and rabbits for all the world like 1930s ‘collier lads’, a past that was always spoken of (Fentress and Wickham 1992) is shocked into silence, folded, and tucked away in drawers “somewhere in back”. In the words of one of my ‘participants’, Steve Pierce, “nobody’ll bring it up as a social to talk about”. Maybe

this is how the “industrial ruin” (Edensor, 2005) remains always so stubbornly full, even when it has been gouged out, emptied, grassed over and neatly and dextrously erased: a revenant excess of meaning leaking continually out-by from the abandoned in-by of lived and worked habitations: seeping through, staining, infiltrating – like the sudden pungent stink of methane that you sometimes get coming into these villages, still venting from supposedly sealed underground workings.

Ten minutes later, I’m in my cousin Joe’s neat, sparse kitchen in one of the old pit houses at the bottom of the village. Serendipitously, Joe and his wife, Ann, walked by me as I was photographing the sign and Ann recognised me before he did.

- Is it Geoff?

As some kind of explanation of what I’m doing, the three of us sit in the quiet kitchen of their pit house at the bottom of the village and talk about the 1984-85 strike in which Joe was a leading local activist who was arrested on the picket line at his own pit and sacked by the National Coal Board as a result. I tell him about the recently established Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign with which I’ve become involved, explaining how, twenty eight years on, it seems to have caught the moment with significant press and TV coverage. Joe was “at Orgreave” – which is all that needs to be said – as was I. We talk about the state of Longthorne village now the coalfields money has dried up. Joe was formerly a councillor in the ward. I ask him if there’s anything happening, if he’s still involved.

- It’s dead. There could be a murder outside our front door an’ y’ woun’t know. They’re tryin’ to break ward up, he says³

Ann digs out some ‘stuff’ from ‘in back’: two boxed Crown Derby plates commemorating the 1984-85 strike (one each for their two sons); a plaque marking Joe’s “one year’s unbroken allegiance to the National Union of Mineworkers”; a pristine and empty leather brief case that he was given as a delegate to the “Extraordinary Conference” that took the strike decision in 1984. Most remarkable are two large red flags blazoned with ‘solidarity’ in English and Japanese sent to him by Japanese factory workers. Joe holds them up and I take some photos, though the light isn’t good.

*- I’m keeping these, he says, indicating the flags, To hang out when **she** goes! He’s referring, of course, to Margaret Thatcher. And he means it. We drink our tea in a short silence.*

*- But do you know **what?** he says, They reckon they’re going to have a **proper** celebration up at Coalbrook school, you know, **of her life!** You know, **for Thatcher, for her, like!***

This, astonishingly, is what the world has become capable of: the final humiliation. Thatcher, the one who named “the enemy within” has now come among the local lives of those she named and is abroad in the schools, among their children. There’s

³ See *Methodology* for an explanation of how I’ve rendered spoken language.

something unseemly, even abusive about this. Done under the banner of 'raising aspirations', no doubt.

- How's that? I ask, incredulous. We sit, silent, trying to fathom this, recognising the enormity of the fact that, somehow, it's actually believable.

- I don't know, maybe it's teachers that they have now, Joe ventures.

*- And in **Coalbrook!** says Ann, sadly. That's terrible!*

In an early published piece called *Writing in-bye and out-bye: Doing autoethnography* (Bright, 2010a. Not collected here), I explored the methodological value of autoethnography (see Methodology) for my doctoral inquiry. As part of that investigation, I developed the notion of “writing in-bye and out-bye” to express the amplitudes of an oscillatory space between subjectivity and social structure that my research, and the relationship between it and my personal biography, seemed to both require and generate.⁴

In that article, I noted how the doctoral study was encrusted with the personal in the profoundest sense, such that even the most basic research practice prompted a rush of what Margaret Morse (Morse, 1999) had called “origin stories” and the pull of “enchantment”⁵. I described how my work seemed to actively refuse the disciplining power of conventional academic writing processes in which the dirty fabric of memory, expectation, dream, desire

⁴ “**In-bye** – ‘in the workings, or in any direction away from the shaft’ ... ‘To gan inbye – to go from the shaft bottom into the workings’ ... ‘to travel into a mine is to go in-bye’ ... ‘I knew what in-bye meant. It signified in or approaching the working area ... [in-bye therefore has the sense of ‘away from the shaft, towards the interior’ **out-bye** ‘towards the shaft, and the outside’ and were used similarly of the two rooms downstairs in a standard miners’ house.] [Old English: inbutan]” (from Griffiths, 2007: 61)

⁵Margaret Morse meditates on the power of “A moment for anamnesis ...” and its legitimate place in empathic enquiry, nourishing as it does “the capacity for emotional investment in the body and in the world, and, culturally speaking, the management of sympathy, the ability to identify with others”. (Morse, 1999: 71) Earlier in the same article she has ‘home’ as a prime site of anamnesis: “Since ‘home’ is not a real place, (though it always was once upon a time), feeling at home is, in essence, a personal and culturally specific link to the imaginary”. (Morse, 1999: 63)

and emotion is kept firmly outside the hygienic space of the ‘research’ as subjectivity is scrubbed away by the ‘rigour’ of method.

That article considered the way in which my doctoral inquiry seemed to be activated at various levels, each one laminated over the others. As I’ve said above, at the most obvious level it emerged from a set of questions arising out of professional work with those ‘disaffected’ young people in the research locality of a de-industrialised coal-mining community. It was also linked to theoretical and practical puzzlements about the relationship between education and social class that had been present for me as a teacher in the post-16 sector in the same locality over a period of twenty years or so. At another level, however, it found its roots in biographical aspects of my own growing up, living, working and being politically active in a coal-mining community and continuing to live and work in, now, an *ex*-coal-mining community. In *Writing in-bye and out-bye* I also noted how a recurring dream probed layers of origination that went back further and deeper still – through collectively embodied historical practices – to the unconscious ambivalences of home and flight that the recurring dream announced. In the article, this *profane* (in Willis’s, 1978, sense) cartography of “in-bye and out-bye” offered itself productively as a dialectically mobile space in which to enact and bring to the surface this densely enfolded positionality.

As I used it in that early piece, the relation of in-bye and out-bye – effectively a mode of, in Thrift’s (Thrift, 2008a) terms, ‘non-representational’ affective mobility– is worth reprising, and extending somewhat, here. To go ‘in-bye’ is to move into the workings of a coal mine close by the coal face, a gendered esoteric place of almost Gnostic mystery, where the coal is ‘got’. To move ‘out-bye’ is to travel out towards the shaft and, ultimately, the surface. As a child, I was fascinated by my father’s use of the term ‘in-bye’ to describe the location of yet

another of those frequent underground accidents that left some part of his body bruised, swollen and tattooed with sub-cutaneous coal dust. ‘Out-bye’, alternatively, linked back to the ‘ordinary’ world of care and replenishment where my mother and I were domiciled. ‘In-bye’ and ‘out-bye’ were the first black nuggets of “pit-talk” arcana that caught my fascination as they doubled the binary of ‘surface’ and ‘underground’ into which I was born (see Griffiths, 2007, on in-bye, out-bye and the rich vocabulary of “pitmatic”).

As the field note at the start of this subsection implies, the notion still remains relevant at the end of this inquiry. Seven years after the beginning of this study, the affective legacy of twenty five years of conflict, deindustrialisation and ruination – now sunk seven years further in the past and, from any common sense perspective, over and done with – is actually *ever more* present in its absence, just as its absent presence is, for some, ever more keenly felt. Flowing, and sometimes stalled, between the in-bye of interiority and the out-bye of the social, that affective legacy still inhabits a strangely ghosted presence. It seeps from the disjunction between policy representations of localities like these as supposedly *diseased* by a lack of aspiration, and the cruelly *diseasing* policy absence around the affective impact of rapid de-industrialisation and its injuries. It shimmers darkly through the apparent collapse of official politics in the coalfields generally, but flickers, angrily – hopefully alive, again – in the first public accounting of 1980s UK policing that is now finally taking place⁶. It even finds a micro “bloom-space” (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010), as we’ve noticed, between the thinnest layers of paint on a street sign.

⁶ The campaign launched by parents and relations of the Hillsborough disaster has opened up this whole question. See, for example, ‘Hillsborough investigation should be extended to Orgreave, says NUM’ by David Conn in *The Guardian*. 22/10/12

As a classed, gendered, historically conjunctural, mobile spatiality of affective knowledge production, the relation of in-bye and out-bye still works well to illuminate the volatile empirical materials that have been generated by this inquiry – even though the autoethnographic monograph once envisioned has not materialised. Basically, the research brought together in this PhD by Article explores how a space of de-industrialised ruin (the Derbyshire coalfield) is “rampantly haunted” in Edensor’s words above, and how this impacts on young people and their experience of education. Its themes thus run constantly back and forth between the almost occult and nearly ineffable in-bye intensities of affect and the ‘robust’, *official* textual out-bye domain of education policy in the neo-liberal project. They also run to and fro between my own in-bye position as a partisan activist and my out-bye identity as an REF-able researcher. Inevitably, then, this thesis still attempts to write the space of in-bye and out-bye as an attunement to – and amplification of – “the force of things” and the “worldings” that that force generates, (Stewart 2010b: 3; See also Stewart, 1996, 2007 and 2010a).

A “rubbed out” site

One of these worldings is erasure. Madge Pierce, a former women’s support group activist during the 1984-85 strike – who I first interviewed in 1987 – feels, like Joe and Ann in the field note above, that education has become a key site where this erasure is taking place. In the race for educational homogeneity and standardisation, something is being deliberately cancelled out. Here she talks of her daughter’s anger that school visits always manage somehow to avoid the lived history of the coal-mining industry:

She’s a child minder now. An’ she were saying, you know, teachers at school, *Headmistress* – she’s gonna *see her!* – Cos she says they take [the kids] to these different places [on educational visits]. An’ she says, [We’ve] *gor a mining museum* that cost’s *nothing* to go down, and they never even ... she says, that’s *part o’...an’* she

gets reight up tight about it...she says that's part o' history! An' my dad used to work down one!

Madge's husband, Steve Pierce, a now retired former NUM activist, "not to want to be *clever*" describes how a non-'clever', affectively intuited counter-knowledge lodges in-by "at back o' your head" where it sits subversively, still dangerous enough to need rubbing out: "Rub it off! Rub it off! It's same wi' where pits were, you've got to rub it off! They try...it's just like a blank sheet. Turn of page an' forget it". He also knows that there's "a political side on it" that gets enacted in the curriculum disappearings⁷ of an educational setting now shaped by increasingly politicised performative imperatives, and asks out loud: "I wonder if *that's* owt to do wi' it?" Steve believes that there's a determination in policy and pedagogic practice to purposely obliterate the politically dangerous subjugated knowledge associated with coal-mining: "Oh, we're not goin' back to *that* shit of a industry!"

Such a "smoothing over" of resistant knowledges, as Edensor (2005) has recognised, is an active aspect of the neoliberal production of the kind of de-industrialised space of "industrial ruin' with which my ethnography attempts to come to terms. Now – and here's where the question of (social) life's 'complicated' character really presses – a space of ruin, like Kathleen Stewart's 'Appalachia' (Stewart, 1996) for example, is not just a *real* place, *discoverable* (or 'findable', or straightforwardly 'representable' – see Research Results below) by conventional social research methodologies. Indeed, its "very ineffability and mystery thwarts attempts at representational fixing" (Edensor, 2011:1). What is more, it is of course, real *and* imagined (or, more strictly, *real-and-imagined*, in that it is *always* simultaneously both). As the literature I've brought to bear on this matter shows (see Literature Review immediately below), such a real and imagined place of ruin might yet

⁷ I use the term deliberately and respectfully to echo the Argentine 'state terror' of 'disappearing' members of the opposition. See Gordon (1997), particularly Chapter 3.

remain hidden under collectively necessary practices of silence, making itself known only by means of a ghosted affective transmission that takes place at the very edge of utterability. That transmission is, nevertheless, insistent in its claims that *something-needs-to-be-done* (see Gordon, 1997: xvii) as my participant – trainee youth worker, Stephanie, herself a child in the 1984-85 strike – articulates so eloquently in this 2010 conversation about a school rebuilding project in my research location:

NGB. So would you agree wi' what I said in relation to, erm, young people's families in Beldover for example, then? Walking round, sort o', do you think, then, the strike affects things today?

S. I *totally* know what you're saying there. It's almost, like, ghostly isn't it? *That* space [the old school] is related to *that* time and you can *paint* it, you can put *wallpaper* on it, you can *fill the cracks* in, but it still *holds* that time... ..So, we'll build it [the new school] *right next to it* and when you look at that new school – which is *amazing* – you look at that [old] school and you do see it's prefabbed, it's pebble dashed, it's awful. It's got it written: depression, sadness, stamped across it, all over it. *This* [new] school is bright, it's full of windows. It's got different *pods* – they're called '*pods*'! ...Erm, so if you're in this [old] school you're brow beaten and depressed and shamed and got nothing to look forward to. But at *this* [new] school – which is built right next to it, [it's] a bit more [she stands, demonstratively], *Yeah!* But, they're *not taking the past into the future!* Haunting, yes, that's a good way of putting it. I think that's the right way to explain it. I don't know if you can lay [ghosts]. I don't know if you can. It's the past. It happened. It's part of...it's part of who we are for those that was involved and those that were affected...*and* for those, I guess, that wasn't. I have a problem, though, wi' people that say: 'Yeah, it were bad weren't it?' [I say] 'Was *your* dad a miner? They say 'No'. I say, 'Well, *piss off, then!*' Do you know what I mean? I say to 'em: what are you *talking about!*? Like I said, I've had conversations about [whether] the miners' strike has affects on young people today, and they say: 'How do you make that out?' So I've had this *chat*...Those that *wasn't* affected, they say: 'What a load of crap! For those that *was* affected, *they* say: 'Yeah, I *really do think that!*' But they don't divulge why. They wouldn't go into detail, you know, without probing, I guess.

NGB. Is it only the ones who are haunted who see the ghosts?

S. Yes...I think it needs to be talked about. I think it needs to be talked about in schools...They'll talk about black slavery, which is interesting, and it's fantastic and it's a great subject but what do you actually *do* with that? But why not talk about something that's significant to 'em? I don't think you can ever exorcise this, because I don't think...I think it needs addressing [...]. You *do* know what's a matter with 'em. That's the *whole* point.

Finally, then, at both its simplest and its most complex, the ‘research subject’ that I’m addressing here and in the articles I’ve submitted is one focussed on some *simple* lived experiences of a particular group of young people and adults, my ‘participants’, in a location where they “through ghosts, make space place” (Bell, 1997: 820) and, having made space place, live accordingly in that ghosted terrain. In doing so, those participants are held in a complicated way *by* a time *at* a time when the “critical vocabularies for communicating” how a time can be said to *hold* anything – never mind the “depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectic of subjection and subjectivity...of domination and freedom, of critique and utopian longings” (Gordon, 1997: 8) – have barely been developed. Except, that is to say, within the literatures I have deployed here. Thus, the matter of how an ethnography such as mine might contribute to that ‘vocabulary building’ project at the “dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” and the past “come[s] alive as the lever for the work of the present” (Gordon, 1997: 8, 66, respectively) is a central one that I’ll bring out in the Research Findings discussion at section 5, below.

2. 3. Relevant Literature

In drawing up this literature review, there are a number of points to be made by way of a preamble. As has been stressed, the body of work constituting my doctoral work *as a whole* (only some of which is presented here) is *intersectional* in its aim. At the broadest level, it attempts a study of affective circuits as they flow through classed temporalities, places and identities and impact on the lived experiences of young people in certain particular ways, notably in relation to education. Reviewing the literature relevant to such an inquiry poses at least three characteristic challenges as far as I can see: one of which is methodological, one logistical, and one relating to presentational format.

The first – methodological – point relates to the nature of inter-disciplinary work. Theorising an intersectional empirical field inevitably occurs out of a space where disciplinary imaginaries and literatures border and overlap each other. Indeed, this inquiry draws both eclectically and, in truth, unevenly on sociology of education, gender studies, social and labour history, human geography, affect theory, and psychosocial theory. Sometimes there is a reasonable fit between these disciplinary perspectives, sometime less so. Sometimes the balance between them shifts as the inquiry takes a turn first this way, then that. Inevitably, there's some conventional pressure to develop a unified register in which each discipline can be heard to speak harmoniously in conjunction with its neighbour. On the other hand, there's also some benefit in allowing the dissonances between disciplinary perspectives to do the productive work, and it's that option that I intend to take here, unashamedly leaving the literatures reviewed to sit in occasional tension with each other

The second – logistical – point relates to the near impossible task involved in adequately familiarising oneself with a set of interdisciplinary literatures, particularly as that involves working across a sciences/humanities division that continues to dog scholarship as it does culture more generally. The impact of that schism is interestingly problematic with reference, for example, to a literature like that pertaining to affect; a literature which, according to Wetherell (2012), already suffers from inexpert extrapolation from highly technical scientific research by ill-equipped cultural and social theory scholars (of no less repute than Massumi!). It would be grandiose, therefore, to imagine that one might avoid the same trap.

The third point – related to format – concerns the literature review as an aspect of a doctoral thesis ‘by article’. Obviously, each of the articles presented in **Part 1** of this thesis includes, of necessity, a summary of the literature in which the *particular argument* of the article is couched. As we’ve seen, one article focuses on socially produced space, another on philosophical accounts of refusal, another on performativity in education, another on policy activism, a final one on implications for youth support practice. As a set of independently generated discussions focussing on different aspects of the same inquiry, they therefore spin off in different directions at the very same time as they repeat things. As I produced the articles that are submitted here, I tried to minimise this tendency by cross referencing each to the other as much as possible when reviewing literature around methodology and general context. Furthermore, as I’ve noted elsewhere in this thesis (see *Commentary on articles submitted in Part 1*), each article is by its nature free-standing, time-bound, limited by each journal’s rubric as to length limit, conditioned by the specific peer review process, and uniquely concerned with questions of specific audience familiarity and knowledge.

Now, all these points taken together mean that the literature review in each article – while it tackles the topic-specific literature in considerable depth – is never likely to be as broad as one would expect to see in a PhD by monograph. Equally, all the separate literature reviews presented in the individual articles, even when taken together, are unlikely achieve the completeness to which a monograph might aspire. As well as being something of a hostage to fortune from an assessment point of view, this generates a presentational problem for the PhD by Article. In such a format, there is clearly a need to make the literature review section comprehensive while at the same time avoiding any unnecessary repetition of the detailed literature already reviewed in the selected articles.

Here, my approach to managing this matter will be twofold. In the first place, I *won't* repeat what are reasonably comprehensive reviews of specific literatures that are generic to the articles as presented (I am thinking here particularly of the literature on the insubordinate social and labour histories of the localities and the circumstances of de-industrialisation). Nor will I extend the account of literatures that are very specific to the topic of given articles (on performativity in relation to *PERF*, on policy activism in relation to *JEAH*, on Bloch in relation to *P and E*, for example) and will assume as a matter of course that the literature discussion presented in *this* section will be read in conjunction with the literature reviews contained within the articles. What I *will* do here, though, is detail my account of certain *underpinning* literatures – specifically on social class and affect – while glossing others that form the general discursive context to my work.

At a more mundane level, it is also worth noting that I will review the literature relevant to the methodological orientation of this inquiry (ethnography and, within that, ethnography of

education) in the Methodology section, as it seems more relevant there alongside the account of the practical research activities that have been carried out.

General context

In general terms, my own position on the grand questions of the nature of education and schooling (in the wide, American, sense of the term) and its relation to society has inevitably been shaped by the evolution of radical education theory and, specifically, critical pedagogy since the 1960s. As an actively political school and university student in the late 1960s/early 1970s and as an adult education practitioner through the 1980s and 1990s, the classic repertoire of milestone radical works (Dewey, 1916; Illich, 1971; Freire, 1974, 1998, 1999; Gramsci, 1971; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Boal, 1982; Giroux, 1983;) did much to shape a positionality to which I would still subscribe. Of course, these works have been subjected to sustained and necessary critique and the central canon of critical pedagogy has evolved in response to changing circumstances and newly prevailing theoretical dispositions (Aronovitz and Giroux, 1985, McLaren, 1986, Giroux and McLaren, 1989; McLaren 1986, 1995, 2003; McLaren and Leonard, 1993). Nevertheless, it is still being powerfully evoked (see McLaren, and Kincheloe, 2007; Allman, 2010; Smyth, 2011, for a recent example) and a summary of the key points will help situate the material collected in this thesis.

The field of critical pedagogy as it has emerged into the 21st Century is no doubt “heterogeneous”, being “consolidated *only* through an underlying and explicit intent and commitment to the unwavering liberation of oppressed populations...to the radical belief in the historical possibility of change and social transformation...” (Darder *et al*, 2003: 10. My emphasis). It is, though, possible to discern the broad features that are relevant to the discussion here. Critical pedagogy as a radical education project is identified by Giroux as “a

particular kind of practice and a particular posture of questioning received institutions and received assumptions” which is distinct because it “...is inter-disciplinary in nature, it questions the fundamental categories of all disciplines, and it has a public mission of making society more democratic” (Giroux, 1992: 10). What is more, its criticality is focussed in on a theoretical and practical interrogation – through dialogic “praxis” – of questions of power and knowledge as they emerge in capitalist social and economic relations. Darder *et al*, having noted how Dewey, the Frankfurt School, and Bowles and Gintis all contributed greatly to “the forging of a critical pedagogical perspective that upheld the centrality of the economy to the configuration of power relations within schools and society” (Darder *et al* 2003: 4) go on to outline the philosophical principles of critical pedagogy. When combined with the review carried out by McLaren in the same work (McLaren, 2003) those aspects relevant to the context of the articles forming this thesis might be summarised as follows.

First, critical pedagogy is fundamentally *partisan*. According to McLaren, critical pedagogy is committed to a “struggle for a qualitatively better life for all through the construction of a society based on non-exploitative relations and social justice” (McLaren, 2003: 70-71).

