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Understanding the Class Politics of Brexit in the Context of Urban Deindustrialisation

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Understanding the class politics of Brexit in the context of urban deindustrialisation

Joseph McMullan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

Candidate Declaration

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Abstract

Since 1979, Britain’s most marginal actors have become subject to a neoliberal class-project which has variously entailed: the destruction of industrial jobs and the hollowing out of post-industrial places, widening inequalities between the north and south of England, the dismantling of the welfare state and ratcheting up of punitive conditionality, and widespread deunionisation. These policies and processes have been given legitimacy through a ‘neoliberal common-sense’ which has misrecognised structural problems as individualistic and cultural. Immigrants and unemployment benefit claimants are harnessed for political gain through a series of discourses which blame these groups for structural problems across the country, deflecting attention from elites. This has occurred in parallel to the atrophying of political representation for the working-class, which has left them without a traditional ‘political home’ and their interests are increasingly marginalised as a result.

These interrelated themes and processes provide an important contextual backdrop to the experiences of, and opportunities available to, working-class people over the last forty years. This has important implications for the EU referendum: Brexit was part of a series of historical processes and changes in which working-class political subjectivities have developed over time and across space. This thesis takes a spatial, biographical and historical approach to trace the lineage of EU referendum voting justifications offered by twenty-eight working-class participants from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and age groups.

Existing explanations of Brexit offer valuable insights but provide only a partial account of the referendum result and shoehorn people’s subjectivities and experiences into narrower conceptual frameworks than is required. They can be broadly grouped into four clusters: ‘left behind’ explanations; explanations privileging class-based exploitation and marginalisation; explanations focusing on race, nation and ethnicity; and sovereignty. The complementarity of these themes has tended to be overlooked. This thesis synthesises a broader range of processes and developments (economic, political, socio-cultural, symbolic and spatial), which leads to a more nuanced and historicised account of voting justifications.

This project uses in-depth, semi-structured interviews to gain proximity to the lives of working-class residents living in two low-income neighbourhoods in Selby and Sheffield. It shows how voting justifications are complex, multi-layered and spatially sensitive, zigzagging across themes and different foci, and defying reductive, singular theoretical frameworks. What seems to unite some sections of the working-class is that those who feel like they have nothing to lose (economically, politically and symbolically) were more willing to take the ‘risk’ of voting for the unknown and change rather than the status quo.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Rationale for the Study

This study focuses on Brexit and how it was shaped by changing working-class political subjectivities in the context of urban deindustrialisation and political-economic restructuring processes playing out in the neoliberal era. It takes a spatialised, classed and historically situated perspective to understand working-class political subjectivities as informed by a range of processes and developments playing out over the last forty years. While the thesis draws upon an ethnically diverse range of respondents, it is the case that the majority of participants and data presented within the thesis are from white working-class people. The main research question it asks is: '*Why did people living within low-income communities vote to leave or remain in the 2016 European Union (EU) referendum?*' This research is premised on two primary factors. *Firstly*, as will be explored in more detail below, Brexit is internationally and domestically significant and tended to come as a surprise to a range of political and economic elites and international development organisations – the reasons for this need to be better understood. *Secondly*, existing explanations for Brexit have a series of shortcomings (see subsection 2.2) which tend to ignore the historical basis of the political-economic changes experienced in the UK and how this is an 'agent-full' process (c.f. Fairclough's (1995) use of the term 'agentless') – determined by groups with particular (class) interests – intended to restore class dominance.

The EU referendum (2016) was a political event in the United Kingdom which asked the electorate whether the UK should remain a member of, or leave, the European Union. It returned a leave majority of 51.9 percent. In the lead up to Britain's referendum on continued EU membership a range of powerful actors within the UK and internationally had endorsed a pro-remain standpoint. This included a majority of Conservative, Labour, LibDem and SNP MPs, organisations such as the World Bank, NATO, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and worker representative bodies such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Trades Union Congress (TUC). All major unions such as Unite, Unison and the GMB supported remain, although some smaller unions (ASLEF, RMT, BFAWU) were pro-Brexit.

The impacts of Brexit have had international and domestic effects. For example, Brexit threatened to undermine one of the world's oldest and most extensive trading blocs; had implications for the Northern Ireland peace process; and brought into question London's place as a global financial centre (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2022; O'Brennan et al. 2019; Springford and Portes, 2023). Domestically, Brexit has created trade barriers for UK businesses and foreign companies with operations in the UK; contributed to labour shortages; caused food shortages and made supply lines more complex and difficult to maintain; and in the immediacy of the result it led to spikes in racist hate-crime (Burnett, 2017).

In the expectation of a remain result, the EU referendum can be understood as an attempted hegemonic manoeuvre intended to shore-up the long-term legitimacy of the ruling class amidst growing instabilities of financial or neoliberal capitalism. The dominance of neoliberal capitalism in the UK has been characterised by deregulation of the economy (Harvey, 2007); rapid hollowing out of manufacturing and extractive industries (Jessop, 2018); labour precariousness and widening socio-economic inequalities (Umney, 2018); and an increasingly powerful (and unstable) financial sector (Harvey, 2007). These processes have had disproportionate effects on the working-class, subjecting them to greater class-based exploitation, the ratcheting up of class and racial othering, and deepening political marginalisation. As the findings of this study will show, this is intimately connected to Brexit.

This project draws upon 28 semi-structured interviews carried out with leave and remain voters from diverse ethnic backgrounds living in low-income neighbourhoods in Selby and Sheffield (Appendix 1 provides an overview of interviewees' demographic characteristics). One neighbourhood site is located in Selby North, a ward which is relatively ethnically homogenous (93.9% White British – Census, 2021), with recent experience of deindustrialisation (mainly coal mining) and low levels of immigration. The second was located in Burngreave, an area in north-eastern Sheffield with more historical experience of deindustrialisation, high ethnic diversity (30.8% Asian/Asian British, 25.3% White British – Census, 2021) and high levels of immigration. Interviews were secured through extensive voluntary work, gatekeeper organisations, local advertisement

and snowball sampling (see Chapter 4). Three core themes are drawn upon in this project: urban deindustrialisation and neoliberal restructuring processes; symbolic othering and denigration; and political disenfranchisement, marginalisation and realignment. These three themes are recurrent in explanations of voting decisions and were key features of the Brexit literature and debates. Chapter 2 explains in more detail how these three core themes were arrived at. In what follows, each of these themes will be briefly expanded upon to contextualise the rationale of this study.