Further, such partisanship recognises the importance of a critical focus on political economy, whereby it is recognised that schools serve to position select groups within asymmetrical power relations that effectively replicate the existing values and privileges of the culture of the dominant class within society.

Secondly, critical pedagogy sees knowledge as socially and historically produced and thus always in principle contestable and always, in fact, contested. It is also ‘dialectical’:

In opposition to traditional theories of education that serve to reinforce certainty, conformity, and technical control of knowledge and power, critical pedagogy

embraces a dialectical view of knowledge that functions to unmask the connexions between objective knowledge and the cultural norms, values and standards of the society at large. (Darder et al, 2003: 12)

Thirdly, while working less with notions of ideology and hegemony than it did in the early period, critical pedagogy has notably retained an important place for the idea of resistance. McLaren in particular has done a great deal to move this notion beyond the limited correspondence theory of Bowles and Gintis, acknowledging the contributions of Giroux (references as above) and Willis (1977) who paid much greater attention to the *partial autonomy* of school culture and emphasised the complexities of conflict and contradiction unfolding within the reproductive process itself. Indeed, it is fair to say that McLaren has largely led the attempt to articulate critical pedagogy to aspects of post-modern and post-structuralist theory, giving it a much greater sophistication in relation to culture and subjectivity by taking on board a number of theoretical insights; not least around the production of multiple capitals, for example. Indeed, his work has added great detail and flexibility to our understanding of forms and practices of resistance as they are played out in the contemporary multi-cultural classroom (see McLaren, 1995).

Such adaptation to new emancipatory imperatives notwithstanding, critical pedagogy has retained a firm emphasis on “the centrality of class relations in shaping the conditions students experience within schools and communities” (Darder *et al*, 2003: 19). It has also withstood the post-modern tendency to see power as everywhere and nowhere, positioning that proclivity unambiguously as “a dangerous form of political abstraction that failed to acknowledge forthrightly the manner in which advanced capitalism was very concretely whipping wildly through the global sphere, well consolidated in its neoliberal efforts to perpetuate the structures of economic domination and exploitation” (Darder *et al*, 2003: 18). It is critical pedagogy, then – adapted as it has been over the past forty years or so – that

constitutes the broad framework in which I position education, schooling (and, consequently, ‘school disaffection’) throughout my work.

Specific contexts

Within this broad general setting, my work is also responsive to specific positions established in a host of other, particular, contributions : Dale’s work on education and the state (see Dale, 1989, for example); Apple’s post-Foucauldian interrogation of the relationship of knowledge and power (see Apple 1995); Ball’s massively significant contribution to critical policy sociology (see Ball 1990, 2008); progressive responses to “educational immiseration” in an “age of new imperialism (see Fielding, 2000, and Satterthwaite *et al* 2003, 2004, 2005, respectively); early critiques of vocationalism (Corrigan, 1979; Bates *et al* 1984) and resistances to them (Muns and McFadden, 2000; Hall, and Jefferson, 2011) and, finally, recent work in the lineage of critical pedagogy (Smyth *et al*, 2010; Smyth *et al*, 2004; Robinson *et al* 2012).

The intersectional nature of my own inquiry must also acknowledge the steady accumulation of work that has collectively and incrementally made such intersectionality possible. Work on space and place in human geography (see Hubbard *et al*, 2004, for a general survey, and Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996; Harvey 1996, 2000; Kouvelakis, 2009, for specifically relevant contributions) has been pivotal in opening up new kinds of inquiry examining intersectionality from an increasingly spatial perspective. As regards education, there has been much good work on spatialities of gender and class (Arnot, 2004; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; MacDonald *et al* 2005, McDowell, 1991, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008; Green and White, 2007; Shildrick, 2008, Lupton and Kintrea, 2008, Kintrea *et al*, 2008; Shildrick *et al* 2009, Sutton 2009; Jack 2010,); and on race and class (Mac an Ghail, 1994,

1996; Evans 2006; Mac an Ghail and Heywood ,2011; Nayak 2009a, 2009b,2009 c and 2011; Gillborn, 2010; Sveinsson, 2009). All of this material has opened up a rich seam of new and specifically intersectional work (Archer *et al* 2007;Taylor and Addison, 2009; St Clair and Benjamin, 2011; Brown, 2011; Taylor, 2010, 2012) that problematises the mass of policy production around ‘aspirations’ (see Aldridge, 2001; Cabinet Office 2009; DCSF, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, ; 2009a, 2009b; DfES 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007).

Furthermore, general work on masculinities (Connell 1989, 2005a, 2005b; Brod and Kaufman,. 1994) and the plethora of policy-facing work that it has generated (Meadows 2001; Lloyd, 2002; JRF, 2001; DCSF, 2005; Ingram, 2009, are just a few interesting examples) is enormously significant to any forthcoming investigation of the gender dynamics operating in my ethnography (see Bright, 2009a, 2010b, and the *Conclusion: Results and continuing research* section of this thesis for an indication of the direction this work might take). Equally, explorations of gender, race and class dimensions of *school exclusion* (see Wright *et al* 2000; Pomeroy, 2000; Vuilliamy, 2001; Frosh *et al* 2002) are highly relevant to accounts given by my participants that are yet to be analysed and written up.

Social class, gender and education

One literature, however, that is clearly foundational to this inquiry and, therefore, merits a detailed treatment here is that on ‘class’ as it emerges from recent work in sociology and sociology of education. Essentially, I have been looking at the intersecting spaces of class and geography, class and history, class and memory, class and identity, and class and gender, arguing that they become saturated with affect during times of de-industrialisation in ways that impact at individual and community level. As I’ve outlined how this relates to young

people's experience of education as it is mediated through practice and policy, the material that I have produced for publication has implied – but not always made explicit – an understanding of class that is attuned to the complex intersectional overlap between these multiple dimensions.

Interestingly, the period of production of my doctoral work (2006-13) has been the very period where a general renaissance of class theory within sociology has occurred, producing the highly nuanced analyses of class as *process* in which my work, with hindsight, so obviously sits. Consequently, the workings of class now seem so much clearer than they did when I first began to frame my inquiry at a moment when proclamations of the 'death of class' were commonplace and critical research largely focussed on aspects of difference such as race, gender and sexuality.

As Strangleman has noted, class – once seen as “*the* core, or central pillar of the discipline” of Sociology (Strangleman, 2008:16) had come to be seen as “irrelevant or esoteric or both” by the 1990s, with the concept of class notoriously remaindered by Beck as a “zombie concept” (Beck, cited in Strangleman, 2008). Undoubtedly, this marginalisation of class owed much to the demise of the left generally in the face of events such as the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the decline of traditional occupational groups and industries at the end of what Therborn has recently called the “working class century” (Therborn, 2012: 7). Within the academy, these phenomena found two predominant forms of expression. First, class – tainted by its underpinning ‘grand narratives’ – was firmly rejected by the post-modern and cultural turns that dominated theory during the 1980s. Second, and the coeval with that shift, scholarship that remained committed to class became “narrowly defined around questions of methodology” (Strangleman, 2008: 16) as typified by the work of, say, Goldthorpe.

As these processes unfolded, sociological interest in the classically ‘proletarian’ cultures of coal-mining communities – politically defeated and rapidly de-industrialising by the 1990s – became thoroughly unfashionable. Of course, such communities *had* been a central focus for some classic sociological inquiries into community and class (Dennis *et al*, 1956, is notable. For others, see bibliographic references in the articles collected in **Part 1**). Indeed, coal-mining culture had been positioned as the ideal type of proletarian traditionalism, as defined by Lockwood (1966). There had also been a short-lived proliferation of published material of various sorts soon after the miners’ strike of 1984-85 (Beaton, 1985; Adeney and Lloyd, 1986; Campbell, 1986; Samuel *et al*, 1986; Seddon, 1986; Beynon *et al*, 1991; Beynon and Astrin, 1994, are representative of the variety). However, by the time my formal research work commenced in preparation for a Masters dissertation in 2004, interest in the lived experience of class in this once valued site was virtually non-existent within the academy, the main continuing interest being in aspects of economic regeneration (Gore *et al*, 2007, is a good example).

Immediately on entering the field, however, the empirical materials that I was able to gather called out for attention to class in ways that neither the classic Marxism nor the Weberian industrial sociology that had dominated sociology were able to accommodate. Clearly, an account was needed that could pick up the culturalist insights of Hoggart (1952) Thompson (1968), Williams (1975; 1977) and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University and develop them by framing class in a way that:

... construct[s] class not as categorical positions but as active, ongoing and negotiable sets of practices that vary across time and space and that accepts that class relations, and ‘the economic’ more widely, include overall ‘ways of living’, including social relations within the home and the community as well as the workplace as more traditionally understood. (McDowell, 2008: 21)

As I started to read around the topic it became clear that “reports of the death of social class [were] premature: although attacked as both empirically and theoretically obsolete ... it refuses to go quietly” (Bufton, 2004: 32). Discerning a welcome “upswing in the interest in class” as overture to a consideration of the emergent field of New Working Class Studies, Strangleman notes (citing Crompton *et al* 2000; Savage 2000; Bottero, 2004; Devine *et al*, 2004) that significant work had been done in the early 2000s by a group of scholars whose:

...volumes, collections and articles have sought to broaden the scope of intellectual enquiry around class to include issues of identity, culture and lifestyle while not neglecting the material base of class structures. Summarising the achievements in the field, Wendy Bottero (2004:985) talks of this group as making a sustained argument ‘...for an expanded and transformed class theory’. Each of these contributions is, in Bottero’s words, an attempt to theorise the relationship between culture and class and to understand how culture is embedded within specific socioeconomic practices. (Strangleman, 2008: 16)

In 2004, Bufton summarised the impact of this work in positive but nevertheless measured tones, arguing that “class is still an important part of the mental landscapes of many people although class identities are generally ambivalent” (Bufton, 2004: 25). Drawing out a number of key trends evident in the research, she concluded that “class is not a strong source of individual or social identity for most people” noting work by Savage (2000), Bottero (2004) and Skeggs (1997) that argued to a widespread dis-identification with social class but interpreted it in different ways, largely using Bourdieusian approaches but to different ends. Suffice it to say that by time of her summary, a new interest in analysis of the lived experience of class was clearly discernible (Charlesworth, 2000; Vuilliamy, 2001; Charlesworth, *et al*, 2004)

By the end of the first decade of the twenty first century, this interest in class had evolved into something of a new preoccupation under the pressure of global economic crisis and new

forms of popular and class protest. Much work produced in the latter half of the decade 2000-2010 (referred to above) explores the precariously lived experience of class, with a lot of it focussing on young people. Indeed, the early work of Savage, Bottero and their associates plausibly, if unintentionally, helped prepare the ground for an entirely new discipline – New Working Class Studies (see Russo and Linkon 2005) – which received a sympathetic reception in parts of the UK academy. New Working Class Studies was framed at the outset as an:

...interdisciplinary and intersectional space [which] offers a model or a language for a more creative critical engagement with working class life. It seeks to understand working class experience in its lived complexity and totality, attempting to grasp the processes of class. [It is] concerned with the intersections of class, race, gender and other forms of identity...an approach which recognises, and is not afraid of, nuance and contradiction within working lives. (Strangleman, 2008: 17)

At the same time, the relevance of class to geography was being remarked on in contributions by scholars such as Wills (2008), Stenning (2008) and, here, Dowling:

My inspiration, almost 10 years after a number of calls for a reinvigorated class analysis in human geography...comes from Stenning's recent proclamation that 'class appears to have returned convincingly to geography agendas' (Dowling, 2009: 833)

What is more, feminist scholars such as Reay, (1996; 1997; 1998 a, b and c; 2000, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2009) Skeggs (1997; 2004; 2009), and Walkerdine (Walkerdine, *et al* 2001) were making a singularly original contribution throughout the whole of period. While working determinedly to correct a tendency for some of the new work on class to remain 'ungendered' (McDowell, 2008: 20), all three of these writers retained and developed their characteristic interrogative focus on the intricate processes of class as it impacts in culture generally – and in Reay's case, in education particularly – while at the same time exploring its affective dimension. The broad trajectory of their work is, in my view, richly productive, enabling some of the most productive recent work (Taylor, 2010; 2012) at the intersection of

class, gender, affect and geography. It is therefore highly relevant to my own work both in terms of the articles presented here and in terms of future developments, and thus merits a summary.

Class, gender, affect and the psychosocial: The work of Diane Reay, Beverley Skeggs and Valerie Walkerdine

In an extensive portfolio of journal articles published throughout the years of “the bright meritocratic world of New Labour” (Reay, 2001: 338), Diane Reay extended and finessed her richly distinctive contribution to the sociology of education. Steadily elaborating her early contention that “...class is a complicated mixture of the material, the discursive, psychological predispositions and sociological dispositions” (Reay, 1998: 259) she has, via a singular development of a primarily Bourdieusian perspective, offered a crucially important account of the role of the affective aspects of class in education.

Noting that Reay consistently acknowledges *both* middle- and working-class subjectivities as implicated in the “deeply problematic and emotionally charged” (Reay, 2001: 333) unconscious aspects of class, it is her work focussing on *working class* relationships to education that is relevant here. For Reay, it is impossible to speak of those relationships without examining the dominant, affectively charged representations of the working classes. In Bourdieusian terms, Reay explains, “the working classes both historically and currently are discursively constituted as an unknowing, uncritical, tasteless mass from which the middle classes draw their distinctions” (335) Pathologisation is central to this construction:

...working-class childhood is problematic because of the many ways in which it has been pathologised over the last century and a half. This process of pathologisation

operates through schooling by representing the children of the poor only as a measure of what they lack... Reay, 2001: 335)

In a “speculative” but nevertheless signal paper published in 2005 – *Beyond Consciousness? The Psychic Landscape of Social Class* – Reay firmly rejects the notion that class awareness and class consciousness are no longer relevant and goes on to argue that “that there is a powerful dynamic between emotions, the psyche and class inequalities that is as much about the makings of class as it is about its consequences” (Reay, 2005a: 911). In developing this point through a series of education-based studies, she outlines “a psychic economy of social class” (911) which is constituted through “affective aspects of class – feelings of ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognition, abjection and the markings of taste” (911). Neither analyses that focus on socio-economic categorization nor those that foreground practices can capture this aspect of class which is, rather, “in the blood, in the very fibre of a man or woman” (911).

Basically, Reay argues against the tendency to see emotional and psychic responses to class as aspects of individual psychology (and, consequently, pathology), making a case, instead, for “broadening out conceptualizations of class and establishing the psychic economy of class as a legitimate concern for sociology” (913). The focus of her empirical work is across a broad spectrum of education and schooling from primary schools to higher education, an extended field where:

...the workings of class are not only concentrated and made explicit but are also heavily implicit. Schools are the repositories of all kinds of fantasies, fears, hopes and desires held by individuals and social groups ...and consequently schooling is a fertile ground for exploring psychosocial and emotional aspects of classed identities... (Reay, 2005a: 914)

Across the whole of this spectrum, Reay notes the workings of psychosocial dynamics of class –conceptually framed in Bourdieusain terms as an aspect of ‘habitus’ – as “complex, difficult and nuanced ways in which class thinking, feeling and practices both generate and are generated in and through each other” (914). As far as the working class is concerned, there are subtle but distinct variations in the way in which these dynamics play out:

...a varying combination of resentment, envy, pride and anger constitute the solidarist fractions of the working classes while their more individualist peers are characterised by a mix of deference, envy and shame. (Reay, 2005a: 913-914)

These dynamics are, moreover, injurious; not merely by means of those “[c]lass recognitions, visceral aversions and feelings of inferiority and superiority [that] are routine everyday aspects of school life” (917) but also indirectly as those affects are “enshrined and perpetuated through policy” (916).

This body of work is richly resonant with the empirical materials generated by my own ethnography of one particular “solidarist fraction” of the working class: the coal-mining community (Reay’s own ‘fraction’, too, as it happens. See Reay, 1996). In various writings, I have made considerable use of her idea of intergenerationally sedimented, psychosocial factors, specifying how they impact on young people’s experiences of education in very particular ways. I have also detailed how these psychosocial aspects are operative in discursive and practice regimes within policy, not least around “aspiration” and “performativity” (see *JEAH* and *PERF* in **Part1**) – the latter being a case that Reay herself regards as distinctive

In developing the analytical framework for understanding lived class experience that I take from my reading of Reay, the trajectory of Beverley Skeggs’ recent work (see Skeggs, 2009,

2010, 2011, 2012, for example) seems particularly fruitful. Of course, her early seminal work *Formations of Class and Gender* (Skeggs, 1997) was instrumental in documenting a strong tendency towards *dis*-identification with class among a group of working class women.

Sometimes wrongly garnered to support arguments in favour of the insignificance of class, Skeggs' ethnography actually demonstrated the day-to-day labour invested in the category as:

...women who were constantly misrecognised as pathological, and hence deemed without value across a range of sites, spent *an enormous amount of time attempting to attach value to themselves* through the performance of respectability, using gendered values to block class misrecognition (Skeggs, 2010:32. My emphasis.)

Her later, and equally significant, *Class, Self, Culture* (Skeggs, 2004a) focussed on the middle-class self, demonstrating how that self is made “through the continual acquisition of value through access to capitals that could enhance future movement through social space” (Skeggs, 2010: 32). This ‘subject of value’, she argued, is established:

...in contrast to the working-class, misrecognised ‘worthless subject’ of *Formations*, who had to scrape together value against a constant process of institutional and social misrecognition, whose movement through space was limited and whose subjectivity was shaped by defence rather than entitlement (32).

Her more recent work has come to focus on the affective aspects of these processes while at the same time discerning a third type of response to the contested construction of value whereby by one can identify:

...another way of generating value for those positioned without access to the capitals necessary for conversion into the ‘subject of value’. Through the non-utilitarian affects of care, loyalty and affection, people [find] other routes to valuing themselves and others, outside the circuits of exchange that demand a value-return. (32)

In a series of recent articles (Skeggs, 2009, 2010, 2011; Skeggs and Loveday, 2012) Skeggs has deepened her critique of the affective production of the ‘classed self’ in a contemporary

context where affect and economy are increasingly bound together as capital colonises intimacy as part of its 'biopolitical' project (see Marazzi, 2011). This move strikes me as particularly interesting. Indeed, I would argue that it inevitably propels the investigation of the psychic economy of class beyond an arguably ill-accommodating framework in a Bourdieusian theory of capitals (for Skeggs) or of habitus (for Reay) and towards some of the most interesting social and political critique to have emerged in the recent period: namely, that originating from the autonomist strand of Italian Marxism (See Berardi, 2009, 2011; Hardt, 1996, Hardt and Negri, 2001, 2006, 2009; Lotringer, 2001; Tronti, 1980; Virno, 1996a, 1996b; Weekes, 2011; Wright, 2002). Indeed, Skeggs effectively – if tentatively – acknowledges this link (See Skeggs 2010: 30)

Outlining her analysis, she notes how the classed self is seen through a bourgeois gaze where the middle class acquisitive self is persistently misrecognised as the naturally occurring normatively “good and proper self” (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012, 496) and the working class self is framed through a lens of disgust. In critiquing theories of personhood and value that legitimate the normative by “hinging our theoretical imaginary to the dominant symbolic, making proper personhood an exclusive resource predicated on constitution by exclusion; where limits define the norm, the margins the centre and the improper the proper” (496) Skeggs raises a vital question: how do people positioned “as the constitutional limit for the proper self, or as the zero limit to culture” (496) develop values? Generating an “analysis of autonomist working-class sociality” (496) in response to that rhetorical question, she and Loveday note how:

...‘useless’ subjects rather than ‘subjects of value’ of the nation, generate alternative ways for making value. ..how the experience of injustice generates affective responses expressed as ‘ugly-feelings’. The conversion of these ‘ugly feelings’ into articulations of ‘just-talk’ reveals how different understandings of value, of what matters and what

counts, come into effect and circulate alongside the dominant symbolic. (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 472)

And, I would add, these ugly feelings – expressed as “just talk” or, in the words of Dave one of my young participants, as “just doing stuff” – not only “circulate alongside” the dominant symbolic but *refuse* it, in the sense of that term that is central to the politics of *autonomia*. (See Wright, 2002). In doing so, one might argue that they escape the allegedly vicious circle of reproduction inherent in Bourdieu’s account and constitute an agentic challenge to the status quo. Though a lot still needs to be done to develop this point, I made this link and attempted an argument along these lines in my own article “*Non- Servile Virtuosi*” in *insubordinate spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield* (See *EERJ* in **Part1**). Skeggs, herself, recognises that:

...we can also see the limits to capital’s lines of flight in this process. And I want to argue that as well as the new forms of exploitation and governance generated from affect, affect also produces limits, operating in all social encounters, seeping through social spaces. (Skeggs, 2010: 48).

Indeed, Skeggs’ later large-scale study *Contingencies of Value* (Skeggs, 2006) showed people moving beyond commodity logics to a “logic which is based on a shared understanding of structural positioning, generated in a local space, against the dominant symbolic”, a counter logic of affect, that is, but shaped within the specific structural inequalities to which participants were subject. Through “autonomist working class values” this logic promoted a “shared understanding of justice and injustice through common experiences” (Skeggs, 2010: 32) inherited through “histories of precarity, as affects of fear and insecurity” (Skeggs, 2011, 506). These shape the present and constitute:

...a distinct moral code focusing on personal integrity and the quality of inter-personal relationships, and a very different form of sociability generated from working conditions that produce different relationships, different forms of attention, different desires and very different value practices...working-class research respondents re-

legitimate value practices that have been de-legitimated, entering different, nearly always local circuits of value, and generating alternative values about ‘what/who matters’, ‘what/who counts’ and what is just. (Skeggs, 2011: 507-508).

Essentially, this is an account of enfolded class consciousness as rooted in collectively accessible, historically specific and relatively autonomous circuits of affect. It puts the struggle for personhood and value – a struggle “*against* unjustifiable judgment and authority and *for* dignified relationality” – at “the very core of ontology” (Skeggs and Loveday, 2012: 472). It is, therefore, a notion of class as viscerally lived within affective geographies and contingent temporalities that don’t just fall from the sky but unfold unpredictably within historically conjunctural intensifications. Such intensifications might reasonably be argued to include, we might note, periods of de-industrialisation; a conclusion which speaks powerfully to my own data.