The first theme relates to what some commentators call the 'body count' of deindustrialisation (Cowie and Heathcott, 2003): the closing down of heavy industries and the loss of industrial jobs. This loss of industrial jobs would not be as much of a problem had service jobs that replaced them been as numerous, as well-paid, and as unionised. In 1966 employment in British manufacturing peaked at 30% of the workforce but had dropped to 7.7% by 2019 (Beatty and Fothergill, 2020). Because of the way industry had developed geographically, these losses have been concentrated in towns, cities and coalfield areas in the Midlands, Northeast England, Yorkshire and the Humber, South Wales and Scotland (*ibid*; Beatty and Fothergill, 2013). These are areas which have been unfairly described as 'left behind' (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; 2017), a characterisation which tends to pathologise working-class people and the places they live as unable to keep up (McKenzie, 2017a; Telford and Wistow, 2019). This neglects the way deindustrialisation and the shift to a finance-led economy was intended to benefit the cheerleaders of financial capitalism and be to the detriment of marginalised groups such as the working-class.

Deindustrialisation and neoliberal political-economic restructuring have also entailed "the dismantling of institutions and narratives that promoted more egalitarian distributive measures in the preceding era" (Harvey, 2007: 22). This has meant the hollowing out of working-class communities, the loss of their jobs and occupational identities, as well as the stigmatisation of their ways of being (Skeggs, 1997; 2004; Tyler, 2013). As a hegemonic project, the success of financial or 'neoliberal' capitalism relies on the ideological production of common-sense: making the social relations constituted by it appear as self-evident, taken for granted truths (Crehan, 2016). Common-sense is a key theoretical concept

used throughout this thesis and can be understood as the ensemble of ideological propaganda produced ‘from above’ as technologies designed by political elites and the media, and in their class interests, to shape the way people think and speak about particular groups and issues (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999; Tyler, 2013). Relatedly, this is to garner consent for, or at least subdue more significant challenges to, policies, circumstances and conditions which might otherwise be recognised (correctly) to contravene the interests of broader social groups (such as the working-class more generally) rather than just an ‘undeserving’ or ‘othered’ section of them (such as migrants or welfare benefit claimants).

Gramsci’s ‘common-sense’ is a concept which refers to the sense-making primarily used and reproduced by ‘subaltern groups’ (as opposed to intellectuals, a key distinction in Gramsci’s work) which tends to be uncritical and incoherent (Crehan, 2016). Common-sense is pervasive precisely because it is a form of knowledge accessible by all groups which derives its ‘credibility’ not from proof or reasoning (although it can be perceived to be, and presented as, factual) but the extent to which it accords to popular beliefs. Gramsci argues that every social class has its own common-sense (Crehan, 2016) and this is part of the way political parties can appeal to, and consolidate a support base from, different sections of the electorate through specific narratives and discourses.

New forms of ‘neoliberal common-sense’ (Hall and O’Shea, 2013) are both borne out of, and give rise to, an ideological system that maligns the social security system as economically burdensome and characterises its recipients “as inherently and necessarily problematic” (Patrick, 2016: 245). Common-sense neoliberalism is both classed and racialised in the sense that the cultural value of particular ethnic and social groups is determined by their economic value and the extent to which they are able to demonstrate this through work and contribution to the nation (Makinen, 2017). The way neoliberalisation demands people think of structural issues as a matter of personal responsibility has buttressed political efforts to decouple class from politics and disconnect particular social groups – particularly immigrants, asylum seekers and welfare claimants – from the working-class. This in turn underpins conceptions of an underclass: people marked as beneath the class system entirely and treated with contempt and disgust (Tyler, 2013). It has opened up space to sow other forms of division which

further disaggregate the working-class from one another and make class solidarities harder to form. As Calhoun (2018: 59) argues persuasively "racial and national scapegoating reflect […] a political economy of blocked opportunity and widespread insecurity"; political-economic restructuring in the UK has not meant widespread insecurity for all, but for class groups for which these effects were intended.

Over the last forty years, a series of Conservative and Labour Party governments have undermined workplace and union rights and constrained access to public services, housing and welfare benefits through spending cuts and tighter eligibility criteria. This has coincided with ideological shifts within the Labour Party, leading to a lack of political representation for the working-class, growing disenfranchisement and the realignment of class groups to other parties perceived to voice their interests (Evans and Tilley, 2017). The rise of UKIP in the 2000s is particularly significant, but the party itself is perhaps less important than the fact that the circumstances in which it thrived (a wave of anti-immigration, nationalist and exclusionary sentiment) were at least partly created by mainstream political parties. The former UKIP leader Farage and his allies perpetuated a national-populist politics which straddled issues central to the referendum including immigration, sovereignty and 'the establishment'.

The slide towards national populism within the UK is partly rooted in the atrophying of political representation for the working-classes and, relatedly, the instabilities of neoliberal capitalism which dominant political parties continue to preside over (Davidson and Saull, 2017). Urban deindustrialisation, de-unionisation and welfare reform have, in different ways, destabilised the identities of working-class people, and particularly those of older workers that were formed in the post-war decades and were connected to racial and class hierarchies of the time (Saull, 2015). The extent to which different groups are more susceptible to national-populist discourses may be increased by the fact that nation and ethnicity are two of the only remaining forms of collective identities available to working-class people (Davidson and Saull, 2017). This is made more significant because of the decline in trade unionism and broader class solidarities which were key sources of political education for challenging common-sense, racialised and individualistic arguments.

1.2 Explanatory Frameworks of Brexit

Popular perceptions of the leave vote in the 2016 EU referendum have often suggested that Brexit was a (racist) white working-class backlash (Khaleeli, 2016; Novara Media, 2016; Taylor, 2016a). While most of those who voted to leave were middle-class (Dorling, 2016), it remains the case that the proportion of the working-class who voted to leave was higher than the middle-class. Those in social grades DE (64%) and C2 (62%), broadly understood as the working-class, had higher leave voting proportions than C1 (48%) and AB (41%) groups (Ipsos Mori, 2016).

Existing explanations as to why the working-class tended to vote to leave offer only partial accounts of their justifications and the political-economic context in which they were formed. Explanations for Brexit have coalesced around clusters of themes, with some focussing on economic marginalisation/deindustrialisation, while others explore immigration, nationalism and racism. The complementarity of these explanations and themes has tended to be overlooked and greater attention needs to be paid to the synergies across them. Synthesising a broader range of processes and developments (economic, political, socio-cultural, symbolic and spatial), as this thesis does, can lead to an understanding of Brexit which is more nuanced, historicised and able to capture the fullness of voting justifications. The next subsection examines some of the strengths and limitations of dominant explanations for Brexit (these arguments are discussed more fully in subsection 2.2).

1.2.1 The 'Left Behind' and Working-Class Backlash

Popularised by Ford and Goodwin (2014) in their study of the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and then further developed in their explanations of Brexit (Ford and Goodwin, 2017), the 'left behind' refers to a group of older, white, less educated voters who feel marginalised because of a series of economic and social changes. 'Left behinds' feel unable to access opportunities in a post-industrial labour market, that they have lost out in competition for jobs and in an

increasingly liberal and middle-class world, they feel threatened and alienated because of their social and political views. The main problems with this explanation are that it tends to stigmatise working-class people as unable to keep up and unmodern (McKenzie, 2017a) and it fails to give enough attention to the structural and class basis of socio-economic change.