As I’ve already noted, the work of both Reay and Skeggs owes key elements of its analytic structure to Bourdieu; in particular, to the theories of habitus and capitals, respectively. Valerie Walkerdine’s contribution – though interrogating much of the same experiential territory – is, however, positioned from quite a different disciplinary location, having its home in an originating project of critical psychology rather than in sociology (See Pulido-Martinez and Walkerdine, 2007). From that perspective, Walkerdine’s work problematises the psychosocial in relation to issues of gender, femininity, class and subjectivity at the same time as it sustains a critique of the disciplinary institution of Psychology (see Walkerdine, 1997, 2005, 2007; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Walkerdine and Blackman, 2001; Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody, 2001). Much of Valerie Walkerdine’s recent work has shown a strong emphasis on affect, neo-liberalism, subjectivities, and work identities in de-industrialisation (Walkerdine, 2006, 2010; Jiminez and Walkerdine, 2011; Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012) and constitutes a crucial reference point for my own inquiry as it develops.

Walkerdine's work, while it generously acknowledges, amplifies and develops themes that are visible in the work of Reay and Skeggs, brings to the discussion a distinctive sensitivity to the *unconscious* that is not evident in their post-Bourdieuian approaches. Walkerdine is aiming, basically, at a "radical re-working" of psychoanalysis:

...what I am talking about, feelings, sensations, affective relations are the province of what psychoanalysis places in the unconscious, but I am interested not in a kind of drive or a kind of sense, I am interested in a radical re-working of psychoanalysis, really...I think that it is always possible to understand a potential in psychoanalysis (Pulido-Martinez and Walkerdine, 2007:191)

Now, this emphasis is particularly important for me as I try to understand the intergenerational empirical phenomena – particularly the collective transmission of what Hardt has called "affects of trauma" (Hardt, 2007: xii) – that I've apprehended in the field. In a 2007 paper exploring the place of class in psychoanalytical psychotherapy – *Class in the Consulting Room* (Walkerdine, 2007) – Walkerdine notes that:

Psychoanalysis is uniquely equipped to understand just how things are carried unconsciously and intergenerationally and in that sense has so very much to offer to the study of the complexities of how class and politics are lived not only now but how issues pass their complex paths down generations. (Walkerdine, 2007: 25)

Of course, we can get a well developed account of "how profoundly classed our embodied sense of being and belonging is" (Walkerdine, 2007: 24) from Bourdieuian notions of habitus and the accumulation of capitals and it would be unhelpful to set up an insensitive dichotomy between a Bourdieuian position and Walkerdine's. Nevertheless, for my purpose, the scope offered by the notion of a *psychosocial unconscious* is rich and extends beyond accounts of psychic economy and value struggle to questions of social haunting that have preoccupied the later stages of my doctoral inquiry. A theme that is evident in *all* my published material is the complex, *non-straightforward* character of the intergenerational affective transmission that

appears to be occurring in the communities studied. The core of my research is a repeated ethnographic apprehension – expressed variously in the articles collected here – of that which is only ever evident implicitly, is seen around the edges, hidden in plain sight: indeed, is “occult” in the original meaning of the word. The data speaks about knowing without knowing, about a kind of intergenerational haunting going on. It registers a swathe of “ugly feelings” and is melancholic, obstreperous, lamenting, self-destructive, comedic and furious by turn. The interdisciplinary psychosocial terrain mapped by Walkerdine, a place where the “intersection of class, politics and psychoanalysis [can] thrive” (28), where “embodied anxieties, which may be so hard to feel or to name, belong as much to a history of class as they do to any family relations that can be separated from that history” (25), seems sufficiently capacious to accommodate such data in illuminating ways.

As a matter of fact, some of Walkerdine’s recent research (Walkerdine, 2010; Jimenez and Walkerdine, 2011; Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012) explores a very similar psychosocial context to my own coalfield work: namely, that of an ex-steel community in South Wales. This body of work focuses on an extensive interrogation of psychosocial aspects of localised de-industrialisation, looking broadly at gender, work and community. There is, for instance, seminally important material reviewing how shame, embarrassment, disillusionment, melancholy, traumatic loss and depressive anxieties influence how men – both adult and young – cope with unemployment, the loss of heavy industrial work and the growth of affective labour. Classic Freudian sources such as *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud, 1917), re-read through the queering lens of Judith Butler’s (1997) intervention (see Jimenez and Walkerdine, 2011, for detail) are brought to bear powerfully in giving a significantly new account of the forces constructing contemporary classed masculinities. The account of the workings of shame and embarrassment in young men’s experience of de-industrialisation has

many parallels in my own data, though there are some subtle differences relating to post-conflict coal-mining communities.

Beyond that, Walkerdine and Jiminez's book length study, *Gender, work and de-industrialisation: A psychosocial approach to affect* (Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012) extends the scope of inquiry across a broader set of themes, notably covering the impact of de-industrialisation on communities generally and in relation to women in particular. With respect to the former, I have made significant use of the account of "communal beingness and affect" that, first presaged in Walkerdine (2010), is presented there (see Walkerdine and Jiminez, 2012, 46-71. For my treatment of the account see *PERF*, *JEAH*, and *P and E* in **Part 1**). With respect to the latter, *Gender, work and de-industrialisation: A psychosocial approach to affect* also includes a crucially important account of the *matrixial* nature of intergenerational transmission which I intend to employ in as yet unpublished contributions on gender but which is not covered in the articles collected here.

Suffice it to say that all of this work – Reay's, Skeggs' and Walkerdine's – is collectively of vital importance. Clearly, it constitutes a framework for any comprehensive contemporary account of the lived experience of class in de-industrialised communities. In highlighting the importance of:

...paying detailed attention to the emotional cost of coping with the traumatic loss ...of manufacturing work and its intergenerational effects on subjectivity, e.g., disappointment, lack of hope, despair and painful grief. (Jiminez and Walkerdine, 2007: 197)

its implications for social policy issues around health, welfare, community, education and training, and youth are very considerable. In characteristic ways, the contributions of Reay,

Skeggs and Walkerdine all respond to the weaknesses in accounts of class that dominated academic work toward the end of the twentieth century by re-centring an idea of class as an embodied process of lived and contested meaning making that is utterly relevant to everyday life . While drawing on feminist responses to post-structuralist theory, this body of work promotes a re-emphasis of the body and responds to the affective turn (Clough, 2007) in social theory, yet argues for a recognition of the structural impact of historical geographies of class. What's more, in its recent iterations it reaches out to new work offering a politically radical critique of biopower, global intensifications of precarity, and the contemporary imaginaries of 'work'(see Weeks, 2011)

Interestingly, in the 2007 interview by Pulido-Martinez, Valerie Walkerdine noted an emergent body of work that was shifting away from a focus on discourse which:

...ignores the body, and therefore some of the things that we try to ignore in looking at the social, which were the biological, the genetic, the embodied [which] are so important in current regulation and in the ways that we experience life, or the life world, that we have to critically engage with embodiment. If we do that we have to look at how in the present world regulation, management, ways of being are global, and so we have to look at how the local and global are connected together in complex ways, so you will get people who are starting to look at embodiment, affect, sensation, and the ideal of things linking, being related, flowing, and there are some interested in the work of Deleuze, but that is just beginning here. (Pulido-Martinez and Walkerdine, 2007:187)

Five years on, and this burgeoning trend has been consolidated in new literatures unified by a focus on ontologies of process and the nature of affect. In philosophy, this has seen a revival of interest in Bergson, Whitehead and Dewey via Deleuze (Massumi's contribution is singular. See Massumi 1992, 1998, 2002, 2010, 2012) and has fed into a broadly "new materialist" project (Bennett, 2010; Coole and Frost, 2010). In politics, it has offered articulations into Spinozist influenced re-readings of Marx (Hardt and Negri, 2001, 2006,

2009; Berardi 2009, 2011) and helped coalesce a new left/post-structuralist project of “post-anarchism” (Rousselle and Evren, 2011). This latter, interestingly, is capable of providing a complimentary habitation for somewhat contrary tendencies rooted in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1987), Situationism (Debord, 1983), Holloway’s recent and relatively popular works (Holloway, 2002, 2010) and a new interest in Guattari’s autonomist flavoured anti-psychiatry as configured independently of Deleuze (see Osborne, 2011). It is within this general theoretical and political trajectory that my own work sits.

Affect theory

Now, the theorisation of affect is key to the emergent literatures just identified and acquaintance with that will be useful here. Academically, ‘affect theory’ has moved successfully into the near-mainstream, even become fashionable, over the last ten years or so. This ‘affective turn’ as fixed by Clough (2007), coalesces broadly around an idea of affect as a *capacity* to affect and to be affected, as *circulating* in and between bodies and as remaining always *in excess* of rationality, economic circumstances and empirical conditions. As such, it has raised as many questions as it has answered, leaving us grappling with a growing volume of production and a variety of accounts that seem to spin off centrifugally in different directions. There is persistent and unhappy definitional slippage around the distinction between emotions and affect (see Gibbs, 2002). There is also a spread of views over the question of affect’s “autonomy” – whether it is organic or, in Massumi’s term ‘virtual’ – and its reach. In the light of Latour’s expansive notion of ‘actants’, (Latour, 1999) an interesting question arises about the nature of the “bodies” that can be said to be affected? Seigworth and Gregg note the roots of these tensions in the “two dominant vectors of affect study in the

humanities: Silvan Tomkins' psychobiology of differential affects...and Gilles Deleuze's Spinozist ethology of bodily capacities" (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, 5) and conclude that there is probably no "single, generalisable theory of affect: not yet, and (thankfully) there never will be" (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, 3). They argue, nevertheless that it is possible to work with the following definition:

Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, non-human, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, *and* in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. (Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, 1)

In surveying the field of affect, Seigworth and Gregg enumerate at least eight "regions of investigation" ranging from "archaic and often occulted practices of human/nonhuman nature as intimately interlaced" right through to "pluralist approaches to materialism" rooted in Whitehead. On the way, this series takes in: "cybernetics, the neurosciences [and] artificial intelligence" as well as "non-Cartesian traditions in philosophy, usually linking the movements of matter with a processual incorporeality (Spinozism)". The latter is found variously, we are apprised, in the feminist work of Braidotti, Grosz, Lloyd, and Gatens, the Italian autonomism of Virno and Lazzarato, the cultural studies of Grossberg, Morris and Massumi and the political philosophy of Agamben, Hardt and Negri. Other, overall, approaches, drawing on the theoretical legacies of Freud, Klein, Tomkins, Williams, Fanon, Benjamin, Dewey and Tarde, are also noted (all references to original works cited in Seigworth and Gregg, 2010, 6-7).

Wetherell, in a recent key-note study, *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding* (Wetherell, 2013), is unhappy about this eclectic generosity, announcing her

project as “driven by a desire to develop a pragmatic way of thinking about affect and emotion as a basis for research, especially new empirical research” (Wetherell, 2012: 3).

Reviewing the range of contributions to affect theory, she discerns two contrary understandings:

...a familiar psychologised notion focussed on ‘the emotions’ as these are usually understood, and also a ‘wilder’ more encompassing concept highlighting difference, process and force in more general terms (2)

and argues that neither provides the right foundations for productive research. Charging that some applications of “Deleuze and related philosophical traditions...have been radically unhelpful in their assertions about the functioning of affect”(4) and have effectively thrown attention on to “becoming, potential and the virtual... in preference to the already formed objects that are the usual fare of social science institutions, identities, economies, social class etc” (3) Wetherell argues for a contrasting understanding that focuses on *affective practices* as *embodied meaning making*. Interestingly, she takes the term “affective practices” from Walkerdine’s work on affective communities (11) and argues that acknowledging ‘affect as flowing activity’ (12), as Walkerdine does, does *not* mean that “a flow of affect is entirely indeterminate” (13). This is a substantive point that effectively reclaims *structural patterning* from the idea of affect as autonomous, as canvassed in Massumi’s Deleuzian account (Massumi, 2002). For Wetherell, affect displays “strong pushes for pattern as well as signalling trouble and disturbance in existing patterns” (13). As such:

Affect is about sense as well as sensibility. It is practical, communicative and organised. In affective practice, bits of the body ...get patterned together with feelings and thoughts, interaction patterns and relationships, narratives and interpretative repertoires, social relations, personal histories, and ways of life (Wetherell, 2012: 13-14).

This emphasis enables Wetherell to draw useful attention to the ways in which interrelated patternings of affective practice can be held inter-subjectively across a few or many participants. Evoking the “complex coalescences” (14) of Williams’ “structures of feeling” (see Williams, 1975, 1977) she indicates that such patternings can even be ‘held’ enduringly in specific places, through social categories and for historical periods. An emphasis on questions of “power, the regulation of affect, its uneven distribution and its value” are also emphasised in Wetherell’s account, and Ahmed’s, Skeggs’ and Reay’s work (see Ahmed, 2004; Skeggs and Reay as above) is marshalled to an argument for the importance of work on “affective economies” tracking the production and distribution of affect through psychosocial technologies that support class positioning. All this is to the good and, as the most recent and comprehensive account of the field, Wetherell’s book is of real value.

That said, there is something to my ear which is a little too polemically dismissive of those broadly Deleuzian contributions by scholars like Clough, Massumi and, in respect of his work on non-representational theory, Thrift (Wetherell, 2012). This, to me, establishes something of a false dichotomy in the field which ill suits its generally pluralistic character. The implicit suggestion is that such Deleuzian approaches neglect the political implications of affect, which is both unfair and inaccurate. All three of the writers just mentioned return again and again to the politics of affect and Deleuze – independent even of the obviously political Deleuze/Guattari project – maintained a political claim for his oeuvre (see Garo, 2005). Nevertheless, these contributions are positioned, in a slightly sneering and oddly positivistic tone, as something of a bogey throughout Wetherell’s account.

Equally, just as autonomous affect is set up as a ‘straw man’, accounts of affect drawing on psychoanalytic notions of the uncanny are set up as another. While acknowledging that

“sometimes we are not aware of what we are doing as we do it’ (21) Wetherell rejects the unconscious as “a dynamic and eerie force” arguing that it should:

...be possible, too, to raise interesting questions about repetitions and personal biography without following psychoanalysis into inherent psychological processes or into the mysterious uncanny’ (26)

This position, while it acknowledges the body of feminist work by Reay, Skeggs and Walkerdine and remains refreshingly impatient with sometimes excruciatingly fashionable affective writing, is unsympathetic to two other contributions that are particularly illuminating in relation to my study: those of Teresa Brennan and Ben Anderson. Brennan *is* engaged, but in terms of one her quirkier arguments, and is fairly peremptorily dismissed. Anderson is consigned to the general category of exponents of non-representational theory.

Brennan and Anderson ...and Walkerdine once more

Oddly, Brennan’s brilliantly idiosyncratic, posthumously published study, *The transmission of affect* (Brennan, 2004), is widely disregarded in recent collections on affect, meriting no bibliographical mention whatsoever in Clough (2007) and only three very cursory mentions in Seigworth and Gregg (2010). Indeed, it is something of an indication of how far the field of affect has shifted – since Brennan’s death in 2002. What was a foundational work then has been left looking somewhat dated, even a little eccentric in its questing from the post-Freudian “foundational fantasy”, via hormonal and electrical “entrainment” and an emphasis on the power of olfactory receptivity, to the demons of theology and the project of bringing “the devil down to earth” (Brennan, 2004, 163). It is this oddness that Wetherell chooses as a point of attack. More sympathetically read, Brennan’s thinking through *transmission* in a way that attends to ideas of a “common unconscious substratum” and processes of “psychic

containment” remains important. That is certainly the case in relation to any work investigating how contemporary experiences of community in general are “affective” and, indeed, to any related work – such as mine – that argues that collective, communal affect is relevant to questions of participation in, and marginalisation from, education.

For Brennan:

The origin of the transmitted affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without...the transmission of affect [means] simply that the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies that these affects entail, can enter into another. (Brennan, 2004, 3)

Brennan’s insight into the ways in which “enhancing and depressing energies” enter into one another, and where she goes with that insight in relation to collective rather than individual phenomena, is what interests me, particularly when supported by ideas from Anderson (as I’ll come to) and Walkerdine. Brennan, probably coming more out of a moment of “psychoanalytically informed criticism” (Clough, 2007, 2) than would be tenable were she still writing now, tends to focus on the possible impact of negative affects in relation to trauma. She notes, for example, how negative affect relates to Kristeva’s “new maladies of the soul” such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia, concluding incisively, in my view, that transmission of energy and affect is “at the partial root of – and *perhaps the whole explanation for* – the new diagnostic disorders” (Brennan, 2004: 47, my emphasis). This insight alone is of remarkable importance in understanding the way in which aspects of the circulation of affective energy might be mis-recognised as individual pathology, something that I’m familiar with from my experience with marginalised young people, particularly working class boys who make up the bulk of ADHD sufferers. The epidemiology of ADHD is clearly gendered and classed. Again to Brennan’s credit, while working with an aetiology that locates trauma in the experience of

“something infiltrating” or “piercing” (ibid) the *individual* psyche, she recognises the social, arguing that the “depressing energies” do not arise *ex nihilo* but are shaped in “the external realities of social and economic orders” (ibid. 22), even that:

These negative affects increase especially in relation to the present global economy and...the physical toxicity and stress of daily life in the West (ibid. 22)

In my view, while this conclusion stops short of describing a political economy of affect, it does position collective trauma and its consequences as resulting from structural features in some way. Building on this, we might be able to think towards a notion of a collective psyche’s being infiltrated by negative affects which – while they always remain in *excess* of the contexts in which they arise – arise, nevertheless, in specific historically concrete circumstances. Ben Anderson’s work is potentially helpful at this point.

Anderson (2009) argues for the recognition of affective “atmospheres”, suggesting that “perhaps the use of atmosphere in everyday speech and aesthetic discourse provides the best approximation of the concept of affect” (Anderson, 2009, 78). He characterises affective atmospheres as “singular affective qualities that emanate from but exceed the assembling of bodies” (77). They are ambiguous “between presence and absence, between subject and object... and between the definite and indefinite” (77). Moreover, to “attend to affective atmospheres is to learn to be affected by [those] ambiguities ...by that which is determinate and indeterminate, present and absent, singular and vague” (77). What is more, affective atmospheres are:

...a class of experience that occur before and alongside the formation of subjectivity, across human and non-human materialities, and in-between subject/object distinctions. (ibid. 78)

Further, Anderson argues that the spatiality and location of atmospheres is also “ambiguous”, concluding that it is difficult to say ‘where’ an atmosphere *is* since it fills space with a feeling tone, a kind of haze.

Suffice it to say that in bringing Brennan and Anderson together I am trying to develop a picture of group affect as an ‘atmospheric process’. That atmospheric process is related in complex and multiply ambiguous ways to collective assemblages of bodies (of varying materialities, plausibly). It can hazily fill space with a certain attunement or infiltrate the “containing” psyche of a community in ways similar to the psychic piercings of individual trauma, generating a similar, but collective symptomology of negative repetition as it does so. The sensibility here, which would probably be unattractive to Wetherell, is remarkably similar to that characteristic of the small body of ‘ficto-critical’ works by anthropologist Kathleen Stewart (see, for example, Stewart’s 2007 *Ordinary affects*)

Pace Wetherell, adding Walkerdine’s work on affective communities into this mix *does not at all* court contradiction. Rather, it results in a mix that is particularly powerful in thinking about affect in de-industrialised spaces. I see no particular problem in the combination of insights that we can extract from Brennan, Anderson *and* Walkerdine and would argue that the tension is in fact productive. Indeed, it allows us to develop a remarkable picture of the place of transmitted affects of trauma in community relations.

As I have explored in some detail in the articles, Valerie Walkerdine works from an approach that stress the importance of the skin as “bodily container” and “psychic envelope” in individual infancy but applies that idea to the community body, investigating “how a sense of a containing skin provides a feeling of ontological security for a community beset by

uncertainty and insecurity” (Walkerdine, 2010: 93). This skin, she suggests is created through a range of affective relations and practices around “spatial and temporal organisation”, “the loss of heavy manual work”, “fear of people coming in [to] the community”, “difficulty in moving” and specific practices of “speaking and silence”. All of these, she urges, are strikingly evident in “traditional communities” such as steel or coal-mining communities. In the event of a community trauma such as the closure of a works (or pit), this painstakingly fabricated skin can be jeopardised in such a way as “to cause a lack of safety *and fear of death* within the inhabitants” (ibid. 93, my emphasis). It is this idea of affect as an atmospheric intensity capable of threatening both collective and individual psychic catastrophe that is crucially important here. It goes some considerable way towards explaining the extraordinary *residual duration* of post-traumatic affective intensities in, say, de-industrialised settings, as is continually attested to in my ethnographic work.

Indeed, it is the very *persistence* of these affective intensities that is the key problematic of my study. The central argument of my work – that young people’s experience of education is shaped by their re-enactment of an affective legacy of which they have no conscious knowledge – is, in one sense, counter-intuitive. The specific community trauma of conflict and de-industrialisation that shaped that legacy in the localities of my research occurred almost thirty years ago now. By the early 1990s the coal-mining industry had been physically eradicated. At a common sense level, nothing remains. There is nothing *there* that might be identified in any positivistic way as cause of the ongoing malaise – or, commonly, ‘haunting’ – that is universally articulated in ethnographic materials generated by my research participants.

As I see the matter, it is almost impossible to accommodate this material without employing a notion of unconscious affective transmission that pushes the boundaries of Wetherell's "affective practices" precisely *because of* its mysterious character. Wetherell, positions her account between two approaches to affect – the Deleuzian (or at least Mussumian) and the post-Freudian – that she firmly rejects. It strikes me, however, that the most difficult aspect of working with affect theory is exactly that of holding together the disparate features of the various accounts without feeling compelled to make explicit the implicit contradictions that fairly obviously exist between them. That seems quite easy to do. Clearly, Massumi's claim for the *autonomy* of affect has massive implications if it is read as the ontological claim that it certainly seems to be. It plainly raises the spectre of an ontological default to biological essentialism, a peril which the positioning of affect in the domain of the 'virtual' hardly seems to avoid. What's more, the impact of such a radical position on the possibility of affect being *structured* in any way – whether as a structure of feeling or a classed affective geography – is profoundly problematic and I understand and share Wetherell's concerns. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to retain Massumi's emphasis on affect as *excessive*, as something that we can never quite lay hold of, an "intensity [that] is the unassimilable" (Massumi, 2002, 27) that somehow "beats us" to ourselves. Why? Because it resonates with my data. That sense of surprise – whereby the skin is often "faster than the word" (Massumi, 2002, 25) – is a ubiquitous context of what my participants *say* and *do* and remains just as interesting empirically whether its final status is ontological or psychological.

Edensor on 'ruins'

I have resolved this matter in my work so far by supplementing my reference to the literature on affect with material from the work of geographer, Tim Edensor. As I have outlined in the

later published articles collected here (see *JEAH* and *P and E* in **Part 1**), aspects of the account developed by Edensor in his *Industrial ruins* (Edensor, 2005) are crucial to my explanation of the durability of the affective phenomena that I describe. Edensor's account of the industrial ruin is a subtly political and sophisticated one, firmly eschewing any sentimental Gothicism and positioning industrial ruination as an actively territorialising aspect of the neoliberal project as it deliberately enacts:

...the erasure or commodification of the past ... and, in so doing, [seeks] a forgetting that things might be otherwise, that elements of the past might have conspired to forge an alternative present. (Edensor, 2005: 141)

What Edensor's idea allows me to do is acknowledge the presence of the coal industry in its absence; that is, as 'ruin'. In fact, this is the centrally original aspect of my work: to show how occluded, ruined – even desecrated – “method assemblages” (Law, 2004) of collective knowledge are fully present through their local absence in ways that influence lived experience in powerful ways, particularly young working class people's experience of education. The four villages that constitute the site of my study – Coalbrook, Cragwell, Beldover and Longthorne – are classic spaces of this kind. “Smoothed over”, in Edensor's term, the disappeared 'pits' remain as erased but abundant spaces of ongoing meaning. Hidden in plain sight at the centre of an emptied habitation of signs – colliery housing, derelict colliery baths, grassed waste tips, lifted railway lines, carcinomatous pollution, leaking methane, subsidence – they are read through a collective, intuitive knowledge of inter-bodily affect amplified through assemblages of multifarious bodies. The methane continues to leak malodorously, the twisted spike of reinforcement steel poking out of the black shale incants its silent memorial threnody, but *of course*, nothing is *said*. How could it be? In the ruin of this culture and its orally elaborated genealogy of struggle, the transmission passes, now, through socially necessary practices of “silence” (Walkerdine, 2010).

This transmission speaks out of an *excess* of the semiotic in the affective geographies of ruins that are simultaneously both full and empty, both “Pit Hill” and “[] Hill” (as we’ll remember from the Research Subject section). Accordingly, for Edensor, industrial ruins are “rampantly haunted by a horde of absent presences, a series of signs of the past that cannot be categorised but *intuitively* grasped” (Edensor, 2005: 152, my emphasis). Transmission is, therefore, strictly ineffable: “the knowledge that emerges out of the confrontation with these phantoms is not empiricist, didactic or intellectual but empathetic and sensual, understood at an intuitive and affective level”. (Edensor, 2005: 164). It occurs nevertheless. Once voluble “origin stories” (Dath, 1995) can be “inarticulate” but “suffused with affect” (Edensor, 2005, 163). They speak, that is, without being spoken. But they are no less powerful a mode of lived experience because of that. Our methodologies, certainly, need to be open enough to accommodate them

2. 4. Methodology

Writing through an uncertain ethnographic moment

...the complex, changing and contested global, societal and cultural contexts of the twenty-first century have given rise to significant methodological questions for educational ethnographers. For instance, issues such as negotiating access to increasingly diverse sites and people, reaching the marginalised, disempowered, victimised and oppressed, power differentials and standpoints, sampling of time, space and people, and speaking to and engaging with multiple audiences, and the ethics of engagement, are all fundamental and increasing concerns. The question posed is, how well are we equipped, as an educational ethnographic community, to engage with and analyse these complexities and moreover portray them in a way that can capture the sensuous array of sights, sounds, and smells as well as represent the traumas, passions and emotions, of twenty-first century lived experiences? Such a challenge arguably calls for a re-working or shifting of ethnographic methodological boundaries (Bagley, 2009: 251)

In the articles presented in this PhD by article, one can see a somewhat stumbling development of the notion of ethnography that I employ. In a personal way, that is not surprising given my own intellectual biography. As a Philosophy major student minoring in Sociology and Social Anthropology in the early 1970s, my own reading in ethnography had inevitably been coloured by the interpretive approaches and subject preferences dominating ethnographic studies in education at that time. This had inevitably left its mark, and on commencing this doctoral study I entered the field – somewhat naively – as a kind of residual symbolic interactionist with an interest in deviance studies (see Hobbs, 2001, for an interesting overview of ethnography and its fascination with deviance). However, I immediately met with ethnographic materials that challenged the boundaries of that orientation, indeed profoundly troubled its underlying realism in ways enumerated in the provocative list arranged by Bagley in the quotation that opens this section.

These materials – retro oddities of gesture, language and practice as century old children’s games were re-enacted under the monitoring contemporary eye of curfew and CCTV; sudden lunges of frenetic violence as teenagers *played* at “being arrested”, their bodies already familiar with the delivery of pain to a point just short of the threshold of bone breakage; dark mutterings of betrayal and abandonment mouthed by residents and workers into a vague nowhere and spoken both to no one and to everyone; the sudden back-stutter of self astonishment locking up a tale of “what’s happened round ‘ere” in mid-utterance – all conjured powerful atmospherics working well beyond the micro-encounters of the interactionist classroom. Here, Bagley’s “sensuous array of sights, sounds, and smells ...the traumas, passions and emotions, of twenty-first century lived experiences” made itself vividly and confusingly present. People talked about a “haunting” reaching back through a classed community history; about action framed through local knowledge “even when they don’t know”; about embodied repetitions in a halted time where things viciously “rubbed out” still make themselves palpably present in what, to paraphrase Thrift, we might call ‘spatialities of estrangement’ (see Thrift, 2008b).

Initially, I couldn’t come to grips at all with this material in the realist frame that I had inherited and struggled unhappily to find an ethnographic model that might attune to the mobile flows of affect circulating through embodied local habitations of class and gender like a prevailing psychosocial weather; and a turbulent weather at that. Various exploring models of critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Foley, 2002; Foley and Valanzuela, 2005) and divergently related strands such as the later ruminations of Paul Willis (Willis, 2000, 2004; Willis and Trondman, 2000) this remained, for me, a frustrating task. Willis’s approach was attractive and I had been sympathetic to the cultural Marxism of *Learning to labour* since its publication (Willis, 1977). Willis’s focus on *creativity* represented an emphasis that

had attracted me to interactionist studies, but was sharper and more politicised. Willis's later, more elaborated, position certainly seemed able to handle some of the field phenomena that I was witnessing. In *The ethnographic imagination* Willis recognised, for example, that:

...practices of sense-making require some digging out...embodied 'sense' is often not expressed in language; sometimes, more strongly, it is organised against, or in tension with, language. (Willis, 2000: xii)

Willis also incorporated into his conception of lived cultural practices an idea of powerful and enduring local traditions:

...there are what we can think of as informal traditions of meaning-making, relating to gender, humour and self-presentation for instance. They are often sedimented in their own ways, long-running and semi-ritualised, so producing their own long durees (sic) and slow motion logics with respect to how quickly they can change and react to changed circumstances. (Willis, 2000: xii)

The 'slow motion logics' clearly made sense in terms of the field data I was accumulating.

What's more, I also sympathised with Willis's stated ambition of "tell[ing] 'my story, about 'their story' through the fullest conceptual bringing out of 'their story'" (Willis, 2000: xi-xii).

At least up to a point. *My* story, as a deep insider in the study that I was carrying out, was certainly significant, shaped as it was by many of the same stories that shaped the participants' own stories. The problem for me lay in Willis's emphasis on the ethnographic goal as a *conceptual* 'bringing out' by means of a sometimes tortuously difficult but, in principle, achievable task of conceptual capture through "translat[ion] into language" (2000: 10). Such a position couldn't, in my view, accommodate what, drawing on Edensor (2005), I had increasingly thought of as an affective epistemology of 'ruin': an intuitive, non-rational/unconscious register of knowing that breaks out of the aporias of conceptual logics rooted in 'old' materialisms (See Coole and Frost, 2010 on 'new materialisms') and unsettles the ethnographic project *per se*.

In one way, I suppose my inability to sign up to Willis's – or any other established – 'position' in the face of the sheer slipperiness of the 'data' that I was accumulating is testament, at least, to the *grounded* nature of the theorising that has informed this study. The articles I've collated represent that perspectival struggle in so much as they move between somewhat contradictory but developing positions in line with the chronology of their production. Indeed, to my eye, they move jumpily from an implicit espousal of a *far* too straightforward educational ethnography to an approach quite different from that; one trying to work with aspects of post-structuralism while retaining a focus on the "grounded imaginings" called for by Willis (Willis, 2000: viii). In my articles' to-ing and fro-ing around this axis – as irritating as it is to me in retrospect – lies, I think, the root energy of their originality. Reviewing them now, it's possible to see them groping independently, if haltingly, toward what are in my view two of the most interesting methodological questions of the current moment. First, how might the character of educational ethnography need to change in response to the affective turn in social theory? And, second, how – in the light of any such change – might ethnographic studies of affective geographies at the intersection of class, gender pay due attention to the ebbs and flows of the *feeling life* of collectivity and community?

By the time I wrote "*It's not a factory!*" *Performative educational provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a former UK coal-mining community* (Bright, 2012a; see **PERF in Part 1**) I was conceptualising a mode of ethnography that had the following character:

First, in "analysing the disputed and contested policy and practice space around young people 'put at a disadvantage'" (Smyth, 2010, 4), it proposes what Smyth identifies as a "critical policy ethnography". As such, it concerns itself with "a broad social and educational policy arena as it is being enacted, rolled out, experienced and re-worked

through the lives of a particular category of young people” (ibid). Such critical policy ethnography obviously draws on Ball’s ‘policy sociology’. There, attention is given to “policy rhetorics and discourses”, looking at the way they “work to privilege certain ideas and topics and speakers, and exclude others” (Ball, 2008, 5) and how they are “contested, interpreted... inflected, mediated, resisted and misunderstood...” (Ball, 2008, 7) when implemented locally. Tracing such discursive contestations is, thus, central to the ethnographic project as I’ve envisaged it.

Secondly, in a post-industrial context *par excellence*, the study seeks to interrogate the “dialectics of discourse and the everyday” in Dorothy Smith’s phrase (Smith, 1987). It does so by way of an interpretive approach exploring the relationship between “discourse-in-practice” operating at meta (institutional, cultural or policy) level and as locally enacted, situated, “discursive practice” operating at a micro (interactional) level. It looks, therefore, at the “myriad *hows* and *whats*” of everyday life, oscillating between “bracketing” the one level – say, the *meta* – and then the other – the *micro* (Hollstein and Grubrium, 2007, 496).

Thirdly, the ethnography attends to processes of local, classed, cultural production, seeing the *locally enacted* as occurring within an affective frame something like a “structure of feeling” (Williams, 1975, 1977) or similar, perhaps, to Thrift’s “spatiality of feeling” (Thrift, 2008); that is, as having a very significant *affective* aspect. In light of that, the study seeks, overall, to work the troublesome edge between policy discourse, material cultural practice and the “bloom-spaces” (Gregory and Seigworth, 2010, 9), “transmissions” (Brennan, 2004) and “atmospheres” (Anderson, 2009) of affect that are so obvious in the embodied choreography of ‘*dis-affection*’ as it presents in the locality. Thus, it aims to come at locally textured fieldwork ‘data’ in a manner approaching that canvassed recently by Lawrence Grossberg whereby the local remains situated within a broader historical conjuncture but the affective, as ‘feeling’, is admitted “as part of [the] study” (Grossberg, 2010, 335).

In this section, I intend to situate the genesis of this still evolving model within the divergent but relevant literatures that produce the current ethnographic moment as one of continuing – and, for me at least, productive – uncertainty. In doing that, I’ll describe the ongoing tensions and divergences within the general field of ethnography that are still reverberating as a result of the post-structural and textual turn in ethnography described by – and, to a not insignificant degree initiated by – Clifford and Marcus’s seminal collection, *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). I’ll then move on to summarise how those tensions – travelling through the dual heritage of educational ethnography in US anthropology and British sociology of education – have come down into

the present research culture in ways that are still, in my view, unhelpfully polarising the field. On the back of that account, I'll try and position my own work as an emergent, and possibly idiosyncratic, attempt to break out of those constraining polarities. In doing that, I'll take a brief excursion in the company of autoethnography, the ghost that has quietly haunted this PhD by its absence (see Introduction). I'll then outline three approaches that are, for me, particularly productive. Finally, given the constraints of space, I'll briefly address a specific difficulty of method and ethics that arose as the inquiry progressed.

Ethnography

Somewhat disingenuously, Willis offers a definition of ethnography as a methodology of aggregated qualitative methods whereby a sufficient "combination" of observation, interview and informal interaction "produces sufficient 'quality' data to generate an *ethnographic* account of a social or cultural form" (Willis, 2000: xiii). Would that it were so straightforward! Indeed, Willis himself follows up this statement with a book-length elaboration of a very singular account of the nature of ethnography that goes far beyond this position. So, except as a statement of the practical range of conventional ethnographic methods (and an implicit recognition of the disciplinary/professional right of passage of 'observation' in anthropology) this position obscures more than it illuminates. The substantive questions that have perplexed ethnography for over forty years now were generated not by the contingently relative weighting of different methods in specific empirical studies but by fundamental questions of ontology, epistemology, representation and politics.

Faced with the unacknowledged Orientalism of the modernist formulations that dominated the period “when ethnographies laid claim to being sealed and scientific texts” (Yon, 2003: 411), the early post-modern critiques of ethnography (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986, Marcus, 1998) constituted an urgent call for an ethnography that would be much more self-conscious about the politics of its narrative and representational practices and the ‘othering’ practices of exoticism. While discussion around this issue concurred in positioning modernist ethnography as a positivistically tainted, colonialising project, the disagreements over the logics and practices of the *reflexivity* necessary to combat it were fundamental and had a massive impact at the time. ‘Positions’ were generated and camps formed; indeed, the associated polemics around ethnographic knowledge production and authority reverberate through the disciplinary cultures of Anthropology and Sociology and into the historiography and practices of contemporary educational ethnography to this day.

Educational ethnography in the US

Writing from an American perspective, Yon’s 2003 overview of the history of educational ethnography takes the position that “trends in the making of educational ethnographies essentially mirror the same kinds of tensions, continuities, and shifts that are discerned in the working of theory and ethnography since the 1960s” (Yon, 2003: 411). Acknowledging a genealogical link between American educational anthropology and the classic ethnographic studies of the Chicago School – themselves a turn away “from exotic others in far-flung places to the exotic and marginalised ‘at home’” (415) – Yon notes how educational ethnography evolved during the 1950s as a “critique of both official [educational] goals and the means to achieving them” (416) primarily through its *observational* interrogation of the

realities of the US education system. Definitively, this moment saw Wolcott position the role of the ethnographer as one of participant observer *par excellence*, strongly “emphasizing description over interpretation” (417).

By the early 1960s, studies had developed a characteristic focus on the hidden curriculum and increasingly on subcultures and the sub-discipline can be seen reaching out beyond the boundaries of anthropology towards the new interdisciplinary domain of cultural studies; a trajectory that by the beginning of the next decade had delivered a thoroughgoing re-conceptualisation of the nature of culture, emphatically foregrounding matters of asymmetrical power relations. For Yon, this theoretical dynamic led, by the 1980s, to “social structure ...increasingly [being] recognized as ...unstable, contradictory, and no longer the taken-for-granted, all-determining object ‘out there’” (Yon, 2003: 419-420). The ‘everyday life’ focus of, for example, ethnomethodology can be seen as a response to this turn away from structure, as can increasingly flexible forms of reproduction and correspondence theory influenced by Bourdieusian notions of habitus and practice. In general – and Yon notes Weiss’s 1990 work *Working-class without work: High school students in a de-industrialising economy* as a case in point – American ethnographic studies of education characteristically paid emphatic attention to notions of autonomy and the playing out of internal contradictions within the education system, with most work continuing to be conceived of within a modernist, realist framework. Remarkably, it was not until the very end of the twentieth century that the full impact of Clifford and Marcus’s 1986 challenge was finally felt:

By now, theories of post-modernism, post-structuralism, and the post-colonial had gained significance and in their various ways eroded the ground upon which earlier ethnographies were built. No longer could culture be viewed as the property of social groups, bounded, determined, and internally coherent, and the kinds of certainty that characterized ethnographic findings in earlier eras could no longer be guaranteed.

Post-structuralism reminds ethnographers and their readers of the interestedness that is brought to bear upon ethnographic writing, undermines assumptions about the unitary nature of ethnographic texts, and reminds us of how the ethnography is always a partial representation. (Yon, 2003: 423)

Post-structuralist educational ethnographies specifically disengaged from the preoccupations of realism, focussing instead on the discursive slipperiness of textually constructed ethnographic accounts. The subjectivities of both ethnographic participants and of ethnographers themselves were increasingly foregrounded in feminist (Lather 1991; Britzman, 2003) and post-colonialist work. As a corollary of this heightened awareness of identities and representations, the question of reflexivity, as I noted above, became paramount; particularly as it focused differences around crucial questions of social justice and emancipation that separated modernist and post-modernist positions.

Educational ethnography in the UK: constructing a tradition?

Writing from a rather more mid-Atlantic perspective, Gordon et al (2001) note a distinctive character in British educational ethnography linked to its roots in the '*new*' sociology of education: a genealogy with which Geoffrey Walford, who has written extensively on the character of British educational ethnography (2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2011) and to whom we'll return in a moment, agrees. From this point of view, British educational ethnography can be seen as contrasting quite sharply with the American version, the former being, arguably, a sub-discipline of sociology while the latter has its home in anthropology. While this difference goes some way to explaining why 'French theory' has penetrated the two cultures to varying degrees; the question of whether it is sufficient to justify claims for a UK 'tradition' is a different matter.

Reasonably, Gordon et al (2001) – in what is now a rather dated conspectus – note all the following perspectives as having been significant in shaping educational ethnography in the UK context: interactionism (influenced variously by ethnomethodology, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism); cultural studies; critical ethnography; feminism; diversity and difference; post-modernism and post-structuralism, and materialism.

Less reasonably in my view, they argue that it was the *lateness* of the post-structural turn in educational ethnography that led to post-structural approaches remaining “rather sparse” (Gordon, et al 2001: 199). I do not think that this provides a complete explanation. There is still a dearth of UK originating work that draws on post-structural approaches, something which, I would argue, is as much to do with the energetic building of a broadly conservative ‘tradition’ in UK educational ethnography as it is to the lateness of the ‘turn’. Most of the labour in creating this tradition – and positioning it as a bulwark against post-structural ‘excess’ – has been Geoffrey Walford’s (Walford has been described as an “‘old school’ educational ethnographer” by Bagley, 2009: 252). To the extent that this retrospectively established tradition has come to inscribe what might legitimately ‘count’ as educational ethnography in a way that has impacted on my work – by placing autoethnography, for example, beyond the pale – I will summarise it here.

Against autoethnography

In a series of papers, edited collections and books focussing variously on definitional descriptions, issues of method and matters of historiography, Walford (2004, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2011) has effectively produced what one might call a ‘legitimising text’ for educational ethnography. Illuminating in its own right as an example of

discursive production of disciplinary provenance, this project effectively establishes the boundaries of educational ethnography as an authoritative and ‘proper’ field of study. Rhetorically, matters proceed as follows (see Walford’s, 2011, historical review *The Oxford ethnography conference: a place in history?*): lineages are established, key dates enumerated, venerable institutions named and (see Walford’s earlier, 2009, position statement *For ethnography*) a vocabulary of firmness, rigour, simplicity and common sense is mobilised. Along the way, the sub-discipline’s warrant is established (Massey and Walford, 1998) and its scope circumscribed, finally, in the editorial of the first issue of *Ethnography and education* in 2006 where the editorial rubric (Walford was an editor) is articulated as follows:

The key elements of ethnographic research applied to the study of education contexts are

- the focus on the study of cultural formation and maintenance
- the use of multiple methods and thus the generation of rich and diverse forms of data
- the direct involvement and long-term engagement of the researcher(s)
- the recognition that the researcher is the main research instrument
- the high status given to the accounts of participants’ perspectives and understandings
- the engagement in a spiral of data collection, hypothesis building and theory testing leading to further data collection; and
- the focus on a particular case in depth, but providing the basis for theoretical generalization. (Troman, 2006:11-12)

Now, there’s a strong measure of ‘scientific method’ here in the references to hypothesis building, theory testing and generalisability, and it is illuminating to view this editorial position in the light of the history of another project in which Walford played a leading role: the Oxford Ethnography Conference. In Walford’s 2011 account *The Oxford ethnography conference: a place in history?*, one of the key dynamics identified as driving the

development of the Oxford conference was the need to defend ‘qualitative research’ against ‘attacks’ originating both externally *and* internally during the 1990s, a decade when:

While the problems from outside were growing, some researchers were also undermining qualitative research from within by embracing elements of the more extreme forms of post-modern research methodology and methods of representation. Rigour in ethnographic work was out of fashion, and the word ‘ethnography’ began to be applied to a whole variety of different forms of writing and activity. Poetry began to jostle with performance ethnography, self-indulgent forms of autoethnography, and reflexive pieces that focused on the feelings of the researcher at the expense of any contribution to knowledge. (Walford, 2011, 138)

The first significant editorial collection that came out of the Oxford conference was Massey and Walford’s *Children learning in context* (Massey and Walford, 1998). As Walford admits in the 2011 history, that collection had operated a tellingly focussed rejection policy which, in the language of sweet reasonableness, positions ‘extreme’ methodological approaches as irredeemable:

...papers that relied on data generated through interviews alone were excluded, as were papers based on very limited engagement with the field – a brand that some call ‘drive-by ethnography’. Papers that threatened more extreme forms of representation were also declined. While some may think this to be an authoritarian way to act, it was done to distinguish ourselves from other conferences and academic outlets which accepted a wide range of qualitative research...We wished the Oxford Ethnography Conference to be one devoted to rigorous ethnography and not one that was stunted by fears of a ‘crisis of representation’ and legitimacy and that encouraged ‘blurred genres’ and self obsession on the part of the ethnographer. (Walford, 2011: 139)

Again, as in Willis’s simple formulation of ethnography as a methods aggregate, there is disingenuousness here. Not least, there’s an unwarranted conflation in equating shortfalls of *volume and appropriateness of data* (“papers that relied on data generated through interviews alone were excluded, as were papers based on very limited engagement with the field”) with rejections based on *fundamental questions of ontology and textual representation*. But, more to the point, Walford is writing here in 2011! Educational ethnography is being

retrospectively established – without any real argument – as having been a bastion of ‘rigour’ against ‘self obsession’. Clearly, a bogey is being set up here and one doesn’t have to look very far to discover its name: autoethnography. And, in truth, Walford had been hunting it for a decade.