1.2.2 Class-based Exploitation and Marginalisation

The arguments considered here are similar in the way they all argue for an understanding of the leave vote as premised upon the exploitation (Jessop, 2017; 2018; Telford and Wistow, 2019) and marginalisation (McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b) of the working-class. McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) uses a cultural class analysis approach which focuses upon the denigration of class identities and communities, while Jessop (2017; 2018) and Telford and Wistow (2019) focus more upon class exploitation and the class relations constituting neoliberal capitalism. McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) is a critic of the 'left behind' thesis but her account of Brexit also reduces economic and political restructuring processes as epiphenomenal to working-class symbolic and political struggles. McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) argues that the working-class are 'left out' of the rewards of capitalism, but analyses this through the culturalization of class. Jessop (2017; 2018) and Telford and Wistow (2019) take a more explicitly Marxist approach. The authors develop agent-full explanations that focus on neoliberal political and economic restructuring processes as intended to rebalance class relations, with political elites using a range of crises for political gain and shaping leave voting sentiments.

1.2.3 Anti-Immigration, Nationalism and Racism

Authors such as Bhambra (2017) have challenged the 'left behind' thesis and what they call the 'methodological whiteness' of other explanations for Brexit (for example, Ford and Goodwin, 2017 or, I would argue, McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b). Bhambra's (2017) critique suggests that socio-economic disadvantage cannot be the sole explanation for Brexit when some of the most disadvantaged groups –

minority ethnic voters in particular – voted to remain. Virdee and McGeever (2018) take a Marxist, historicised approach in line with Jessop but with a greater attentiveness to race and racism. They explain Brexit as a consequence of enduring political and economic crises which have left working-class voters more susceptible to an anti-globalisation and anti-immigrant politics, which encourages people to think of structural problems through racialised discourses of "blood and nation" (Davidson and Saull, 2017: 5). Patel and Connelly (2019) argue that working-class leave voters articulated their justifications through 'post-racial racisms' – the more coded and non-racial forms of racism – but fail to grasp the class dynamic.

1.2.4 Sovereignty and 'Take Back Control'

'Take Back Control' was the key slogan of the official Vote Leave campaign founded by political strategists Mathew Elliott and Dominic Cummings and supported by prominent politicians such as Boris Johnson and Michael Gove. In academic work, the saliency of sovereignty relates to how it has been constructed "in opposition to a 'failure of democratic internationalism'" (Menon and Wager, 2020: 279) and a way to reclaim political *and* social and economic control against the backdrop of a series of changes occurring over time (*ibid*; Agnew, 2019). As the argument goes in official government literature, leaving the EU will ensure that Britain is able to take back control of its economy as well as immigration policies, establishing new economic partnerships, safeguarding jobs (HM Government, 2018) and managing immigration in a way which benefits British people (with 'British' being a complex identity and subject to racialised definitions). Taking back control focuses upon the idea of British sovereignty as being lost to EU integration and EU bureaucracy, with voters supporting leave because they wanted to see decision making processes made at the smallest possible scale. Implicitly, this argument draws upon ideas about 'race' and nation by encouraging people to think about sovereignty, democracy and laws through discourses relating to statehood, belonging and immigration and ties into common-sense ideas about deservingness.

1.3 Understanding Brexit in the Context of Neoliberal Political-Economic Restructuring

Existing explanations for Brexit tend to offer partial accounts which oversimplify and flatten voting behaviour into narrow theoretical frameworks and thematic foci and tend to ignore the complementarity of themes and synergies across explanations. Authors such as Bhambra (2017); McKenzie (2017a; 2017b); Patel and Connelly (2019); Telford and Wistow (2019); and Virdee and McGeever (2018) are right to draw attention to the weaknesses of the 'left behind' thesis, yet the prescriptions they offer also pose a series of different empirical, methodological and theoretical problems (see subsection 2.2). The purpose of this thesis is to explore the validity of these explanations and the assumptions underpinning them, and allow for more nuanced, complex analysis which is rooted in understanding the everyday lives and experiences of leave voters.

This thesis proceeds from Tyler's (2013; 2015; with Jensen, 2015) interweaving of Marxist political economy; the symbolic and cultural articulation of neoliberal hegemony through common-sense discourses which perpetuate classed, racial and nationalistic divisions (building on the work of, *inter alia*, Gramsci); and classificatory struggles and cultural class analysis (owing to Bourdieu) (explained more fully in subsection 3.1). I add to, and extend, this theoretical framework by applying it to the formation of longstanding political subjectivities in the context of Brexit. This theoretical framework is also flexible enough to allow for divergences and differences. The study draws upon a Marxist model of class which centres on the ownership of the means of production (capitalist and proletariat or working-class) which is also attentive to the cultural divisions within and between these groups, and the symbolic ramifications of class positions as Bourdieu's work attests.

1.3.1 Research Objectives, Questions and Design

This project shows how working-class people form their political subjectivities in the context of urban deindustrialisation and political and economic restructuring

processes occurring in the shift to neoliberalism in the UK. Going further, it shows how these historically generated dispositions are important to the way more contemporary political events – such as the EU referendum – are experienced and interpreted. The main research objective this project pursues is:

> *To understand how and why people living in low-income neighbourhoods in England voted to leave or remain in the EU referendum (2016).*

This can be translated into the following four research questions:

1. What are the economic, political, socio-cultural and symbolic factors that influenced the way working-class people voted in the referendum?

2. What does the Brexit vote tell us about wider working-class political subjectivities and class-based forms of politics?

3. What analytical and theoretical tools best support an understanding of the effects of the UK's changing political economy?

4. How useful are existing explanatory frameworks of Brexit for understanding the leave vote?

1.3.2 Contributions to Knowledge and Core Arguments

This study makes a number of contributions to knowledge; these are developed more fully in Chapter 10 but can be briefly reprised here. They include:

1. Interviewees' justifications for voting to leave or remain are complex and multifaceted, and challenge more monolithic theories and explanations, which vindicates the synthesisation of multiple theories and foci.

2. The theoretical framework developed in this project is a response to the weaknesses of cultural class analysis (losing sight of the economic) and Marxist political economy (losing sight of micro-level experiences). It is argued these shortcomings need to be addressed to fully understand what changing working-class political subjectivities tell us about Brexit.

3. Brexit cannot be abstracted from its longer-term historical roots. Brexit is the starting point of analysis which looks backwards (and forwards) to explore the longer-term economic, socio-cultural, political and symbolic processes, changes and developments which have shaped working-class political subjectivities over time.

4. This study asserts the importance of viewing the working-class as a multi-ethnic group and in doing so challenges 'white victimhood' explanations of Brexit.