In an earlier, 2004 article, *Finding the limits: autoethnography and being an Oxford University Proctor*, Walford briefly courts autoethnography, all the more effectively to dismiss it as a self indulgence whereby the likes of Ellis and Bochner (2000) in particular – though Denzin is a firm target, too – “invit[e] the reader into a therapeutic relationship, where they explore their own lives through the reading process” (Walford, 2004: 412). In Walford’s later and ominously titled paper, *For ethnography*, the same rough beast is being pursued. Emphasising, in one breath, that those who see ethnography as he does are “not ignorant of the crisis of representation” and “accept that qualitative inquiry now embraces a wide range of different forms of research and representation” (Walford, 2009: 274) he continues, in the next breath, as if that crisis has never been:

My own reaction to this is that, if people wish to write fiction, they should call it fiction and not call it ethnography or any other form of research. While it is clearly correct that all accounts are selective and distorting, the aim of research is surely to reduce the distortion as much as possible. Whilst recognising multiple realities and all the difficulties of representation, I would argue that a piece of writing that claims to be ethnographic (or any other form of research) does not try to present as evidence something that is clearly not factual. (277)

Is it not *precisely* the recognition of multiple realities that has terminally jeopardised received notions of factual ‘evidence’, what it is and how it ‘counts’? Passing over that internal contradiction, *real* educational ethnography as positioned here – distinct from the ‘fiction’ of autoethnography – is rigorous and factual, presented in “logically constructed and clear” research reports where “the text is one where attempts are made to *reduce ambiguity and to*

exhibit precision (Walford, 2004: 413. My emphasis). Walford's rejection of 'extreme' forms of autoethnography "as put forward by Ellis and Bochner" is presented as a purely formal matter of rejecting "*as a report of research ...any of these newer forms of qualitative writing*" (414. Original emphasis). The 'extreme' autoethnographies are presumably fine as fiction or therapy (though probably not very good or effective) but they are not *knowledge*. Although some, oddly – particularly if they have now been appropriated to the canon – *are* acceptable. The appendix to Whyte's (1955) *Street corner society* is offered as one example: acknowledged as a 'confessional tale' in Van Maanen's term, such a self-narrative as Whyte's remains acceptable to 'rigorous' educational ethnography in so far as it is 'realist'(See Walford, 2009). Recent contributions to autoethnography such as Chang's (2007, 2008) are also considered worthy of inclusion as educational ethnography, justified by virtue of:

...long and arduous process of ensuring that good quality data are generated, and that they are analysed in such a way that claims are backed by evidence – it justifies the name ethnography as it follows the tenets and procedures of traditional ethnography (Walford, 2009: 279).

Now, the question arises as to exactly what is going on here, and why it is that I'm dwelling on it. The first thing to say is that I'm *not* suggesting that Walford's position is monolithic; there has been some genuinely wide ranging methodological questioning at the outer limits of the educational ethnography mainstream (see, in particular, Beach, 2006, 2008, and Bagley 2008, 2009). The second thing that I'm *not* saying is that disciplinary coteries and canon building projects are immune to the vice of perjorative 'othering'. Of course they aren't. In fact, it's an institutional commonplace. What I *am* saying is that this essentially *rhetorical* positioning of the sub-discipline of educational ethnography asserts – but doesn't argue – a realism that is based on little more than tired exhortations to rigour and the old fashioned

virtues of long and hard labour. As Denzin has noted, scholars in this mainstream paradigm “remain committed to traditional, post-positivist values of objectivity, evidence, truth” (Denzin 2009: 255) in a way “which seems to stand outside time, in a strange timeless apolitical space” (256)

Is this a problem? Well, for my work and other work like it, yes. First, in general, it’s hard to see how this model might accommodate ethnographic studies of circulations of affect through ‘spatialities of feeling’ (in Thrift’s term). Such spatialities, by their nature, *include* the researcher in what Stewart has recently called “atmospheric attunements”, the rendering of which requires a “cultural poesis” that is not at all amenable to post-positivist evidential requirements (see Stewart 2005, 2007, 2010a, 2010b). Second, and specifically in relation to my own work’s incorporation of Edensor’s notion of the ‘industrial ruin’, I am moving inevitably and deliberately beyond the conventional register of rigour and precision. To a place, in fact, that still seems to call for a significant degree of autoethnographic attention.

Writing in-bye and out-bye

In the Research Subject section of this thesis, I suggested that the originally intended autoethnographic project – abandoned under the combined pressures of educational ethnography’s disciplinary gaze and the invasive metrics of contemporary research production – should be kept in mind as a kind of spook haunting this text just as the coal industry’s past haunts my ethnographic field. Textually absent but poetically present it might, I suggested, function as a kind of countervailing subterranean alter-text speaking back at *this* text from an oscillatory space between what I called “in-bye” and “out-bye”..

In letting the spectre now have its say, I'll draw on what I wrote in an early published paper *Writing in-bye and out-bye: Doing autoethnography* (Bright2010a) and recap why I came to consider an autoethnographic project at the outset of my research and what I imagined would be the process of its production. Basically, I was so close to the interior of the project that I was carrying out that even the most banal research activity promoted a welter of memories, longings, dreams and affect. In one epiphanic moment, for example, I was stunned to find a photograph of my own great grandfather being used as an illustration by labour historian J.E. Williams in his trade union history *The Derbyshire miners* (Williams, 1962). It was obvious, in fact, that any attempt to isolate and separate off these personal meanings would probably be impossible, certainly futile and would only really serve to de-nature the resulting research text.

Moreover, as I started to write up the ethnographic materials coming to hand, I felt curiously compelled to produce two simultaneous texts and place them side by side on the page: one argumentative, discursive, marshalling and primarily cognitive; the other passionate, partisan, urgently affective, of the heart and of the unconscious, too. The idea that such an approach might enable me to layer subterranean affective material onto a more conventional qualitative enquiry had a strong appeal and I imagined a text constantly shifting between an in-bye attentive to a poetics of passion, solidarity and witness and a discursive out-bye articulated in the usual register of the social sciences. This is what I tried to do in *Writing in-bye and out-bye*. In making that attempt, I felt that I was working in a perfectly legitimate and coherent mode of post-structurally informed ethnography that offered a bridge not only between the imagination and 'sense' but also between the measurable outputs of the academic domain and the partisan imperatives of 'militant research' (Shukaitis and Graeber, 2007) that had, for me, shaped a life time of activism

Autoethnography

In considering the way that autoethnography has been vilified in some quarters, it's worth keeping in mind that as a specific methodological approach, it is not particularly new.

Anthropological work transgressing the boundaries of ethnography and autobiography became progressively more common during the last decades of the twentieth century (see Atkinson *et al*, 2001). Reed-Danahay (1997: 4-9) gives a historical account of the term autoethnography, noting an early anthropological use by Heider in the mid-Seventies (Heider 1975) and moves on to sketch a helpful genealogy acknowledging two relatively clear family lines, both articulated as alternatives to ethnographic realism, but variously stressing either the ethnographical – Hayano (1979), Strathern, (1987) Van Maanen, (1995) – or the autobiographical – Brandes, (1982) , Denzin (1989), Lejeune, (1989) and Pratt (1992).

Autoethnography, growing out of the “new taken for granted [of a] dual crisis in representation and legitimation” and a recognition of the fact that the “ethnographic tradition and literary genres in [for example] the United States have displayed intertextual relationships over many decades” (Atkinson *et al*, 2001: 1-2), reflects:

...a changing conception of both the self and society in the late twentieth century. It synthesizes both a post-modern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a post-modern autobiography, in which the notion of coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question. (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 2)

At its simplest, autoethnography is:

...an emergent ethnographic practice...which involves personalized accounts of author's experiences, [and] has emerged as a tool to give greater attention to the ways in which the ethnographer interacts with the culture being researched. (BRE, 2007: 225)

Arguably, it finds a natural home in an anthropology made self-reflexive by, as we've seen, a profound post-colonial crisis that desperately required a new "understanding of ethnographic limitations and potentials" (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 9).

Ellis (1999) notes that:

...the work of the autoethnographer involves moving back and forth between a wide ethnographic lens focusing on social and cultural aspects of experience, and a more personal lens exposing a researching self that moves by and through cultural interpretations that are often resisted – (Ellis, 1999: 225-6)

These same characteristics of multivalence, resistance and polyphony are again emphasised in Ellis and Bochner (2000):

[Autoethnography] is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations ... As they zoom backward and forward, inward and outward, distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:739, cited in Alsop, 2002: paragraph 40)

A Liberatory Heresy?

Autoethnography "foregrounds the multiple nature of selfhood and opens up new ways of writing about social life" (Reed-Danahay, 1997:3) It requires "a pluralism of discursive methods that critically turn texts back upon themselves in the constant emancipation of meanings" (Spry 2001: 727 cited in BRE, 2007:230) For Alsop, interrogating the relationship between 'home' and 'away', autoethnography provides an opportunity to tackle the dialectic between the personal and the cultural:

That dialectic is the purpose as well as the challenge of our work, a challenge as a language is lacking that captures both levels, the personal and the cultural. Auto-ethnographers who set themselves the task of relating cultures are boundary walkers: they crisscross between the boundaries of being home and away, of being insider and outsider, of being personal and cultural selves. (Alsop, 2002: paragraph 45)

The methodology “inevitably challenges our notion of centre and periphery” (Alsop, 2002: paragraph 39) and is “an attempt at practicing...self-reflexivity by having a closer look at one’s own longings and belongings, with the familiarity that – when viewed from a distance [...] can change one’s perspective considerably” (Reed-Danahay, 1979: 9) In autoethnography, the binary conventions of a self/society split are questioned as are issues of “identity and selfhood, of voice and authenticity, and of cultural displacement and exile” (Reed-Danahay, 1979: 3). Resonant with St. Pierre’s (1997) and St. Pierre and Pillow’s (2000) post-structural feminist project, autoethnography, too, inevitably works the ‘ruins’ of binarism in a space where “truth and reality are not fixed categories, where self reflexive critique is sanctioned, and where heresy is viewed as liberatory”. (Spry, 2001: 711). Heterodox at heart, maybe this is why autoethnography generates such hostility from the orthodoxy of the white, middle class, male, Oxbridge mainstream.

For me, autoethnography had initially appealed for a number of reasons. It offered scope for an adventure on the edges of the textual conventions of doctoral rubric, allowing me to experiment with a post-structural writing practice that would work my own research material from the out-bye of the social world to the in-bye of my own personal biography and back again in a potentially rich manner. Indeed, rather than being an approach that might tempt one to ‘self-indulgence’ it seemed, instead, to require a level of multi-dimensional self-scrutiny that militated firmly *against* self indulgence. In addition, in unapologetically legitimising emotion and affect it provided a register for my own layered, complex and

ambivalent attachments to the field I was exploring. It also chimed with data ‘hot spots’ that glowed insistently as I read and re-read field notes that shifted unevenly between spatialities of longing and belonging, of staying and leaving; between past as spooked present, and present as trashed past.

My current position

In sum, as the seven years of my doctoral work unfolded, the autoethnographic project progressively retreated ‘in-bye’. A group of colleagues around *Ethnography and Education* and the Oxford conference who were in many ways very supportive of my work in general, counselled strongly against my autoethnographic interests. Sometimes, specific editorial pressure was exerted: one example being my submission to the Oxford Ethnography conference in 2009. This was my first attempt to place a paper at the conference and I was told that, while the conference was very interested in my work, they wanted me to re-write my abstract *without* the autoethnographic element. I was also informed privately that “we don’t do autoethnography”. Alongside this general, shall we say, ‘enculturation’ into educational ethnography, the realities of the varied publication opportunities that arose for me – and that, in fairness, I took – steadily pushed me in the direction of more conventional forms of presentation. Further, as my publications accumulated and the possibility of a PhD by Article emerged as an option, the alternative format of a fully (or even partly) autoethnographic monograph looked less realistic in practical terms and, in the light of a book contract that I was negotiating with *Ethnography and Education*, started to feel like a hostage to fortune. Nevertheless, the issue of developing an ethnographic approach capable of responding to affect remained and, as my work develops into its post-doctoral phase, still

does (See *Article submitted for ECER 2013*, in Conclusion: Results and Continuing Research, below).

Post-ethnography?

So what is the way forward? Basically, I have been arguing that the ‘traditional’ space of educational ethnography – being bound “to finding legitimacy in a predictive capacity that continues to rely upon humanist readings of identity categories that contain behavioural patterns and identifiable meaning systems” (Popoviciu et al 2006: 410) – is not sufficiently capacious to respond to the kind of ‘data’ that my work has generated. Autoethnography, which initially attracted me is, it appears, condemned from most, if not all, sides: Walford, of course, challenges its *abandonment* of realism but Lather, coming from a completely different, antifoundational, perspective argues that it is, in fact, the *hidden realism* of autoethnography that is the problem, as autoethnographers “often use post-modern rhetoric to justify their poetic, evocative texts, but continue to use modernist, realist notions of the self, author, voice, text, and science” (Lather, 2001, cited in Foley, 2002: 479). The overall position seems unhelpfully stalled.

Clearly, the default to realism – long after *Writing culture* – obstinately persists in the field generally. As Popoviciu et al, writing as recently as 2006, suggest: there is still “little sense of alternative textual constructions or representational techniques in the doing of ethnographic fieldwork (Popoviciu et al, 2006: 394) and even “research that draws upon post-structuralism, queer theory or post-colonialism continues to adopt critical realist methods and often have an underlying appeal to foundationalist approaches” (407). We are, it seems, not much further

forward. The question of how far ethnographers can take on board post-structuralist claims of the multiplicity of self, notions of de-centred forms of power and the intersections of highly relational social categories at the same time as they retain some sense of a liberatory project which retains “an understanding of the material conditions of existence” (Gordon et al, 2001: 198), remains a difficult one. With a view to finding a way out of this impasse as I move into the next phase of research arising from my doctoral study, I want to sketch three other potentially productive approaches not yet discussed: critical ethnography (at least in Foley’s formulation), sensory ethnography as developed by Pink (2009) and, finally Kathleen Stewart’s recent work on ‘ordinary affects’ (Stewart, 2005, 2007, 2010a, 2010b)

Critical ethnography: Foley’s approach

Gordon et al (2001) summarise critical ethnography as rooted variously in cultural studies; neo-Marxist and feminist theory; and research on critical pedagogy. Its aim, they contend, is “to theorise social structural constraints and human agency, as well as the interrelationship between structure and agency in order to consider paths towards empowerment ...of the researched”. It is, therefore “simultaneously hermeneutic and emancipatory” (Gordon *et al*, 2001:189). Now, this emancipatory aspect is one that I would wish to retain at the same time as I try to respond to the post-structuralist challenge *and* incorporate the residual possibilities of autoethnography. Of course, that is no mean task. As Gordon *et al* note, critical pedagogy is strongly present in the background of critical ethnography, and critical pedagogy and post-structuralism have a ‘history’ in the popular idiom; that is they have been intertwined in mutual contestation. McLaren’s (1986, 1995) attempt to integrate post-structuralist and post-colonial theory with critical pedagogy offered a powerful new view of school as a cultural

site where a struggle for symbolic capital takes place and where students resist the marginalisation of their street culture. Lather, however, remained unimpressed, continuing to position critical pedagogy as a “stuck place” (see Lather, 1998). So there’s no easy reconciliation, if any, though Foley – while consistently describing himself as a critical ethnographer – attempted something of a rapprochement in a 2002 paper, *Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn*, (Foley, 2002). Not surprisingly, autoethnography again finds its way into the discussion at this juncture.

Forms of Reflexivity

In a paper that “advocates blending autobiography and ethnography into a ‘cultural Marxist’ standpoint [which] also draws upon multiple epistemologies and feminist notions of science” (Foley, 2002: 469), Foley focuses the ‘realism’ debate refreshingly in terms of a discussion that sees reflexivity as the fundamental bone of contention. Viewing debate around reflexivity as originating in late 1970’s critiques of positivism coming out of Mead’s modernist, symbolic interactionist perspective, Foley extends Marcus’s three-fold typology (Marcus, 1998) and describes *four* distinct approaches to reflexivity: confessional, theoretical, textual, and deconstructive.

As we’ll remember, we’ve already met the first of these, ‘confessional’ reflexivity – derived from Van Maanen’s notion of the confession tale – as a form of realist self-reflection, canonised in Walford’s account considered above. Seen by Marcus (1998) as fairly common by the end of the twentieth century, this ‘first reflexivity’ for Foley *includes* “highly subjective, mixed-genre texts blend[ing] autobiography and ethnography” (Foley, 2002: 474) that originate in feminist and native ethnographic work, and can justly be labelled

'autoethnographic'. So Foley, contrary to what we've seen Walford argue, does not see any *flight* from realism in autoethnographic 'confession'. That is not the problem. Given that critical ethnography is a neo-Marxist perspective rooted in Gramsci, Bourdieu, Hall and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, the central problem with confessional tales is not their *flight* from the real but their dependence on heroic discourses of the autonomous individual. Autoethnographers "tend to explore psychological matters or feelings more than the sociological, structural conditions of their interpretations" (Foley, 2002:476). They thus stop short of second, or 'theoretical', reflexivity' as seen notably in Bourdieu's more sociological notion of self:

Where Bourdieu differs radically with autoethnographers is in his aversion to their existential notion of an experiential, intuitive, introspective knower. Like other French post-structuralist thinkers, he distances himself from existentialist or Hegelian notions of consciousness and an autonomous self. But, unlike most post-structuralist thinkers, Bourdieu does not reduce the self, subjectivity, and authors to mere 'effects' of discourses (Foley, 2002: 476)

As such, for Foley, autoethnographers and their kind generally neglect the historical and political, failing to give attention to "how classes of people negotiate, assimilate, and transform their lived, structured, historical reality or [to] the collective agency of groups" (476). They "tend to be more personal and literary and less explicitly theoretical" (477)

As a remedy, Foley requires that:

...ethnographic knowers are 'epistemologically reflexive' in at least two ways. First, they must critically analyze the disciplinary and discursive historical context that shapes them and their interpretations. Second, they must practice a systematic, disciplined abductive process of theory development within and against the discursive traditions of a discipline(s). (Foley, 2002: 477).

Some, however, do:

...try to hold these two seemingly contradictory ways of knowing in tension. They try to utilize both a scientific and a more artistic way of knowing. Being situated, embodied, historical selves/characters in the text, they are far less likely to disappear behind a grand rational, theoretical framework or, as we shall see, a grand antitheoretical post-modern call for poetics. (Foley, 2002: 477)

Passing fairly quickly over Marcus's "somewhat post-modern" (478) third category of 'intertextual reflexivity' – which focuses largely on the rhetorical use of representational practices – Foley introduces the final, fourth, category of 'deconstructive reflexivity'. As advocated typically by Patti Lather, this form of reflexivity emphasises a radical scepticism about the foundations of the post-enlightenment project *as a whole*, stressing openness as against analytical closure and seeking to explore the aporias of *all* representational attempts by means of indeterminate, evocative, poetic accounts of 'reality'.

For Lather, as Foley notes, "being theoretical is actually about 'getting lost' and building on the 'ruins' of knowledge rather than assuredly mapping and discovering reality" (Foley, 2002: 479). Positioning himself somewhat ambiguously in terms of his own four-fold taxonomy, Foley describes himself as "tap[ping] into introspection, intuition, and emotion the way autoethnographers...and ethnic ...and indigenous scholars" do, but while continuing "to use a quasi-scientific abductive epistemology, or what Paul Willis (1999) now calls an 'ethnographic imagination' to know, map, and explain the lived reality of cultural others" (486). Again, as generous and genuine as Foley's attempt to smooth the waters between realist ethnography and post-structuralism is, it remains unconvincing and incomplete from my view. No amount of softening the status of the quest for objectivity from 'scientific' to 'quasi-scientific' [my emphasis] really avoids the post-structuralist challenge. Indeed, it finishes up begging the very question that it sets out to avoid.