This study shows that sections of the working-class who felt like they had 'nothing to lose' were more likely to vote for 'risk' and change (leave) rather than the status quo. Common-sense arguments were central to the way interviewees (both leave and remain voters) articulated their voting justifications. These discourses seemed to be more responsive to the structural problems interviewees were facing than mainstream political rhetoric allowed. Not only this, as the findings of this study attest, the leave campaign was able to build a coalition of voters across different ethnic backgrounds and age groups.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 provides a critical overview of the dominant explanations for the referendum result, expanding on the schematic outline provided above, followed by a more thematic review which maps out the economic, political and social context within Britain and how it has changed over the last four decades. This begins with an exploration of how urban deindustrialisation and restructuring processes occurring in the shift to neoliberalism have played out within the UK and why financial capitalism was adopted as a hegemonic strategy. Secondly, attention is paid to the ideological tools and technologies used to (attempt to) manufacture consent for financial capitalism, thinking about the production of common-sense discourses and the way they target marginalised populations. The final subsection focuses upon the relationship between class and politics, and changes to working-class voting behaviour.

The theoretical and conceptual approach is discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter explicates how structural changes occurring at the macro-level can and should be connected to micro-level attitudes, subjectivities and responses to these processes. Chapter 4 focuses on the study's methodological approach: it explains the usefulness of a critical realist-informed ontological approach, the value of focussing upon two different low-income neighbourhoods, and the way semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to produce rich data. Detail about sampling procedures, data analysis and the practicalities of conducting this project ethically, and with an attentiveness to positionality and reflexivity, are also included. Chapter 5 presents neighbourhood profiles of both Selby and Burngreave (Sheffield), exploring the local and regional economic, labour market, political and demographic context within each case study site. This chapter also reasserts the value of a spatial approach to studying Brexit and shows how regions which are poorer overall tended to vote leave.

Four analysis chapters which broadly map onto each of the themes discussed in the literature review comprise the remainder of the thesis. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 show how working-class participants form their political proclivities within the context of urban deindustrialisation and the class relations and classed experiences it shapes. Chapter 6 takes a more narrative approach to analysis which dedicates more space to individual accounts to trace the lineage and complexity of interviewees' political subjectivities. Narrative is designed to complement the later thematic analysis chapters which can prise data from the contextual totality of participants' experiences. It is shown how a range of explanations and themes can and do coalesce in a single account and how these explanations are often justified in relation to a series of life experiences occurring over time, which may be treated as unrelated or insignificant without a longitudinal/narrative focus.

In terms of thematic analysis chapters, Chapter 7 looks at the material impacts and experiences of economic marginalisation shaped by rounds of deindustrialisation and, more recently, austerity. It shows how these experiences, and a perception that things were better in the past, shape the way participants voted in the referendum. Chapter 8 concerns the articulation of symbolic, ideological technologies (common-sense) used to justify inequalities wrought by

capitalism. It shows how participants' voting justifications are often couched in terms which pertain to a series of classed, racialised and nationalistic divisions designed to divert attention away from political elites. Chapter 9 focuses on political disenfranchisement and realignment. It shows how interviewees feel abandoned and neglected by mainstream political parties and the perception that their needs, and those of the country more generally, are repeatedly ignored. As a form of direct democracy, the EU referendum was interpreted as an opportunity for real social and economic change. The thesis conclusion is presented in Chapter 10, which summarises the key conclusions of the study, adds detail to the contributions to knowledge it makes and fleshes out some of the limitations and possible future directions for research in this area.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Understanding the EU referendum result (2016) requires a deeper analysis of the wider structural changes and processes which have been shaping working-class politics, communities and identities over time. These key developments pertain to urban deindustrialisation and neoliberal restructuring (privatisation, deregulation, competition and offshoring), political state crafting, ideological shifts in party politics and the symbolic othering that serves elites to divert attention away from the sources of structural inequalities. Many of the explanations volunteered for Brexit by participants do frame their analysis using *some* of these themes, but accounts tend to be atomistic and partial, with participants prioritising some processes and developments whilst excluding others (such as focussing on economic change without reference to wider capitalist relations). The key element which distinguishes my own approach from other academic accounts is its synthesis of a broad range of themes, processes and developments in a more holistic way which illuminates the myriad of experiences informing, and being informed by, interviewees' political dispositions and particularly how they relate to Brexit.

This chapter begins with a critical review of the dominant explanations for Brexit, which have different inflections and foci. Each explanation tends to be associated with one or two key academics, other than the final subsection (Taking Back Control), which is more of a popular/political narrative. The explanations include:

- The 'left behind' and working-class backlash.
- Class-based exploitation and marginalisation.
- Arguments foregrounding racial nationalisms.
- 'Taking Back Control,' which focusses on sovereignty.

The purpose of this section is to unpick different explanations of the referendum result in order to draw out key themes, codify different explanations, and illuminate unresolved debates and gaps in understandings.

The literature review then proceeds with three thematic subsections which explore the key trends, developments and processes that have impacted on and shaped working-class dispositions, subjectivities and experiences over the last forty years. It is important to note that objective structures do not inform working-class subjectivities in a deterministic fashion; the two are mutually constitutive in a dialectical process in which structures are internalised as dispositions, but dispositions shape structures (see Bourdieu, 1977). These core themes are broadly about neoliberal restructuring and deindustrialisation; symbolic othering and denigration; and political re/dealignment.

The thematic foci of these subsections were arrived at through an iterative analysis exploring explanations for Brexit – which revealed a series of key themes (such as the economy, immigration, racism, and inequality) which I felt were important to explore in more detail – and broader literature on working-class politics. A series of theoretical preconceptions which owe to the work of Bourdieu and Tyler, and particularly the idea that working-class (political) dispositions are formed through the internalisation of life experiences and struggles against classification, prefigured how I arrived at these core themes. Themes, gaps and inconsistencies identified in the Brexit literature helped to further develop the theoretical framework I (see Chapter 3), particularly in terms of the need to bring more explicitly Marxist and political-economic understandings of the classed effects of capitalist restructuring processes into dialogue with more cultural and symbolic theories.

These three themes are critical to understand my later analysis: participants' justifications for voting to leave or remain are about long-term feelings of economic, political and symbolic marginalisation which stem from experiences of structural change. In brief they concern:

1) *The Losers of Financial Capitalism: Forty Years of Economic Marginalisation* (Section 2.3.1). This subsection concerns how different policies and processes instituted as part of, or as a result of, the regime shift towards financial capitalism, can be understood as a way to discipline the working-class, curtail their bargaining power, and subject them to increasingly insecure, precarious and degrading living and workplace conditions.

2) *Legitimising Political State-Crafting Through Symbolic 'Othering'* (Section 2.3.2). In this subsection, attention is paid to the ways in which punitive social and economic policies are made to appear 'legitimate' and necessary by using a range of common-sense narratives to stigmatise, racialize and denigrate 'other' groups as deserving of punishment and undeserving of empathy and equality.

3) *Political Disenfranchisement and Realignment* (Section 2.3.3). The final subsection explores the collapse of class voting patterns, how class has been expunged from political rhetoric and discourse, the re-emergence of national-populist parties in the UK and what this means in terms of the way class groups feel politically represented and heard.

Firstly, however, I explore the various competing explanations for Brexit in greater detail.