Doing sensory ethnography

Sarah Pink's work on sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009) is, I think, one of the most interesting contributions to ethnography in the recent period which, as it happens, responds adroitly to the call that we saw Bagley issuing in the quotation that opens this section. Though her 2009 study *Doing sensory ethnography* is receiving a lot of attention as a methods textbook, Pink's work in fact has a much wider *methodological* ambition. *Doing sensory ethnography* sets out to describe a "process of ethnography that accounts for how...multisensoriality is integral both to the lives of people who participate in our research *and* to how we ethnographers practice our craft" (Pink, 2009:1). It attempts, therefore, to remodel reflexivity (yet again) in a way that might avoid the blockage that we've noted between realist and post-structuralist approaches. As an inquiry that in its "theoretical commitments to place, memory and imagination reach[es] out to ideas, and practices" across an interdisciplinary range including "academic, applied and arts practices" (Pink, 2009:1-2), Pink situates her work in a 'sensorial turn' evidenced by work in, among others:

...an anthropology of the senses...sensuous scholarship...sensuous geography...sociology of the senses...the senses in communication and interaction...the sensorium and arts practice...the sensoriality of film...a cultural history of the senses... (Pink, 2009: 8)

She remarks on new explorations of "sensory experience, perception, sociality, knowing, knowledge, practice and culture" (8) noting in passing – but, as yet, not developing – contributions to which I've independently drawn attention: Thrift's work on the sensual and affective aspects of space, and Edensor's material on industrial ruins. Foregrounding perception, place, memory and imagination in relation to 'emplaced', embodied knowing and its transmission – as she does – is a significant development in my view. It is certainly one that has an impact on the development of my work, promoting a focus on tacit and intercorporeal knowing while at the same time holding open a space for the political:

To conceptualise a sensory ethnography process requires an understanding that can account for both human perception and the political and power relations from which ethnographic research is inexplicable...a theory of place as experiential, open and in process – as ‘event’ or ‘occurrence’ – offers a way of thinking about the contexts of sensory ethnographic research and the processes through which ethnographic representations become meaningful. (Pink, 2009: 42)

However, whether sensory ethnography – as richly significant it is – succeeds in getting us off the horns of the realist/anti-foundationalist dilemma or merely hides its realism well, is another matter (though I’m inclined to think that the latter is the case). It is not clear, either, that sensory ethnography can really accommodate notions such as affect, Edensor’s ‘ruin’ or the social unconscious as argued for by Valerie Walkerdine; at least not without reducing them effectively to epiphenomena of sense data. The absence of any index reference to *affect*, for example, suggests a significant omission, and doesn’t bode well. That said, Pink’s work is a significant contribution within the field and a full critical review will be a key task in preparation for my forthcoming book-length study (see Conclusion: Results and Continuing Research, below).

Ordinary affects/Atmospheric attunements

As I move out of the doctoral phase of my inquiry it is becoming clear that the richest methodological inspiration for me – Foley and Pink work notwithstanding – has been the work of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart. Stewart provocatively characterises the trajectory of her work since the classic post-modern ethnography *A Space on the side of the road* (Stewart, 1996) as a project of "ficto-critical" ethnographic poetics that roams "from one texted genre to another – romantic, realist, historical, fantastic, sociological, surreal" (Stewart, 1996, 210). *A space on the side of the road* is a book that retains enormous unexploited potential in the background to the thesis I’ve presented here. Entranced by the

poetics of the book when I first read it at the beginning of my doctoral work, I was unable at the time to fully understand its capacity for transcending the limits of realism in ethnography. I can see now, however, that it not only succeeds in doing what I imagined autoethnography might do, but also *exceeds* it.

Stewart describes *A space on the side of the road* as ‘a story about the fabulation of a narrative [space]...that enacts the density, texture, and force of a lived cultural poetics somewhere in the real and imagined hinterlands of ...the hard-core Appalachian coal-mining region of south western West Virginia – a region that constitutes an ‘other America’’. As such, the work “stands as a kind of back talk” to US national myths of realism, progress and order (Stewart, 1996: 3); a project to which, in a British context, I would happily subscribe.

Stewart characterises her ethnographic project as it has evolved as a:

...slow, and sometimes sudden, accretion of ways of attending to the charged atmospheres of everyday life. How they accrue, endure, fade or snap. How they build as a refrain, literally scoring over the labour of living out whatever’s happening. How they constitute a compositional present, pushing circulating forces into form, texture and density so that can be felt, imagined, brought to bear or just born. (Stewart 2010b: 2)

In recently positioning her ficto-critical approach, she draws on a literature that includes Deleuze and Guattari, Nigel Thrift, Lauren Berlant, Barthes (specifically the little known *A lovers discourse*), Benjamin (specifically the *Arcades project*), Micheal Taussig and Raymond Williams. Her project – “an experiment, not a judgement” – is one that is:

Committed not to the demystification and uncovered truths that support a well-known picture of the world, but rather to speculation, curiosity and the concrete, it tries to provoke attention to the forces that come into view as habit of shock, resonance or impact. (Stewart, 2007:1)

Stewart calls the “charged atmospheres” with which ficto-critical ethnography is concerned, “ordinary affects” (Stewart 2007: 1). Ordinary affects are “akin to Raymond Williams’s structures of feeling” (2) which in *Marxism and literature* are described as “social experiences in solution [that] do not have to await definition, classification, or rationalisation before they exert palpable pressures” (Williams, 1977, cited in Stewart, 2007:2-3)

They are at once “abstract and concrete”. Ordinary affects “work not through ‘meanings’ per se, but rather in the way that they pick up density and texture as they move through bodies, dreams, dramas, and social worldings of all kinds” (3). They are:

More directly compelling than ideologies, as well as more fractious, multiplicitous, and unpredictable than symbolic meanings. They are not a kind of analytic object that can be laid out on single, static plane of analysis, and they don’t lend themselves to a perfect, three-tiered parallelism between analytic subject, concept, and world. They are, instead, a problem or question emergent in disparate scenes and incommensurate forms and registers: a tangle of potential connections. Literally moving things – things that are in motion and that are defined by their capacity to affect and be affected – they have to be mapped through different, coexisting forms of composition. (Stewart, 2007: 3-4)

In such a project, writing is an “effort to approach the intensities of the ordinary through a close ethnographic attention to pressure points and forms of attention and attachment” (Stewart, 2007:5). Now, in one very real sense that is *precisely* what my own work is about: “intensities of the ordinary” that leak form “pressure points and forms of attachment” – both real and imagined – and impact on the lived experience of young people undergoing ‘education’ at a time of de-industrialisation. In fact, what I’ve been trying to do – stutteringly, clumsily – in the articles I’ve brought together here, is to elaborate a poetics of circulating forces “pushed into form by events that ...are at once abstract and concrete, ephemeral and consequential, fully sensory and lodged in prolific imaginaries” (Stewart, 2010: 4). Like

Stewart, “I’m interested in the peculiar materialities of things that come to matter” (4) but at a particular historical conjuncture when those things, made an absent nothing, have come to *not matter at all*.

In working through “interruptions, amassed densities of description, evocations of voices and the conditions of their possibility, and lyrical, ruminative aporias that give pause” (Stewart, 1996:7) it is Stewart’s work – above all other – that offers a register for my own developing inquiry. It speaks to the yearning that drew me initially towards a hybrid project where sensorially “grounded imaginings” (in Willis’s phrase) might be performed through an in-bye ↔out-bye, autoethnographic momentum that unashamedly deployed what *I* was afraid of calling – but Stewart, categorically, is not – a “sixth sense”. In Stewart’s hands, that sixth sense – improvisational, processual, intuitive – breaks free *at a stroke* from the confines of the Real as it is ossified in realism and its representations, seeking instead to turn “a potentiality into a *threshold* to the Real” through “a sideways step into what normally gets stepped over, a curious pause to wonder what analytic objects might matter in the singularity of a situation and what forms of writing and thinking might approach them” (Stewart, 2010: 4). My emphasis)

Conclusion

So where does this leave me? Let me recap what I’ve done in this section. In simple terms, I’ve mapped the shifting terrain of my own uncertain conception of (educational) ethnography and plotted it against the shifting ground of the sub-discipline itself. In doing so, I’ve noticed how my own conception of educational ethnography ebbs and flows uncertainly between sensitivities at one moment towards the grounded imaginings of Willis; at another to

the kind of critical autoethnography that Foley ponders; at yet another, to wandering with Patti Lather in the inglorious ruins of ‘scientific’ ethnography, with only Wanda Pillow’s “reflexivities of discomfort” (Pillow, 2003:175) for support. I’ve argued that this uncertainty is inscribed in the contemporary moment of educational ethnography, where the discipline still seems stalled in an impasse, locked in a binary squeeze between realism and the anti-foundationalism of post-structuralism. I’ve also reviewed my own experience with autoethnography and situated it in a wider discussion about the construction of educational ethnography as an exclusionary tradition – particular in the UK context – going on to explain how that has had an impact on my work. Looking for a way forward, I’ve considered positions to which I’m sympathetic – Foley’s articulation of critical ethnography, Pink’s work on sensory ethnography, and Stewart’s recent writing on ordinary affects – and have concluded *pro tem* that while the first two of these fail, alone, to offer a satisfactory way forward, Stewart’s work is enormously productive at a moment that is fast becoming critical for educational ethnography.

Within the academy currently, projects in educational ethnography are under pressure from a number of directions. Certainly in the UK, research councils are placing ever greater emphasis on large scale, quantitatively focussed, longitudinal research projects with clear impact routes and generalisable ‘findings’: not a happy climate for the deeply emplaced micro-focus of ethnography. From my experience reviewing draft articles for publication, I would also suggest that doctoral projects in educational ethnography are becoming very much of a kind and are largely framed within what has become the received – and ‘safe’ – tradition.

At the same time, however, newly developed theoretical vocabularies in social and political theory – around affect (Clough, 2007; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010), new materialisms

(Bennet, 2010; Coole and Frost, 2010), biopolitics (Hardt and Negri 2001, 2006, 2009), post-work imaginaries (Weeks, 2011) and post-autonomist politics (Power, 2008) for example – are opening up new ways of thinking about educational possibilities in the light of recent challenges to the political *status quo* made explicit by, for example, the global Occupy movement (Taylor et al, 2011). These new formations (Berardi, 2009, 2011; Rousselle and Evren, 2011) require a form of empirical inquiry that is adequate to their ambition of multiplying and amplifying radically new socialities, often through ‘educational’ processes (see Anderson, Bright and Whiteley, 2012).

In my view, this form of inquiry can still be achieved. It will, though, in Norman Denzin’s words, have to finally “transcend the limitations and constraints of a lingering, politically and racially conservative post-positivism” (Denzin, 2009: 256). It will be an inquiry that will look a lot like Kathleen Stewart’s affectively attuned ficto-critical ethnography. It might now, after ‘method’ (Law, 2004), have to be even ‘messier’ in its means of responding to (new) spatialities of (new) material flows through (new) affective geographies and their (newly) attendant belongings and estrangements. Working “out of the limits of the categories provided by the grid of traditional qualitative methodology” it will pay attention to that “emotional, dream, sensual, and response data” – the “data that escaped language” (St. Pierre, 1997, cited in Pillow, 2003: 190-191) – that has been a rich seam within my own work. Moreover, it may well be an educational ethnography that speaks as much through performance as it does through language, drawing on:

...a performance studies paradigm capable of moving through action research, and case study to queer studies, from the modern to the post-modern, the global to the local, from the real to the hyperreal, to the liminal in-between performance spaces of culture, politics and pedagogy...This performance paradigm travels from theories of critical pedagogy to views of performance as intervention, interruption and resistance. It understands performance as a form of inquiry; it views performance as a form of

activism, as critique and as critical citizenship. It seeks a form of performative praxis that inspires and empowers persons to act on their utopian impulses. These moments are etched in history and popular memory. (Denzin 2009, 256)

Such a “performative autoethnography” in Denzin’s term (260) – or what I’d prefer to call, in a suitably monstrous locution, a ‘performative, ficto-critical, ethnographic utopianism’ – is what I tried to imagine in the article *A practice of concrete utopia?* It is also what I have enacted in bringing my own work as a performer into greater connectivity with my ‘research’, forming now one, multi-nodal, rhizomatic domain of inquiry. As I outline in *Conclusion: Results and Continuing Research* below, it is *that* inquiry that will constitute the core of my work as it progresses from this doctoral project in response to Bagley’s call for “a re-working or shifting of ethnographic methodological boundaries” (Bagley, 2009: 251)

Anonymity: An ethical and methodological consideration

Finally, as something of a footnote to this discussion and before moving on to look at the practical details of the research carried out during this doctoral project, I want to examine one particular ethical issue that has had an ongoing impact as my work has been prepared for publication. Of course, the doctoral project as a whole underwent due ethical scrutiny at the proposal stage and, apart from some minor points being made in relation to the accessibility of some of the participant permission documents, was accepted. Equally, it goes without saying that the routine requirements of qualitative research as stipulated by the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University have been adhered to as a matter of course. Nevertheless, one area has been difficult and unsettling to manage in practice: the securing and maintaining of participant anonymity.

Now, as Dennis (2010) has pointed out in introducing a recent journal discussion of ethics and educational ethnography, “[m]any more ethical questions emerge than one could address

through formal institutional reviews. Behaving ethically in the field is a complex, dynamic endeavour for education ethnographers” (Dennis, 2010:123). Field relationships are “mired with complications concerning insider and outsider issues” (124) and some ethical dilemmas permeate the ethnographic site itself. Both of these two points have weighed somewhat heavily in own experience of managing anonymity.

In general terms, the protection of research participants’ well-being through the making anonymous of all personal and institutional identities and geographical locations, has become a ‘given’ of research management procedures. As such, it is policed through research ethics committees as part of the oversight of both doctoral and wider research within academic institutions. Research plans are vetted at an early stage and it is not at all rare for planned arrangements to require modification in the interests of stringency. Equally, requirements extend beyond the institutional boundary both formally and informally. For example, a journal may have its own explicit ethics statement which constrains the submission and peer reviewing process quite considerably.

There is, as one might expect, an increasingly sizeable critical literature around research ethics in general and in relation to educational ethnography (see Murray and Dingwall, 2001 and Popoveciua et al, 2006, as examples across a range). As Popoveciua et al argue, ethical codes are:

...constituted by understandings of modernity...proper and improper activities are rule grounded, in that they are not simply descriptions of ethical behaviour. Rather, they are prescriptions of what should really be done. In this way, ethical codes operate as disciplinary mechanisms authorizing correct behaviour underpinned by a power relation that depends and sustains a notion of moral certainty and fixity. Thus ethical codes are not neutral, but contain social and cultural normative assumptions. (Popoveciua et al, 2006: 407)

Really, any seriously critical research project ought to start from this viewpoint, though it is hard in practice for *any* researcher – doctoral or professional – to maintain such a position against the institutionalised power of rulings originating from ethics review boards, professional associations and research councils. There is also a literature focussing specifically on the matter of anonymity.

If we return to Walford, we might acknowledge his significant contribution on this issue. In a 2005 paper *Research ethical guidelines and anonymity*, Walford notes how the:

...practice of giving a false name to a research site and to the people within it has become almost unquestioned. Anonymity has become the ‘default option’ for most ethnographic work in education. It is usually thought of a principle that researchers should simply adhere to almost without question. (Walford, 2005: 85)

Walford argues that such a principle is, in fact, usually inadequate in ensuring anonymity.

Further, “that it is often undesirable to try to do so” (85). As Walford discusses, Jan Nesper made one of the early forays into this discussion, arguing that “anonymization naturalizes the decoupling of events from historically and geographically specific locations” (Nesper, 2000, as discussed in Walford, 2005: 90), something which not only establishes a spurious generalisability but denudes ethnography’s supposedly characteristic ‘rich descriptions’ of key contextual elements.

How has this affected me? Well, quite fundamentally in methodological terms from two points of view. Firstly, in so far as my work is a study in “local, strategic subversions of self-evidence” (St.Pierre, 1997: 196), any power it has arises from specificity. In the particular coalfield context where my study is situated, those strategic subversions only make sense when voiced through minute details of historical and geographical context. After all, my field

‘universe’ is constituted by the intersecting cultures of four coal-mining villages, each within three or four miles of each other, that have experienced both unity – as part of one industry – and division – through the bitter legacies of that industry’s labour history – in ways that reach down to the lives of young people twenty years now after the end of the industry.

In one specific case, a reviewer of the draft of what became my second published article ‘*Off the Model*’: *Resistant spaces, school disaffection and ‘aspiration’ in a former coal-mining community* (Bright, 2011a; *CG* in **Part 1**), challenged a footnote that contained details of three large scale mining disasters that had occurred in the site, one in the 1930s, one in the 1950s and one in the 1970s. Having searched the internet, the reviewer identified the villages and suggested that I was in breach of the principal of protection of identity. Quite unnerved by this as an inexperienced researcher, I removed the details and effectively neutralised a point I was developing about the ‘sacred’ nature of some of the ground which was being ‘redeveloped’ after de-industrialisation. This withdrawal on my part still feels like a betrayal of the implicit research covenant – reaching way beyond the parameters of any ethics board – between me as a deep insider, and those with whom I conducted my research.

The second case is related. In both the article just mentioned and another later one, I made much of a young people’s self produced film that I called ‘Sticking together’ (see *CG* and *JEAH* in **Part 1**). Obviously, it wasn’t called ‘Sticking together’ at all, but that was the nearest I could get to its real name and still justify my claim to its being a local instance of what I called ‘resistant aspiration’ among young people. In fact, the real name of the film and the circumstances of its production in the immediate aftermath of a feature film being made in the locality, spoke more powerfully to that case. But, of course, the real name would, via an internet search, have quickly revealed the young people’s identities. Consequently, given

the point made by the reviewer of the *CG* article about the colliery disasters, I changed the name of the film, something the young people found difficult to understand. *They* had made the film to tell *their* story to a world that they felt constantly denigrated them and they couldn't see how their purpose could be met if people didn't know who they really were. Indeed, they felt strongly that nobody ever knew or cared who they were, and that it was vitally important to them to counter that. That was the reason that they made the film in the first place. What's more, they saw themselves as spokespeople of a proud culture that 'stands up for its sen' and 'says what's what' even in the face of persecution by power. Again, protection of anonymity in this case ran against the spirit of the implicit covenant that I brought to my work, unsettled me profoundly and still feels like an unethical capitulation to a bureaucratic system. Like the well-meant erasure of around 300 underground deaths by the *Children's Geographies* reviewer, it, too, continues to disturb me.

Details of empirical research carried out between Sept 2006 and Sept 2013

While all the articles selected for submission as part of this PhD by Article necessarily contain some kind of summary of the fieldwork element of the doctoral inquiry it is, nevertheless, appropriate to collate an overall record of the fieldwork for presentation here. It will also be helpful to detail some key aspects of the way that data arising from the fieldwork has been recorded, managed and processed in terms of analysis, transcription and presentation.

Fieldwork

Basically, the research has been ethnographic: that is, it has been a social inquiry involving *direct* and *sustained* contact with agents and actants (Thrift 2008a) in a bounded field, drawing on a repertoire of methods but with observation as primary. As it happens, fieldwork was concentrated during the four year period 2006 – 2010, but has continued, sporadically, up until as recently as December 2012. During that extensive period, fieldwork has taken place in a variety of settings as follows.

- An out-of-school 14-16 project for pupils defined as ‘at risk of becoming NEET’
- ‘Entry to Employment’ and pre-apprenticeship Foundation Learning programmes for young people 16-18 years old defined as NEET
- Youth clubs
- Community based informal youth support venues, including mobile and street work settings
- A miners’ welfare club
- A National Union of Mineworkers local ‘surgery’
- Private homes
- The ‘beater’s wagon’ at local shoots
- An intercommunity youth football match
- A Trades Council sponsored anti-racist meeting
- In ‘go alongs’ (Kusenbach, 2003) with participants
- During unaccompanied ‘walk throughs’
- At local political rallies and May Day celebrations
- In the street

While fieldwork was often concentrated in intensive phases, most of these sites were revisited a number of times during the six years of the inquiry, sometimes in a formal fieldwork context, sometimes merely to renew relationships or to sensually re-familiarise myself with the settings. As remarked in most of the articles, however, two key sites generated the bulk of the data.

Research taking place at th the *Go 4 it!* project (later *Move4ward*), Coalbrook – 2007-2009 and 2011

During the period 2007-2009, a sustained link was maintained with staff and different cohorts of learners at a community-based education and support programme offering provision for two types of learners. Situated in Coalbrook, the *Go 4 it!* project offered

1. A part-time programme of learning for 14-16 year old pupils from four local secondary schools who were deemed to be ‘at risk of exclusion’ from school.
2. A full time ‘pre Entry to Employment’ (E2E) programme for NEET 16-18 year-olds deemed “not yet ready” for E2E. These young people were from throughout the area but mainly from the four immediately local communities of Beldover, Cragwell, Coalbrook and Longthorne. Programmes varied between 18 weeks under one funding regime and 12 weeks under another.

As sources of funding for these programmes dried up or changed due to official re-designations of fundable provision, the 14-16 *Go4it!* programme disappeared entirely and 16-18 *Go4it!* programme eventually became part of Foundation Learning provision known as *Move4ward* offering pre-apprenticeship training for 16-18 year olds defined as ‘not yet ready’ for apprenticeships. Further ethnographic work was carried out at *Move4ward* during

2011 (see PE article). Not including early briefing and liaison meetings or instances of informal observation, this site generated the following specific fieldwork:

Formally arranged observations (NB. The observations below varied between around an hour to around three hours in duration.)

One observation of a student ‘celebration’ of course completion by 16-18 year old students

Four classroom observations of young people (two of groups of 14-16 year olds; two of groups of 16-18 year olds)

Two off-site visit observations of 16-18 year old young people

One ‘Go along’ session with young people in Coalbrook

One observation of a large scale ‘raising aspirations’ event - *UCan!* – during which the film *Sticking Together* was shown as part of the programme of events (See the ***JEAH*** article)

Semi-structured interviews and research conversations

Interviews typically lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour 30 minutes and were recorded on tape by agreement and were either fully or partially transcribed. Prompt sheets were prepared for semi-structured interviews initially on the basis of research questions but later in line with emergent themes. Interviewees were selected with reference to a mix of availability, willingness and an intention to broadly correspond in gender terms to the rough gender distribution of young people on programmes (of around 60:40 m to f) and of adults working for children’s services (of around 70:30 f to m) In contrast, research conversations were not formally scheduled but took place *ad hoc* when an opportunity arose, typically lasted 30 minutes and were summarised later as written field notes or Dictaphone recordings.

Summary of interviews carried out

Ten semi-structured individual interviews of young people aged 14-18 years old (6m, 4f)

Four semi-structured mixed gender group interviews of young people: two within

classroom settings when the lesson period was given over to me; two outside the classroom which took place during break and lunchtime (groups typically 60% m, 40%f)

Three mixed gender pair interviews of young people: two with 14-16 year olds (m,m) (f, m) one with 16-18 year olds (m,m)

Thirteen semi-structured interviews of individual adults: 1 Project Manager (f)

(interviewed twice); 1 Classroom assistant (f); 2 project tutors (f); 1 adult education worker (m); 1 'Fathers worker' (m); 1 Full time trade union officer (m); 1 Connexions worker (m) 1 Trainee youth worker (f) 1 fulltime youth worker (interviewed twice) (f) 1 Senior Manager (m) 1 former resident (f)

Two semi-structured pair interviews of adults: 2 community police support officers (f,m), 2 grandparents (f,m)

Four unstructured research conversations with adults: 1 outdoor education worker (m); 1 Adult education worker (f); 2 parents (f,m)

Participant observation of youth service provision 2009-2010 (with follow up visits to Sept 2012)

During 2009-2010 I was given access to observe Derbyshire youth service provision in the north of the county and carried out a one year participant observation of youth service mobile, community based and club provision. Observations took place of one or two evening sessions each week (typically 5.30/6.00pm to 8.30 pm) during both term time and during parts of the summer holidays for most of the period (depending on negotiation with the youth

service team). Most of these observations were of sessions run by staff attached to the *Bus stop!* mobile youth support project offered on the Cavendish Estate and the Colliery Model Village at Beldover. A significant number of others, however, were at *The Spot* (a community house at Beldover), or at age related group sessions at Cragwell youth club. Observations often involved me in sport activities such as playing rounders or football or other activities facilitated by the youth workers or initiated by the young people such as quizzes, discussions. I was also frequently involved in informal talk around spontaneously arising topics (on one occasion a nearby stabbing incident, for instance). This element of the empirical research generated an abundance of observational material which was mostly recorded as audio material or on one occasion as video. Otherwise, summary field notes were made either in writing or as short Dictaphone notes.

As part of the general observational access that I was granted, I was able to engage in many spontaneously arising conversations with a range of adults and young people beyond those officially involved in the youth service provision – parents, carers, grandparents, older and younger siblings – and, with permission, recorded these as field notes or on Dictaphone wherever possible.

More formally, through relationships established as part of this extended participant observation, I was also able to organise a series of individual interviews with young people and staff as well as some single and mixed gender small group interviews with young people. With participants' permission these were recorded on Dictaphone and fully or partly transcribed as they related to the emergent themes of the inquiry. These sessions were convened *ad hoc* as the opportunity arose depending on the variety of provision that was offered or on the basis that someone had identified themselves as “wanting to talk” to me.

Summary of interviews and research conversations

Six semi-structured individual interviews of young people (2f, 4m)

Two semi-structured group interviews (young women only): Cragwell youth club; ‘Cavs Lasses’, The Spot, Beldover

Two semi-structured group interviews (mixed): The Spot, Beldover; Cragwell youth club

Two semi structured interviews with adults: parents and residents

Unstructured research conversations: Numerous research conversations took place during the year long observation with two full time (f,m) and six part time youth workers (1m, 5f) as well as practitioners middle and senior managers at Connexions Derbyshire and Derbyshire County Council.

Research feedback

During the research programme a number of opportunities were taken to provide feedback to a variety of interested parties as follows:

One formal meeting took place at a Derbyshire Youth Service county-wide team meeting.

Periodic informal briefings were provided to young people involved in the youth service observations. Periodic briefings were given to Connexions Derbyshire senior management and practitioner meetings, and to Derbyshire County Council Children’s Services equality group meetings and also to individual managers. One article submitted as part of this PhD by Article (CG) was circulated to Children’s Services managers with a view to informing youth support policy development in former coal-mining localities in Derbyshire.

Analysis of empirical materials

In the early stages of the inquiry reported here, empirical materials – field notes, early interviews – were gathered and analysed in relation to the initial research questions as first posed. Those research questions had been informed by my earlier Masters level dissertation (Bright, 2005) and my initial review of the literature around school marginalisation and exclusion, where questions of gender appeared prominent. Consequently, my initial research questions determined the logic that governed how the first set of semi-structured interview schedules were framed and the strong early focus around gender issues. As material was gathered, it was analysed in terms of *emergent themes*, some of which – notably around affect – diverged from the focus set at the beginning of the inquiry. This consequently prompted a review of the initial research questions and a new thematic analysis in the light of the subsequent change of emphases in the empirical inquiry. This process – of thematic analysis shaping a review of focus through a grounded iterative process – has been the approach to analysis that has been adopted throughout this inquiry.

However, it is worth noting another dynamic that is particularly relevant to the PhD by Article process. A minor topic of this thesis has been about the production of academic knowledge within contemporary conditions in a Higher Education sector that is increasingly characterised by regimes of performativity (Jeffrey and Troman, 2012). Indeed, I have argued that the very existence of the PhD by Article format is a function of such a performative culture. The PhD by article represents – and to some extent reproduces – the increased pressure on researchers to publish if they are to have any real chance of employment within a system where research output metrics significantly affect institutional funding. Such a pressure to publish inevitably leads to a focus on searching out publication opportunities or on responding to any that may arise serendipitously. In my case, four of the articles presented

as part of this thesis were invited as contributions to special issues of journals. The other was commissioned as a chapter for an edited book collection.

Their production was, then, necessarily skewed towards meeting already established editorial objectives. This has meant, in practice, that thematic analysis of data has been steered to a discernible extent at each stage of pre-publication process, from initial commission, again at first submission, again at review, again at final submission. This process, while incremental and subtle is nevertheless influential and, arguably, epistemologically mischievous as it militates against an analytical process being determined solely by the thematic logic of the data. Of course, it is a truism that a *performative* culture inevitably produces research that counts as an appropriate *performance* – that is to say, is publishable in peer reviewed journals – rather than research that is shaped entirely in terms of its own internal logics. As such, the performative dynamic has an influence right down to the very analysis of empirical materials and the underlying epistemological claims that justify any such analysis. Researchers and supervisory staff considering the appropriateness of the PhD by Article process would do well to be mindful of this.

Transcription and presentation of empirical materials

Interviews

All the material described as originating in ‘interviews’ came from formally arranged meetings between myself and participants where discussions took place in a semi structured format around a schedule of topics. All of these interviews – individual, pair or group – were recorded on tape or Dictaphone and transcribed either fully or partially, depending on their thematic significance. Transcription was done either by myself or by a free lance transcriber and then checked by me. I employed a locally originating transcriber who could understand

and render the local accent into writing and was familiar with dialect words that might be used.

Presentation of transcribed material

I should note here that the position I have taken on the presentation of transcribed material is not without controversy. Basically, in presenting interview material within published articles I have generally followed Kathleen Stewart's stated intention in using "ethnopoetic notations in an effort to evoke something of the intensely elaborated cultural poetics" of speech and to "mimic the effects of poetics in performance" (Stewart, 1996, 10). I have not, though, referred to this as an explicit strategy within the articles, so it is worth considering in a little more detail here. Though I don't use all the devices employed by Stewart, I do try and capture the specific, subtle rhythms of the speech by not, for instance, adding 'the' where a glottal stop suffices in the local accent (as in "I was active in strike"). Nor do I correct any apparently ungrammatical speech (as, for example, "I were out everyday..."). I also use '...' to indicate pauses that are significant to the poetics of the performance. Perhaps more controversially, I attempt to represent spoken pronunciations to evoke the difference between the Derbyshire coalfield accent and 'Standard English'.

Like Stewart, I know that this "is a process of translation both of the oral to the written and of a local (and stigmatised) language to a particular audience for desired effects" and, like her, am committed to it as an ideological strategy "which traces forms in their social and political use" (Stewart, 1996, 10). At one conference, where an early draft of one of the papers was read, one person raised the question of the way I had emphasised accent in extracts from interviews arguing that it effectively stigmatised participants. In my view, her point missed the fact that the use of accent in this locality is nuanced through gender, class and age and

rendering the accent can actually reveal the subtle shifts of position and power that occur as these interviews unfold. The use of accent by interviewees can in fact be seen to shift constantly even within single interviews (as can mine as interviewer) as the topic and relationship between interviewer and interviewee changes. In one case, the heavy use of accent by a male official – a community police officer – demarcates his account as constructed within an informal masculine space that, while it is *of* the ‘workplace’, subverts the workplace’s *official and professional register*. As such, it serves to reproduce a gendered resistance idiom that is sufficiently powerful for me to unconsciously collude with it through my own more emphatic use of the local accent. I would thus argue that an attempt to reproduce accent can be valuable not only in understanding and representing the lived experience of participants but also in facilitating a deepened reflexivity in any researcher who speaks beyond the boundaries of received pronunciation.

The inclusion of unfamiliar dialect words – the informal form of address ‘thee’, for example – complicates things, however. In some of the articles presented in this thesis, I can be seen to be inconsistent in ‘translating’ terms within the text (“thee [you]”, for example), in end notes, or not at all. The same person who objected to representations of accent also argued that I had translated dialect in young people’s interview extracts but not in those of the adults, thus representing young people through deficit. Whilst fully acknowledging the charge of occasional cases of inadvertent inconsistency, I would rebut the accusation of deficit production, pointing out that there is *in fact* a greater preponderance of dialect terms and swear words within the speech of the boys and men than is generally the case among the girls and women and it is this that I have represented and sometimes translated. Nevertheless, an interesting and illuminatingly gendered shift into a space of masculinised ‘roughness’ can be seen to occur in interviews with women and girls as they express insubordinate positions in

relation to school or work (an interesting point in its own right). Dialect terms and, consequently, translation can be seen to be more frequent at such points. Overall, the measure I took to accommodate such subtle materials as these was to support interviews with contextual field notes wherever possible.

Other research

The research outlined above has, of course, taken place as part of a recent *formal* doctoral inquiry carried out in the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University. It is important to remember, however, that the ethnographic project referred to in the articles collected here grew out of my connection to the localities as a member of a pit family, as a worker, as a political and trade union activist and as an education ‘professional’. Consequently, the material generated by the formal inquiry has been supplemented and influenced by field contact with the same specific coalfield locality occurring during the thirty year period prior to the commencement of the doctoral research. In formal terms, that has included

- Research into the transport effects of the contraction of the mining industry carried out during 1986 for the National Union of Railwaymen and Sheffield City Council Employment Department
- Research carried out into the community impact of the contraction of the coal-mining industry during 1987-88 as part of a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education at Huddersfield Polytechnic (some interviewees from that time have been re-interviewed as part of this research)
- Research carried out during 2002 -2005 into the development of the Connexions youth support service for the dissertation element of a Master of Science in Education

Management completed in the School of Education at Sheffield Hallam University in 2005.

- Research carried out in the south Yorkshire coalfield during 2002-2011 as an Associate at the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby (ICeGS)

Informally, field contact has taken place as part of a life immersed in the political, trade union and educational affairs of the research locality. Contact has been ‘recorded’ in various ways including

- extensive diaries and journals that have been kept periodically since 1978
- some early audio work carried out with people who have since also participated in this formal doctoral inquiry
- trade union, political and activist journalism produced between 1978 and 1987
- performance practice as a performance artist and curator. The large scale improvised music performance – *Node-Flow-Mass (Disaster Box)* – which took place at Magna, Rotherham, in November 2012 is a notable example.

There have also been many, many discussions and conversations over the years with former miners, miners’ wives and partners, young people, trade union and political activists, teacher colleagues, youth workers, care workers and others who have been perplexed by what has happened in this locality and how it has affected young people. There have also been many drives, family visits, walks, bike rides, and motor bike rides that have revisited this striking landscape.

2. 5. Conclusion: Results and continuing research

This section incorporates a summary statement of both the research results and the ongoing and planned research that follows from them. For clarity, the concluding discussion will be treated in two separate parts.

Research results

Once again trying to avoid the double edged temptation to repetition and/or omission that is inherent in the 'PhD by Article' format, I intend in this sub-section to provide a relatively straightforward summary account of the 'results' of this doctoral inquiry; an ambition that requires an immediate and emphatic caveat. It ought, really, to be fairly obvious by this point in this thesis that the general direction of the my inquiry as a whole runs completely counter to positivist conceptions of social inquiry as a mode of unproblematic realist investigation that is productive of objective knowledge presentable as 'results'. In fact, my work sits in quite a different lineage: one that fundamentally problematises method and looks right through it to a messy vista (Law, 2004) not unlike Lather's 'ruins' (Lather, 2001); a landscape where questions:

...of narrative structuring, constructedness, analytic standpoint, and historical provisionality of claims to knowledge direct [us] to the ways in which our stories can be understood as fictions of the real (Gordon, 1997: 11)

The troubled route I've taken to that destination is one that I've reviewed in detail in both the Literature Review and Methodology sections above. There, believing with Foucault "that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth" (Foucault 1980: 193), I've outlined a methodological vision of an *affectively attuned performance ethnography* that is more inclined to *show* rather than *say*, and that owes more

to critical creative practices and to the writing of fiction than it does to the delineation of *results*. So, the first thing to note here is that an understanding of the idea of results as problematic is one that should be taken as read throughout this discussion.

That qualifier registered, I'll proceed to navigate as best I can towards something like a set of results/findings/conclusions. First, I'll try and freeze-frame what is essentially an ongoing inquiry, and set it against a review of the aims originally outlined at the 'upgrade to PhD' stage. That ought to allow a relatively stable picture to emerge of where the research process has taken me and what general statements might reasonably be floated. I'll then move on to *briefly* recap the concluding positions achieved in relation to the specific topics addressed in each of the five submitted articles as they contribute to that final result. These should be read in conjunction with *Commentary on articles submitted in Part 1*, where a fuller account is available. As an addendum to that I'll, finally, summarise some thoughts arising from a group of unpublished conference papers and a mass of empirical data on the topic of gender.

Overall research outcome

At the upgrade stage, it was proposed that the doctoral inquiry then outlined would make an original contribution to knowledge in three areas: empirically, theoretically and methodologically. I would contend that it has done so. Empirically, it was envisaged that the work would extend the knowledge of how young people (labelled as disaffected from education) experience youth support services, both in general and specifically in relation to post-industrial and post-conflict settings. It would do so, in the first place, by generating and analysing a data-base of ethnographic material amounting to upwards of 250,000 words of interview and field note records and, secondly, by disseminating related research products throughout the international research community. Though much of the data remains to be

exploited in a forthcoming book, the overall aim *has* been achieved in terms of the scale of the material produced. What is more, early responses to dissemination (see, again, Continuing Research, below) indicate strongly that the central claim I make is seen as having national, European and international significance. The academic reception to my overall conclusion – *that it is the case (in some circumstances, at least) that there is a complex (sometimes ‘ghosted’) transmission of historically conjunctural, place-based, affect that constitutes a classed spatiality of feeling through which schooling is lived and in relation to which so called disaffection and its consequential exclusions need to be understood* – has been highly encouraging. As a result, I am now networked into a research community across both education and youth studies that sees such a claim as relevant to our understanding of young people’s lived experience of education in other de-industrialised and post-conflict settings that share significant features with coalfield settings. The next step is to make the definitive book-length account available as planned, with a view to it having an impact on policy discussion that will inevitably arise next year in 2014, thirty years after the beginning of the miners’ strike.

Secondly, it was projected that the empirical material gathered during the project would be theorised in an interdisciplinary way. In the event, I would contend that it has in fact contributed to the burgeoning of an innovative interdisciplinary space between a group of literatures that I have already referenced in this study: those attempting to understand social flows of affect; those developing intersectional inquiries into affective geographies of education, class and gender; psychosocial accounts of community trauma; ‘new’ approaches to working class history and memory; cultural accounts of social hauntings; and interrogations of post-work imaginaries. Indeed, I think it is in this interdisciplinarity – or ‘post-disciplinarity’ – that the radicality of my project lies. As Schostak and Schostak (2008)

contend, “radical research is ‘post-disciplinary’ in that it refuses to be reduced to the confines of particular disciplines and refuses to keep the boundaries of disciplines intact” (Schostak and Schostak: 8). That being the case, this project cannot but be a radical research project in so far as its own spectral (il)logics pursue an inquiry that simply cannot, in principle, be disciplined within any disciplinary boundary that currently exists. The mere recognition of the possibility of a social haunting requires new modalities of language and experience that must *of necessity* create, in Barthes words, “a new object that belongs to no one” (cited at Gordon, 1997: 7, via Clifford and Marcus, 1986:1).

Thirdly, it was envisaged that the project would be methodologically innovative in developing an experimental, autoethnographic writing practice as a means of situating the researcher’s subjectivity performatively within a more conventional ethnographic study. As we’ve noted, that aspect of the inquiry has not materialised in full for a number of reasons. I have, though, tried to keep the idea as an absent presence in the background to this study of absent presences by re-iterating the project of ‘writing in-bye and out-bye’ above. In truth, however, that project has been superseded on the whole by the work I’ve done in modelling *a form of affectively attuned educational ethnography* that proposes and enacts a methodological and representational escape from the exhausted and moribund realism that still dominates the sub-field of educational ethnography. This, in itself, is a significant contribution to knowledge, particularly where ethnographic sites need to explore the spectral quality of space to unpack how absence, emptiness and the imperceptible can signify presence and have a very real impact upon identity and experience.

Space, place and ‘aspiration’

All that said, let's come back now to the articles presented in **Part 1** and, taking them one by one, see if we can capture their 'results'. The first article, "*Off the Model*": *Resistant spaces, school disaffection and 'aspiration' in a former coal-mining community*, focuses, we'll recall, on the contemporary proliferation of policy around *aspirations* and the ways in which an identifiably hegemonic discourse of aspiration is rejected by the young people in my study. The argument is made that that these rejections – persistently misrecognised as an outcome of 'low aspirations' – can be seen, instead, as related to a counter-aspirational framework complexly situated within a spatiality that, recalling the colliery model villages that are its concrete sites, I call 'The Model'.

Taking advantage of the 'spatial turn' coming out of human geography, an account of *resistant aspiration* is developed that deploys a Lefebvrian notion of space that works against abstractions of space as empty or inert and sees space, rather, as a dynamic "encounter, assembly, simultaneity... [of] everything that there is *in space*, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols" (Lefebvre, 1991: 101).

This notion of space, it should be remarked, *includes* hyper-complex and contested place-making. In line with my moving towards Taylor's notion of "affective geographies" as "circulating via official discourses of place, as well as in and through inhabitants' senses in evoking place" (Taylor, 2012: 47), Lefebvre's idea allowed me to propose an account of 'the Model' as a place produced through a confluence of historical, economic, imagined and affective 'flows' concentrated at the intersection of classed and gendered geographies and temporalities in very specific ways. Accordingly, I drew **the general conclusion that (in the coalfield site at least) a research attunement to lived experiences of education as situated**

in affective spatialities of contestation, requires an understanding of disaffection that registers its psychosocial character, its creativity and its localised meaningfulness.

Refusal

The second article, “*Non-Servile Virtuosi*” in *insubordinate spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield*, develops the idea that disaffection needs to be seen as situated within spatialities of contestation but worries away at the nature of the radical (or not) character of that contestation. The key move I made in this article was to shift the interpretive lens away from two dominant – and limiting – notions: first, that of resistance as it has traditionally been configured in education research; secondly, that of coalfield radicalism as constructed through a left historiography significantly dominated by the imperatives of labourism. I did this by deploying the conceptual framework of post-*autonomia* Marxism to think of young people’s actions as enacting a politically meaningful refusal defined as ‘exodus’ in Virno’s terms (Virno, 1996a, 1996b) . On that basis, I drew **the conclusion that it is both possible and fruitful to view disaffection as agentic ‘exodus’, thus avoiding two persistent temptations, both of which fail to do justice to the data.** These are, on the one hand, valorising it as nihilism; on the other, positioning it within a masculinised labourist romance constructed through a dominant – and politically partial – coalfield historiography.

Performativity

In the light of this emerging picture of disaffection as a complexly situated rejection of dominant policy productions and their localised implementation, the third article, “*It’s not a factory!*” *Performative educational provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a former UK coal-mining community*, looks in detail at political aspects of the relationships that

form between my intergenerational participants. In this article, the youth support sector as a whole is described as one increasingly affected by regimes of *performativity* primarily characterised by an audit culture of ‘outcomes’ and ‘targets’ secured through “policy rhetorics and discourses” (Ball, 2008: 5) that are “...contested, interpreted and enacted in a variety of arenas of practice and ... inflected, mediated, resisted and misunderstood...” (7). **The key conclusion of this article is that the creep of performativity is resisted in an intergenerational space that brings locally originating youth support workers and excluded young people together in an *unspoken* ethico-political bond. That bond is somehow negotiated through an intergenerational transmission of affect related both to that ‘resistant aspiration’ that I first noticed in *CG*, and to the ‘unofficial’ refusals of conditions of ‘precarity’ that I viewed as exodus in *EERJ*.**

Policy activism

The fourth article, *Sticking together!* *Policy activism from within a former UK coal-mining community*, tries to refine the argument made in *PERF*. It does so by using the concept of ‘policy activism’ to clarify how refusals that are necessarily limited in their impact in mainstream schooling contexts can, in the more relational ethos of non-school support settings, form an incipient site of activist possibility that is potentially capable of speaking back to policy in meaningful, even transformatory ways. One project is examined in detail and found to possess significant potential that remains, however, unrealised due to the power of socially necessary practices of silence operating in the local post-conflict context. **The conclusion is drawn that there is a need to deploy a consistently theorised form of critical intergenerational youth and community practice that is capable, like Rancière’s new history from below (see Rancière, 2011, 2012a, 2012b) of ‘archeologically’ and ‘polemically’ re-speaking the now ‘unspeakable’ – because silenced – practices of work**

place and community action, thus making them available to locally meaningful projects and practices of contemporary activism.