2.2 Explanations for Brexit

One of the key tasks underpinning the formulation of research questions and aims for this thesis was codifying the key themes and developments within existing explanations for Brexit and identifying gaps and shortcomings, particularly in relation to my theoretical interests and knowledge. The explanations for Brexit explored in this subsection are, to different extents and with different problems, largely unsatisfactory accounts, for reasons which will be elaborated further throughout this subsection.

Before exploring these accounts, a brief summary of the breadth of voting themes can be demonstrated by Swales' (2016) work, who draws upon a range of data from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, British Election Study (BES) and NatCen Panel Study. The author shows how the economy was cited as the most important factor deciding referendum position (21 percent of participants), followed by immigration (20 percent), while 17 percent cited sovereignty and EU bureaucracy as the most important, and a range of other factors, including cosmopolitanism and protection of rights, were also mentioned (*ibid*; see Figure

1). What stands out from this is that immigration is an important issue, but balanced by similarly significant issues, and how there a wide range of factors shaping political proclivities. The top three concerns identified by Swales (2016) roughly map onto the core foci of each thematic findings section presented later in this thesis (Chapters 7-9).

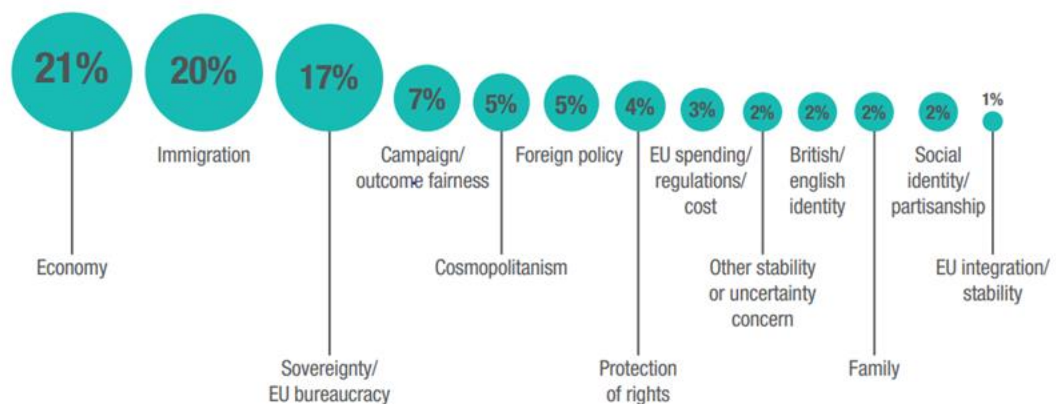


Figure 1 – Issues cited as most important to referendum voting decision. Adapted from Swales (2016).

Synthesising a range of largely academic qualitative studies, analyses and other theoretical contributions to knowledge of Brexit, I have identified four core explanations, albeit with not always clear boundaries, which mobilise different arguments around the leave vote. By doing so, I was able to see how each of the core explanations tended to ignore elements of the other, as well as the value of synthesising the foci of each in an overarching theoretical framework (see Chapter 3) to produce a more holistic understanding of Brexit wedded to its wider structural context.

Table 1 summarises the key characteristics of each of the four core explanations. In summary, the authors of the 'left behind' thesis (Ford and Goodwin, 2017) focus on economic marginalisation and labour market change as the drivers of largely white working-class resentment, which they see as key to understanding

Brexit. The second core explanation focuses on class-based exploitation and marginalisation. What sets this apart from the 'left behind' thesis is the way the former focuses on neoliberal restructuring processes as intending to rebalance class relations in favour of the capitalist class and their intermediaries, rather than presenting the plight of the working-class as an unfortunate outcome of blind historical processes. Other explanations for Brexit take as their focus immigration, race and post-colonialism, with some following more intersectional approaches which combine class exploitation/marginalisation with an attentiveness to race and racialisation (Virdee and McGeever, 2018).

The 'take back control' thesis is a political campaign message-cum-explanation which focuses on sovereignty. It has some loose thematic similarities in the way claims to sovereignty are (not unproblematically) often articulated through discourses of economic change and immigration. In academic work, explanations of the saliency of sovereignty tend to argue that it acted as an umbrella term used by politicians, and in the media, to provide "legitimacy and coherency to a range of broadly nativist views and populist sentiments" (Menon and Wager, 2020: 280; see also Agnew, 2019). Sovereignty was significant to voters in the way it was premised upon an ensemble of broader and deeper concerns – some about how political decisions are made in the UK, others about immigration and borders – and how it offered a sense of control in a period of change, uncertainty and insecurity.

These core explanations are not discrete entities; they overlap with each other and can be mobilised as clusters of explanations within single narratives, such as a left behind working-class that can restore a sense of pride and status by reclaiming sovereignty from the EU.

Explanation	Key People	Source of Argument	Positives and Negatives	1. Economic Marginalisation	2. Symbolic and Discursive Othering	3. Political Disenfranchisement and Realignment	Core Logics
The 'left behind'	Ford & Goodwin (2017).	Academic, journalistic, political, popular.	Positives: provides economic/labour market explanation for Brexit. Does not downplay size of working-class (both in Brexit vote and society generally). Negatives: focuses only on white working-class; glosses over race/ethnicity and immigration.	Deindustrialisation. Labour market insecurity. Economic inequality and insecurity. Labour market effects of immigration.	Construction of 'left behind' as ideological tool (victims of globalisation).	Class fragmentation. Political disenfranchisement and realignment. Liberal identity politics denigrating 'illiberal' working-class.	Long term ('agentless') economic and social structural changes have marginalised older, white, working-class voters who no longer have the skills needed to succeed in a post-industrial labour market.
Class-based exploitation and marginalisation	McKenzie (2017a; 2017b). Jessop (2017; 2018); Telford & Wistow (2019).	Mostly academic.	Positives: structural and historicised explanation of Brexit which offers persuasive account of class struggle from above (Jessop and Telford & Wistow). Negatives: does not focus on race/ethnicity and immigration; lacks empirical grounding (Jessop); not too dissimilar to left behind (McKenzie).	Uneven development. Class marginalisation. Increasing exploitation. Class domination. Deindustrialisation. Economic crises.	Crisis of hegemony, legitimising structural inequalities.	'Blowback' effects of chronic insecurity lead to support for national populism. Political marginalisation stems from increasing exploitation.	Economic marginalisation and the dismantling of institutions underpinning class domination, exacerbates divisions and inequalities which are harnessed by national-populist parties and the leave campaign.
Anti-immigration, nationalism and racism	Bhambra (2017); Patel & Connelly (2019); Virdee & McGeever (2018).	Mostly academic. Limited distribution in media and popular.	Positives: attentive to race/ethnicity and some develop a persuasive intersectional, structural and historical account of Brexit (Virdee & McGeever). Negatives: some lack empirical grounding; others offer individualistic accounts of working-class (Patel & Connelly).	Labour market effects of immigration. Post-colonial decline.	Immigrants as 'other' population, used as scapegoats for structural inequalities.	White working-class feel 'uniquely disadvantaged' and tend to support divisive national-populist politics. Links to 'liberal' identity politics: working-class as insular and racist.	Widening and deepening structural inequalities wrought by neoliberalism have been racialised and blamed on a series of external and internal 'others'. These racialized discourses were harnessed by leave campaign.
'Take back control' and sovereignty	Cummings (2016); Johnson (2016). Agnew (2019); Menon & Wager (2020).	Political (campaign), journalistic, popular and academic.	Positives: useful to show how political parties may have used Brexit as a hegemonic manoeuvre to secure legitimacy in period of crisis. Negatives: focus on sovereignty in 'take back control' thesis tends to be displaced arguments about structural inequalities.	Economic crises. Free movement of goods, services, people. Claims to sovereignty as response to economic decline and social change.	EU as scapegoat for domestic problems (involving poorer EU nations, migrants, EU bureaucrats).	Perceived failures of democracy. Links to a communitarian/nostalgic form of identity politics (looking back to better times).	Bloated and burdensome contributions are made to the EU to support a dysfunctional financial system, to prop up poorer economies and pay unelected bureaucrats to govern Britain from abroad. Brexit is about reclaiming parliamentary sovereignty, and being able to take control of Britain's borders, money and laws.