Concrete Utopia

The fifth and final article presented, *A practice of concrete utopia? Informal youth support and the possibility of 'redemptive remembering' in a UK coal-mining area*, aims to outline just such a model of practice. It is this article, really, that picks up the question of the practical implications of this doctoral work, and asks – in terms of practice, at least – what can be done? Drawing on work that attempts to redesign critical pedagogy in ways that are more commensurate with post-structuralist and post-modern sensibilities (McLaren and Tadeu de Silva, 1993; McLaren, 1995) I employ a small-scale literature rehabilitating the work of the least celebrated member of the Frankfurt School, Ernst Bloch. Drawing on Blochian readings of Freire, **the article concludes by mapping a critical pedagogy of intergenerational 'redemptive remembering' (a practice of 'concrete utopia' in Bloch's terms) arising out of local, subjugated histories and capable of linking episodic and short lived resistances of dominant policy imperatives – around, for example, 'resilience' and 'aspiration' – into a renewed, community-wide critical pedagogic project.**

Unpublished material

Perhaps the most significant area of my inquiry on which I have not published, as yet, is gender. I have, though, previously presented two linked papers – *'I know I'm going to have to hold back': Educational disaffection and 'aspiration' as experienced by women and girls in a former UK coal-mining community* and *'Not takin' no shit'. Disaffected Masculinities: Resistance and Schooling in a former UK Coal Mining Community* – to the Oxford

Ethnography Conference. As a result, I have been invited to submit an article on the topic to the journal *Ethnography and Education* (see Continuing Research, below) and am currently working on a draft. Some points are already sufficiently salient as to be worth mentioning.

Clearly, the question of gender and its relationship to class is central to any intersectional account of lived experience in the coalfields, and any contemporary work examining that setting has to address it. Questions relating to the division of labour in the coal-mining industry, the character of patriarchal labourism, and the reproduction of hegemonic forms of heroic masculinity through very particular power geometries, have all been trenchantly critiqued in the set of 1980s feminist studies referenced in the assembled articles. In the post-conflict, de-industrialised context of my work, however, these themes still loudly resonate and contemporary ways of ‘doing’ gender (Butler 1987) remain complex and problematic.

Initial interrogations of the data are interesting. Materials relating to young men suggest a powerful tension between the *transgressive* possibility (McLaren, 1995) of a masculinity embracing ‘tenderness’, identifiable in some coalfield performances of masculinity, and the more common, nostalgically coloured “protest masculinity...reworked in a context of poverty” noted in the international literature by Connell (Connell, 1995:114). The way that this tension plays out in the intergenerational space between the male workers and the excluded boys and young men – as a formulaic, gendered ‘respect’ on the one hand, and as a space of affectionate and gentle bonding on the other – is remarkable and worthy of a focussed consideration.

With regard to the girls and women, data again highlights a set of complex tensions: this time about femininity, class, place and (often incomplete) class transitions. The group of adult

women, all individually affected by their earlier experiences of personal growth, politicisation and changed family relations during the 1984-85 strike (see Spence and Stephenson, 2007) articulate a range of ambivalent responses to how their historically gendered ‘support’ role has re-emerged as a ‘career’ looking after ‘difficult ‘young men in low-paid and often casualised affective labour. Commonly, the women articulate their commitment to the young people with whom they work as one of protecting “skin and feelings and brains” against the masculinised ‘factory’ of performativity (see *PERF* in **Part1**).

As for the *young* women, data suggests that their ‘aspirations’ are ‘counter expressed’ in ways that veer sharply between, and sometimes combine, stereotypically masculine measures – “fighting back”, for example – and stereotypically feminine ones – wearing ‘Chav’ earrings in breach of school rules, going shopping in school time, for instance. That said, like the boys, their initial self-identification is apparently made not through gender but rather through class; or at least through a classed affective geography of being from “round ‘ere”. As such, being part of a generalised battle with “those who think they’re above you” – notably teachers – is as prominent a value for girls as it is for boys. Clearly, though analysis of this material is incomplete, there is a significant discussion to be developed around contemporary experiences of gender in de-industrialised settings and how it relates to the quite different picture established through milestone studies such as Weiss (1990)

Continuing Research

In the sub-section just concluded, I’ve pulled out the emerging findings from my doctoral inquiry. Taken out of the broader flow of ongoing development and captured separately, they seem odd, isolated. I think the true significance of the work carried out in this doctoral project

– the real *conclusion*, as it were – can only be brought out by systematically outlining the rich body of related research activity that it has already generated and which continues to flourish. In this final sub-section, I will outline that activity – both as research production and dissemination – as de facto evidence of the interest that my work has stimulated.

In the interests of space, I will focus on specific projects rather than reviewing general areas of inquiry in which I have become interested but as yet have no concrete plans to develop. In general, the proposals, seminars and projects noted below touch on three fairly distinct thematic areas within my work. First, that around the policy and practice implications for youth, community and education provision in de-industrialised areas (notably pertaining to questions of ‘disaffection’ and the debate around ‘aspirations’). Secondly, that concerning the methodological implications for ethnography of an approach attuned to affective geographies of class. Thirdly, that theorising ‘school disaffection’ as an aspect of a politics of refusal that might be generatively linked to developing ‘post-work imaginaries’ (Weeks, 2011).

In most cases, the initiatives originate in themes or ideas first expressed either in the articles submitted in this thesis or in a variety of conference papers presented at a total of nineteen international conferences during the period of doctoral study. Some of them develop material from the doctoral ethnography that remains, as yet, unpublished (the projected article on gender for *Ethnography and Education* being a case in point. See below). Others, which I’ll note, arise out of – and inform – multi-authored projects driven by institutional research centre priorities and links. Furthermore, while most are relatively conventional in form, I’ll nevertheless take a moment towards the end of this discussion to point to some linked creative practice projects that I am currently involved in which arise out of a longer term – but nonetheless serious – research ambition aimed at implementing an experimental

'research' practice that looks something like the critical performance ethnography that Denzin (2009) and Baguley (2009) consider, and to which I referred at the conclusion of the Methodology section above.

Summary of research involvement related to this thesis

ESRI Research centres

Since 2010, I have been closely involved with three research groups at the Education and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University: initially with the Centre for Social Justice in the City (led by Prof John Schostak) and the Centre for Innovation in Vocational and Life-long Learning (CIVILL) led, at the time, by Professor Helen Colley. In the period September 2012 to now, I've been part of the Centre for Difference, Diversity and Social Justice (led by Profs John Schostak and Heather Piper) which has been established through an amalgamation of the two earlier groups. In relation to each of these research centres I have, at various times, been involved in preparing material originating in my own work for inclusion in major research bids. Though these particular bids have, for various reasons, been unsuccessful they still broadly define the territory in which my future research feels most at home and the work invested in them continues to be productive. By way of an example, a recent research fellowship in Australia has provided an opportunity to exploit the congruence between my own research contribution to the (failed) bids and the institutional interests of colleagues at the Universities of Ballarat, Deakin and Victoria to crystallise a new book proposal planned to emerge out of a series of symposia that will be proposed to major European, Australian and American research conferences during 2013-14.

ESRC Bid (2011-2012)

During most of 2011, I spent considerable time working to Professor Helen Colley to draft a bid to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) seeking funding for a research project that would have been based in the coalfield area of Derbyshire. Basically, the project sought to extend work on ‘aspiration’ as classed, gendered, raced and spatialised that was emerging from interdisciplinary perspectives in youth studies and link it to work done in the life-long learning sector, using the findings of my own work as a pilot study. The intention was to interrogate notions of aspiration at both macro and micro levels through a critical policy ethnography such as that employed by Smyth in Australian studies (Smyth, 2010). Taking up Slack’s (2003) argument that work on “disaffection, non-participation and social exclusion [must] take a multi dimensional approach encompassing those factors that form the general economic, social and cultural framework within which individuals are located” (Slack, 2003: 331) the research proposed to investigate the situated, multiple meanings of aspiration as lived within a specific local context of de-industrialisation; focussing, as had my doctoral research, on an *intergenerational* group of mainly female, locally originating, adult professionals and para-professionals, and the group of young people with whom they worked.

With Prof Helen Colley as Principal Investigator, the analytic framework drew on feminist work on women returners that foregrounds class (Tett, 2000) and the fracturing of identity (Adams, 1996), and troubles the ‘conceptualisations and practices’ of transition as ‘inflexible and obdurate’ (Quinn, 2009, 118). Employing concepts such as nomadism (Braidotti, 1991) and exile (Hughes, 2002), the project aimed to interrogate participants’ developing and changing understandings of aspiration as they passed through and out of the ‘raising aspirations’ project that was to be researched. Uniquely, the study would have generated knowledge of how class, gender, place and time-space impact on understandings of aspiration in an education research space usually missed in the gap between two largely mutually

exclusive research literatures (that on youth 'transitions' and that on the experience of working class adult returners).

At the time I was working on this proposal, I was still employed part-time as a senior manager within the Children and Young Adults department of Derbyshire local authority and had been instrumental in managing negotiations that had secured an agreement covering fieldwork access. Frustratingly, however, the bid was ultimately withdrawn due to an unexpected change to ESRC funding regulations at national level which re-orientated ESRC funding priorities towards funding very large bids rather than the kind of medium sized project that we envisaged. Nevertheless, the research bid was prepared to completion and remains as a significant support for new directions in the general trajectory of my work. With development, it is now informing research on co-operative schooling which has emerged from the Centre for Difference, Diversity and Social Justice at ESRI and is being led by Professor John Schostak.

International research network on space, place and social justice, ESRI 2011-12

This project – for which I was Project Co-ordinator and which took place under the auspices of ESRI – originated in a discussion initiated by me among a multi-national group of scholars involved in the ethnography strand of the European Conference in Education Research (ECER) in Helsinki in 2010. In principle, the project aimed to establish an international network of education researchers around the topic of space, place and social justice in education by linking a number of research goals to a one day international research seminar held at Manchester Metropolitan University in July 2012. With the support of two European Education Research Association (EERA) research networks – network 19 (ethnography) and network 7 (intercultural education and social justice) – funding was gained from both EERA

and the British Education Research Association (BERA) to fund the project and achieve a variety of outcomes alongside the one-day seminar: a podcast of the event which would be made available to the EERA community and directly to the 2012 ECER conference in Cadiz; a research workshop supported by Networks 7 and 19 at ECER 2012; and a collection of original research papers brought together in a journal special issue of the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*.

The seminar took place as planned on 13th July in Manchester and brought together an international, multi-disciplinary audience interested in deepening their interrogation of questions of space, place and social justice in education. Around 70 participants came together to hear keynote presentations and individual papers from a total of 35 new and established scholars from four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe and South America (see http://www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/space/delegates_12/index.php).

Publication projects

Special Issue of *Qualitative Inquiry* on space, place and social justice in education.

In the summer of 2012, I was invited by Prof Norman Denzin at the University of Illinois to be lead editor of a special issue of the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*. The special issue, like the conference from which it originated, has been informed by methodological issues arising from my own doctoral research and will bring together nine full-length articles from the UK, US, Australia, South Africa and Spain around the topic of space, place and social justice in education. Now in the final editorial stages, it is scheduled to be published in Winter 2013.

Single authored book. Provisional Book Title: Youth and Educational Disaffection in an English Coal-Mining Community: an intergenerational ethnography. Contract signed with Tufnell Press for publication in 2014.

Article on gender aspects of my doctoral work for Ethnography and Education. This article will develop material initially considered in two conference papers presented to the Oxford Ethnography Conference in 2009 and 2010 respectively: “‘Not takin’ no shit!’ Disaffected masculinities, resistance and schooling in a former UK coal-mining community”, and “On refusing to be ‘plastic’: Educational disaffection and ‘aspiration’ as experienced by girls in a former UK coal-mining community”. As such, it will cover the main area of doctoral ethnographic data on which I have not yet published and will constitute a chapter of the single authored book.

Edited collection on ethnography after the affective turn

Supported by Prof Harry Torrance, Director of ESRI, I am currently drawing up plans for a major book proposal to Routledge that will be brought together through a series of symposia to be offered to the European Education Conference on Education Research, the International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois, the Australian Education Research Association conference and the British Education Research Education conference during 2014. The symposia and subsequent book will frame discussion around a key question in the contemporary field of ethnography: Is educational ethnography adequate to researching cultures of education after the affective turn in social theory? This topic arises directly out of my own work and is potentially the richest outcome of my doctoral researches.

International research dissemination

Spain

University of Barcelona, Spain, March 16th, 2012

Invited keynote speaker at *Sharing experiences of researching with young people. A European perspective*. Department of Educational Methods, University of Barcelona.

This one day seminar was organised to conclude the three-year national research project *Rethinking Secondary School Success and Failure by Considering Young People's Relationship with Knowledge* (MICINN. EDU2008-03287. 2008-2011), carried out by members of the consolidated research group Contemporary Subjectivities and Educational Environments – ESBIRINA (2009SGR – 0503), of the University of Barcelona.

Australia, March 2013

Visiting Research Fellowship at ADIEH, University of Ballarat

This fellowship involved a series of discussions, planning sessions and formal presentations which I was invited to deliver by Professor John Smyth at the Centre against Disadvantage in Education and Health (ADIEH), University of Ballarat. The formal events at which my doctoral work was disseminated included the following: a public lecture (*What's going on with disaffected youth and what's wrong with educational policy?*); a presentation to the graduate student community (Researching disaffection in resistant spaces – Sharing a research journey) and a joint Faculty of Education/ Faculty of Arts seminar (*Aspirations, social justice and educational refusal among young people*)

Deakin University Ethnography Colloquium, 25th March, 2013

'Place, ethnography and narrative' – I was invited to deliver a keynote presentation to this colloquium along with a Deakin panel of Prof Deb. Verhoeven, Dr. Karen Charman and Assoc. Prof Julianne Moss; chair Assoc. Prof Mary Dixon. Hosted from Deakin City Campus, Melbourne, this event was video-conferenced to Burwood, Geelong and Warrnambool campuses.

Presentation at College of Education, University of Victoria, Melbourne. 27th March, 2013

This presentation was invited by Professor Pat Drake, Dean Elect of the College of Education at Victoria University as a means of sharing the findings of my doctoral thesis work staff and doctoral students.

Forthcoming

BERA Youth Studies and Informal Education/TAG event, May 2013

Invited keynote at Street Violence, State Violence, Symbolic Violence: How Does Youth and Community Work Respond? University of West of Scotland, Hamilton Campus, May 9th, 2013.

The aim of this day is to deepen understandings of how youth and community work can be implicated with violence and how this can be addressed. Presentations of current research are intended to highlight the complexity of these relationships, particularly in the context of symbolic violence against communities in 'the riot-torn areas of our cities.'

Forthcoming conference papers

Paper accepted for the "Rhetoric, between the Theory and Practice of Politics"

Conference, University of Braga, Portugal, June 21/22, 2013.

Title: Rhetorical processes and the unwriting of neoliberalism for democratic organisation

Authors: Geoff Bright, Research Associate, Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University, John Schostak , Professor, Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University, Jill Schostak, independent researcher and author

Paper accepted for ECER 2013, Istanbul, September 10-13

Title: Mapping Spatialities of Affect: Some Methodological Implications for Ethnography of Education

Performance

As noted above, one of the most significant dynamics shaping my future research interest is that operating at the intersection of research (particularly ethnography) and performance. With that in mind, it is appropriate to summarise my research-informed performance practice within this section of this thesis. Basically, the thematic that links the various ongoing projects mentioned below is that of a relationship between performance ethnography, a post-*autonomia* politics of refusal, and improvisation as a non-representational, provocative, critical method.

Node/Flow/Mass

Node/Flow/Mass is an ongoing, mobile mass provocation devised by me and co-curated by myself, Walt Shaw

(http://www.artsderbyshire.org.uk/find_artist/search/artistprofile.asp?ArtistID=965) and

Gillian Whiteley (<http://www.bricolagekitchen.com>) . Its first manifestation – ‘Disaster Box’

– took place at the Magna Steel Heritage Centre, Rotherham on Saturday 3rd November 2012 with supporting curation from Matt Harling. Conceived initially as a response to a found object – a 1970s steelworks disaster evacuation plan – the event grew directly out of my doctoral work and brought together around 50 sonic improvisers and performance artists from collectives in different parts of the UK to take part in a ‘mass sound provocation’.

Fundamentally, the event mobilised sonic improvisation and embedded performance to re-occupy geographies of concentration and dispersal within a large-scale, post-industrial site. Using ideas of process and flow (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 1987) and notions of space, aesthetics and materiality in industrial ruins (Edensor, 2005) the provocation worked to *counter-enact* a pacified space of post-industrial ‘heritage’ consumption as a ‘ghosted site of insubordination’.

A film of the Disaster Box manifestation can be accessed at:

<http://www.facebook.com/events/293109217457131/>

ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder)

ODD is a provocative vocal and electronics improvising space enacted by myself, Lyn

Hodnett, (<http://lynhodnett.co.uk/lh/home.htm>) Bo Meson

(<https://www.facebook.com/bothemeson>) and Rob Tarana (<http://taranarecords.com/rob.php>)

Performances have included material devised by me such as “Schizoanalymprov” based on Foucault’s introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti Oedipus* (Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. 1983). A live manifestation of this provocation accompanied by improvised video can be heard/seen at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PD-4OQUfOBs>

Alchemy/schmalchemy

Alchemy/Schmalchemy is an ongoing performance space enacted by myself, Walt Shaw and Gillian Whiteley. My contribution deploys a variety of improvised activities to explore the borders of social inquiry and critical performance practice. Consciously parodying realist notions of authenticity, and authored artifice, *Alchemy/schmalchemy* aims to conjure a critically disruptive, oscillatory space of ‘becoming’ in which the live performance operates.

Dividual Machine @ Summer Institute of Qualitative Research (SIQR), ESRI, July 2013:

Research as Improv/Improv as research

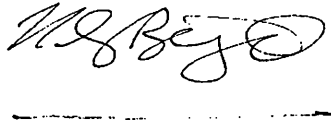
This project, devised by me, will constitute a significant performance/research space directly within the academy. Taking place at SIQR – the established international qualitative research summer event convened by Professor Maggie Maclure – this project will incite a research/performance laboratory interaction about ‘improvisation’ in research and ‘research’ in improvisation with the audience of qualitative researchers. *Dividual machine*, a temporary collective of sonic improvisers, will work live with the idea of the *ritournelle*, or ‘refrain’, from Section 11 of Deleuze and Guattari’s: *A thousand plateaus* as an initial provocative device which will “begin to bud ‘lines of drift’ with different loops, knots, speeds, movements, gestures, and sonorities” (Deleuze and Guattari: *A thousand plateaus*, 344). The performance and ensuing discussion will be recorded, filmed and ‘written up’ with a view to producing a multi-authored, multi-media ‘publication’ for submission to a methodology journal.

2. 6. Appendix

Appendix (a): Permissions

I hereby confirm that permission has been sought and granted by either the editor[s] or publisher of all the articles submitted for their inclusion in this thesis

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. B. J.', is written above a horizontal line.

Appendix (b): Table indicating how the article selection procedure required by the regulations for the degree of PhD by Article has been met

The articles forming the basis of the assessment will be as follows:

- **Regulation: The articles will deal with the same research question or set of questions but the material in each one should not be a duplication of the others**

Each article presented here was commissioned as a contribution to a special guest-edited issue and thus treats a different aspect of the doctoral inquiry as it developed. Broadly the themes of the submitted articles is as follows:

Children's Geographies (CG): Special issue theme: geographies of aspiration. Guest Editor: Sarah Holloway. University of Loughborough. Article topic: resistant aspiration. Article title: 'Off the Model': Resistant spaces, school disaffection and 'aspiration' in a former coal-mining community.

European Education Research Journal (EERJ): Special issue theme: bottom-up agency. Guest editor: Carola Mick, University of Paris. Article theme: refusal. Article title: "Non-Servile Virtuosi" in in subordinate spaces: School disaffection, refusal and resistance in a former English coalfield.

Performativity in UK Education (book chapter) (*PERF*): Editors, Bob Jeffrey, Open University and Geoff Troman, Roehampton University. Chapter title: "It's not a factory!" Performative educational provision for marginalised and excluded youth in a former UK coal-mining community

Journal of Education Administration and History (JEAH): Special issue theme: Policy activism. Guest editor: John Smyth, University of Ballarat, Australia. Article title: 'Sticking together!' Policy activism from within a former UK coal-mining community

Power and Education (PandE): Implications for practice. Special issue theme: Education after neo-liberalism. Guest editor, John Schostak, Manchester Metropolitan University. Article title: A practice of concrete utopia? Informal youth support and the possibility of 'redemptive remembering'

In all cases the draft articles were fully peer reviewed and then redrafted in the light of review and proof-read by the author on acceptance and prior to publication. Early drafts of all but the JEAH article were presented as conference papers at international conferences.

- **Regulation: The number of articles will depend on the scope of the work and on the candidate's contribution to them**

The five articles selected represent some (but not all) key themes from the doctoral study. Other significant themes are discussed elsewhere in this thesis

- **Regulation: The publications may be jointly written although the candidate must normally be the principal author of a major part of the work**

All articles presented are single authored by the candidate.

- **Regulation: In cases of multi-authored articles, candidates are required to indicate in the thesis appendix, by means of a list, their contribution to each article**

Not applicable

- **Regulation: The articles must either be already published or accepted for publication by the editor in order to qualify for inclusion in the award**

All are now published

- **Regulation: Students are required to seek and obtain copyright permission for their published work and will be required to sign a declaration to this effect which will be included in a thesis appendix**

Copyright permission sought and obtained for all articles

- **Regulation: Students should take into account the IP (Intellectual Property) regulations of Sheffield Hallam University**

Taken into account

- **Regulation: Candidates must agree the final content of the thesis, including the number of published papers and any related matters such as IP, ethics and confidentiality issues that may pertain to industrially sponsored research, with their supervisor(s).**

Submission agreed with supervisors. Other issues not applicable

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