Table 1 – Summary of Brexit explanations.

2.2.1 The 'Left Behind'

The 'left behind' thesis is an explanation for Brexit which focuses on economic and labour market processes but tends to constitute a deficit model in the way it explains the leave vote through the inability of the white working-class to adapt to structural change, thus individualising responses to neoliberal capitalist restructuring as the reason (Ford and Goodwin, 2017). The key point of criticism is that it glosses over how economic and labour market changes are part of an active process of class struggle from above that *produces* and *exacerbates* inequalities. The social values of the 'left behind' are considered to be insular and parochial among an increasingly younger, liberal and supposedly middle-class electorate (Ford and Goodwin, 2017). Ford and Goodwin contend that "mainstream politicians attached to that [liberal] consensus were not only ignoring the values and priorities of the 'left-behind', they were actively promoting a vision of Britain that the 'left-behind' voters found threatening and rejected" (Ford and Goodwin, 2017: 4).

Ford and Goodwin's (2017) focus on 'left behind' people largely fails to set people in a spatial and economic context of 'left behind' neighbourhoods and regions. Economic geography is an important factor shaping national-populist proclivities, with people living in deindustrialising and declining (left behind) areas tending to vote leave. Other advocates of 'left behind' arguments have extended its focus to consider the spatial and geographic dimensions of economic and labour market change and how it produces inter-regional inequalities and resentment (Carrascal-Incera et al. 2020; McCann, 2020; McCann and Ortega-Argiles, 2021; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018). McCann (2020) shows how the UK has some of the greatest inter-regional inequalities in the industrialised world and claims that this is "essential for understanding the 'geography of discontent' and political shocks which are evident nowadays in many countries" (McCann, 2020: 256).

The inter-regional effects of economic decline wrought by deindustrialisation (McCann, 2020) are compounded by punitive welfare reforms and disinvestment (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016) which shape the way that people then think about and experience the opportunities and landscapes around them and form their (political) subjectivities. People who live in places which have suffered from rapid decline, job loss and/or greater exploitation, service closures and perceived

neglect are increasingly susceptible to political discourses which attack the "factors on which recent economic growth has been based: open markets, migration, economic integration, and globalisation" (Rodriguez-Pose, 2018: 32).

Some commentators (Bhambra, 2017; Patel and Connelly, 2019) have claimed Ford and Goodwin's (2017) analysis offers a disingenuous account of the class breakdown of the referendum and that the authors gloss over racism and racial inequalities. They argue, using research from Dorling (2016), that it was the white, propertied, middle-class in southern England that delivered the majority of the vote. These authors are right to question Ford and Goodwin's (2017) focus on the white working-class when working-class people from ethnic minority backgrounds are just as disadvantaged by economic and labour market restructuring processes, and many voted to remain. In terms of class, Dorling (2016) uses the Registrar General's framework to show that those in social grades ABC1 (broadly understood as the middle-class) represented 59% of the total leave vote, whilst those in the two lowest social class groups D and E, constituted only 24% (Dorling, 2016). One criticism is that Dorling excludes grade C2 (which should be part of the working-class) from analysis completely and overestimates the size of the middle-class in society more generally. However, it is perhaps no surprise that 'middle-class southerners' constituted a larger proportion of the leave vote because more people live in the south and middle-class people are more likely to turn out and vote. But in terms of relative probabilities, *the working-class were still the social class group most likely to have voted to leave the EU* (Dorling, 2016; Ipsos Mori, 2016) and greater leave voting majorities were found in the midlands, Yorkshire and northern England (Beatty and Fothergill, 2018).

Several other important contributions have offered partial ripostes to the 'left behind'. Surridge et al (2021), build upon the work of Swales (2016), and explore the motivations of 'comfortable leavers'. These are people who are predominantly Conservative Party supporters, tend to have incomes of over £2,200 per month, are middle-aged (average age of 47 years), Eurosceptic, feel like they are managing financially and have anti-welfare attitudes (Swales, 2016). Comfortable leavers think immigration has made things worse in the UK and share a "nostalgic optimism that leaving the EU might be a catalyst for change […] that could restore

industries, services and a sense of pride from an earlier era" (Surridge et al. 2021: 11). This adds nuance to understandings of the effects of economic and social contexts on leave voters. Left behind white working-class leave voters living in deindustrialised and declining areas can co-exist with 'comfortable leavers'.

Relatedly, Antonucci et al (2017) focus their analysis on the 'squeezed middle'. They use data from the British Election Survey (BES) to show how this group – those with stable jobs, declining financial positions and GCSE or A-level qualifications – were more likely to have voted to leave the EU than those with little to no educational qualifications. Fundamentally, this is about class trajectory; the squeezed middle "face an increasing challenge in maintaining their lifestyle" (Antonucci et al. 2017: 214-15) because of widening inequalities, greater downward pressure on wages and welfare reforms which have stripped away social protections for all but the most marginalised groups (*ibid*). This further weakens the validity of explanations which single out particular groups (the white working-class 'left behind') and misses the nuances and complexities of the range of leave voters assembled within this coalition.

2.2.2 *Class-based Exploitation and Marginalisation*

The explanations explored here are similar to each other in the way they think of Brexit as related to processes which disaggregate and dispossess working-class people. They differ, however, in the way one subscribes to a more cultural class analysis approach (McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b) and the other a more structural, economistic and Marxist approach (Jessop, 2017; 2018; Telford and Wistow, 2019). McKenzie's (2017a; 2017b) work is premised upon qualitative interview data and fieldwork diaries derived from ethnographic study of two deindustrialised working-class communities, one situated in East London and the other in Nottinghamshire. She is a critic of the 'left behind' thesis, arguing that it stigmatises the working-class as outmoded and oversimplifies "the depth and intensity of what has happened to working-class people, their communities and their identities for over 30 years" (McKenzie, 2017a: 207). McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) argues that working-class interests have been systematically abandoned by mainstream political parties over this period, with both Labour and the

Conservatives pursuing economic and social policies that have served to exacerbate inequalities and attack working-class communities and identities.

The extent to which McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) convincingly demarcates her analysis from that of the 'left behind' is questionable. Using a cultural conception of class struggle – which focuses more upon struggles against symbolic representation than labour relations – she does not do enough to connect the ground level experiences of working-class people to macro-level processes of neoliberal capitalist restructuring which have advanced class domination. In a similar way to Ford and Goodwin (2017), McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) also focuses too narrowly on the views of the white working-class. Having conducted part of her research in Newham and Tower Hamlets – areas where only 16-30% of the population are White British – McKenzie's (2017a; 2017b) work is unrepresentative of the ethnic backgrounds of the majority of working-class residents in that case study site.

McKenzie (2017a; 2017b) problematises depictions of the *white* working-class in politics and the media as both economically and culturally impoverished and argues against the 'left behind' for legitimising these "devalued identity of the deindustrialized working class" (McKenzie, 2017a: 277). We must also be mindful of overlooking cultural stigmatisation experienced by many working-class people of colour and the depth of institutionalisation white privilege holds. For example, types of religious fundamentalism attributed to working-class Muslim communities are not only constructed as a form of cultural impoverishment but are drawn from deeply sedimented racial stereotypes which frame them as a threat to the very constitution of Britain as a nation. Attitudes of this kind are related to Brexit because of the way racialised common-sense discourses of immigration and borders bleed over into anxieties about ethnic and religious minorities more generally (Virdee, 2017).

Other explanations from Jessop (2017; 2018) and Telford and Wistow (2019) (also Virdee and McGeever, 2018, discussed in the subsection below) are more explicitly Marxist forms of political economic analysis. The authors develop agent-full explanations that identify the protagonists of class struggle from above, who are able to harness the contradictions and crises of capitalism as technologies through which anti-EU sentiment can be cultivated. Jessop (2017; 2018)

develops a theoretical interpretation of Brexit from a Poulantzian and Gramscian perspective. He takes a historical approach to explain how the referendum itself could be thought of as a hegemonic manoeuvre pursued by the Conservative Party as an attempt to reconcile and placate deepening economic crises which are a symptom of the internal weaknesses of a capitalist political economy (Jessop, 2017; 2018). Whilst Jessop does not explicitly claim so, this critique seems to take aim at the 'take back control' narrative. In this context, Brexit is explained by Jessop as a form of 'nationalist and populist blowback': resistance from "disadvantaged capitals, intensified uneven development, increasing inequalities of income and wealth" (Jessop, 2018: 1731). However, what Jessop (2017; 2018) does not do is explore what counts as 'national-populist blowback' in an empirical context: different classed groups living in particular neighbourhoods may see the EU as being a greater or lesser source of wealth and opportunity.

Telford and Wistow (2019) draw upon qualitative data to link together a "localised experience of neoliberalism's slow-motion social dislocation" (*ibid*: 1) and decisions to vote to leave the EU. Their data set is derived from 26 interviews conducted with white, working-class and predominantly male residents of Teesside in northern England. Telford and Wistow (2019) explicitly challenge the 'left behind' thesis and provide further nuance to the idea that systematic exclusions from the rewards of global capitalism provide an important explanatory framework for understanding motivations to leave the EU (Telford and Wistow, 2019). In a similar way to McKenzie (2017a; 2017b), Telford and Wistow (2019) argue that Brexit must be understood as shaped by deindustrialisation, the playing out of neoliberalism and the Labour Party's abandonment of the working-class.

Their analysis differs from McKenzie (2017a; 2017b), however insofar as it is more about class-based exploitation and domination rather than processes of cultural exclusion: the authors talk more about the loss of jobs, low wages and the decline of unionisation instead of class stigma, respectability and deservingness. What the authors devote little attention to are concerns over immigration despite nearly a third of the sample having claimed it "intensified the difficulty in obtaining remunerative work, housing and put additional pressure on

underfunded public services" (Telford and Wistow, 2019: 9). This may be a purposeful omission given the constraints of journal writing or challenging to acknowledge as Marxists who wish to defend working-class interests. A number of authors also take more explicitly intersectional approaches to analysis (other than Patel and Connelly, 2019), which explain Brexit through the interrelatedness of class, race and nation.

2.2.3 Immigration, Nationalism and Racism

Explanations considered in this subsection tend to critique the 'left behind' thesis for glossing over race and ethnicity and suggest that the EU referendum result was at least partially determined by racialised conceptions of nation and economic and social change. Rhodes et al. (2019) draw upon the experiences of 15 residents living in Oldham from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds which provide counter-narratives to the 'left behind' and develop progressive and structural understandings of local social and economic problems. Although voting proclivities are not the central focus of their work, Rhodes et al (2019) claim that the majority of their participants think of themselves as 'Remainers' who thought Brexit would deepen local economic insecurity, consolidate racial inequalities, and further entrench a feeling of political neglect. The report underscores the fact that the white working-class are not "uniquely disadvantaged" (*ibid*: 7), and that individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds continue to experience disproportionately high levels of poverty but form their political subjectivities in different ways.

Bhambra (2017) argues that a 'methodological whiteness' in the popularisation of the 'left behind' narrative – which focuses on white working-class concerns rather than considering the working-class as multi-ethnic – displaces racialized inequality from the discussion. Bhambra's (2017) critique of the 'left behind' thesis is not based upon empirical findings; this doesn't mean it is not at least partially true. The 'left behind' is an economically reductionist and individualistic notion, and, as Bhambra (2017) argues, analyses of Brexit need to consider how the middle-class constituted a large proportion of the leave vote, which reveals how

"opposition to immigration was primarily cultural in character and not based in economic disadvantage" (Bhambra, 2017: 222).

Henderson et al (2016; 2017) draw upon data from the Future of England survey and argue that Brexit was related to the persistence of Eurosceptic attitudes in England and the relationship they have to English national identity. Their analysis shows that concerns over immigration were significantly related to decisions to vote to leave the EU, as were right-wing social views and identifying with an English national identity. However, the authors find no significant relationship between English national identity and anti-immigrant attitudes and show how some of the "assumed avenues by which English national identity might influence attitudes to the EU – nostalgia and a perception of England as a distinct national community – are largely absent" (Henderson et al. 2016: 643).

Patel and Connelly (2019) conducted a localised, qualitative research project to investigate the voting justifications of 13 White British residents living in Salford, who are all leave voters, and how their justifications are informed by post-racial or, as the authors term, "more palatable" (*ibid*: 981) racisms. It is important not to deny that racisms (new or old) pervade the accounts of a section of those who voted to leave the European Union. However, Patel and Connelly's (2019) account ignores how racist structures are constructed and perpetuated at the elite level, reinforces long-held stereotypes of Britain's poor as intolerant and insular, and tells us little about how the racist views presumed of the working-class may have oriented them to voting to leave or remain. Their explanation contrasts to that of Virdee and McGeever (2018) who offer a more structural account which is, I would argue, the most persuasive existing explanation for Brexit.

Virdee and McGeever (2018) provide a theoretical explanation of Brexit. Their analysis marries class and nationalism-based arguments with an attentiveness to the ways these structures intersect with race and racialisation. The authors suggest that the declining status of Britain as an imperial hegemon amidst a series of working-class defeats suffered at the hands of Margaret Thatcher throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the limited response of New Labour, has left the working-class politically and socially atomised and susceptible to national populist politics. They go further to claim that it is the *politicisation* of a narrow and racialised conception of Englishness which is one of the key drivers of Brexit

sentiment and that support for this has been harnessed by rehashing understandings of structural decline with a nationalistic hue (Virdee and McGeever, 2018). Virdee and McGeever's (2018) contribution shares similarities to that of Jessop (2017; 2018) and Telford and Wistow (2019) in the way it provides a "conjunctural analysis of the financial and political crisis within which Brexit occurred" (Virdee and McGeever, 2018: 1802) but is more attentive to 'race' than both of the former.

2.2.4 Sovereignty

Parliamentary sovereignty was a fundamental part of political and journalistic commentary leading up to and preceding the referendum result. Virdee and McGeever (2018) and Bhambra (2017) may be correct in their claims that political discourses associated with 'taking back control' were embedded within idealised and racialised visions of Britain's colonial past. But this may be truer of the organisation of the leave campaigns themselves, and the political actors embedded within them, than the themes structuring the accounts of voters in empirical research who focus on sovereignty (c.f. McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b; Telford and Wistow, 2019). For example, in McKenzie's (2017a) work, interviewees focused on the critique of bureaucracy, rather than a celebration of Britain's colonial past, rejecting the EU as "another layer of government" (McKenzie, 2017a: 268).

As an explanation for Brexit, sovereignty-based arguments suggest that people voted to leave the European Union because they wanted British government to be able to make their own laws and policies in relation to the economy, immigration and borders, and trade (HM Government, 2018). Concerns over migrant crossings, fishing rights, the shape and size of fresh produce, and agriculture were key battlegrounds on which this sentiment was articulated. Taking back control focuses upon the idea of British sovereignty being lost to EU integration and bureaucracy and with membership funding the wages of an unnecessary layer of government which worked against the specific national interests of British people. However, by counterpoising a narrow and nationalistic conception of sovereignty to immigration and open borders, this argument also

encouraged voters to think about 'taking back control' through racialised common-sense discourses which vilified migrants and other ethnic minority groups living in Britain and abroad.

Academic research has dealt with the issue of sovereignty and its political construction in different ways. Those working within the disciplines of law and international policy have tended to focus on what they see as the flawed premises for reinstating a totalising conception of British sovereignty (Agnew, 2019). It is argued that Britain's imperial past and the way it is embedded within a series of trans-national economic and political agreements and relations means it can never have full sovereignty (Agnew, 2019). Reclaiming sovereignty seems to be less about total and independent governance, than having *greater control* over a series of different processes which were perceived to have increasingly negative effects on people's lives.

As critics have noted, many of the arguments made in the name of 'sovereignty' tended to be refracted arguments about the effects of capitalism (Calhoun, 2016). This is significant because the progenitors of national populism and the leave campaign, such as Farage and Johnson, had to argue for greater control over borders, laws and money without recourse to any notion of capitalism or neoliberalism. This relates to the work of Menon and Wager (2020), who argue that the notion of sovereignty was "an ungraspable chimera, a fog that has proved seductive to the public and which has – due to an acute failure of statecraft, leadership and basic understanding – infected the British body politic" (Menon and Wager, 2020: 279). The authors suggest that sovereignty is something relatively intangible and a construction but, in a later part of their article, a repository for a range of tangential issues made salient in times of political and economic change and uncertainty (*ibid*). This contradiction is what made sovereignty so powerful as a driver of the leave vote; it served as a 'messaging tool' for political gain which drew upon nationalist and populist arguments about borders, the economy and decision-making and became a proxy "for the regaining of individual political autonomy" (*ibid*: 282).

This subsection has considered four core explanations for Brexit which overlap with one another. Virdee and McGeever's (2018) explicitly Marxist and intersectional explanation is perhaps the most persuasive individual account

considered here because of the way it synthesises an agent-full understanding of class inequality and political-economic change which is attentive to the racial effects of these developments. However, the authors offer only a theoretical account of Brexit, which needs to be substantiated empirically. The following three subsections explore the key trends, developments and processes identified in the introduction (subsection 2.1) that have shaped working-class dispositions and political proclivities over time and across space. This is to complement the four explanations outlined above and illuminate more clearly some of the gaps and inconsistencies within them.

2.3 Thematic Analysis

2.3.1 The Losers of Financial Capitalism: Forty Years of Economic Marginalisation

It is important to note from the outset that Britain joining the EU (1973) (formerly European Economic Community) occurred largely in parallel to the emergence of (neo)liberal capitalism in the UK. This has meant that many of the effects of domestic (neoliberal) policy in the UK have been conflated with EU policy and its key principles. This is important in understanding the way working-class people form their political subjectivities because it means processes such as the free movement of people and immigration can be harnessed by politicians to distract from the effects of class inequalities largely caused by domestic political decisions. The EU did not cause neoliberalism in Britain, it was British class interests and changes in British policy that ushered in the neoliberal period; today most other EU countries remain less neoliberal than Britain. However, since the 1990s, neoliberal principles have been baked into EU treaties and have contributed to the way neoliberalisation has been rolled forward in the UK.

This subsection explores the deep structural inequalities that emerged in the wake of the relatively prosperous post-war era of social democracy and how a series of concessions granted to the working-class in that period have been gradually rolled back. This project follows Jessop’s (2018) definition of neoliberalisation as:

> "an economic, political, and social project that tends to judge economic activities in terms of profitability and social activities in terms of their contribution to accumulation and seeks to promote this vision through institutional redesign, encouraging new forms of subjectivity and conduct, and establishing new spatio-temporal fixes" (Jessop, 2018: 1729).

This is not 'agentless' (Fairclough, 1995): history does not play out by itself but, rather, there are active agents which believe a specific political system – liberal capitalism – is the best possible alternative. Neoliberalism is a *class project* intended to rebalance class relations in favour of capital (Harvey, 2007; Jessop, 2015a). Because politicians and economic elites pursue an economy which subordinates all social activity to market logics and consistently, and increasingly exploitatively and forcibly, seeks out national and international sources of profit, it is a "major driving force of uneven development" (Jessop, 2018: 1729). This is about both the concentration of wealth and the rewards of capitalism in particular regions and the way this type of political-economy values and privileges mobile and high profit producing capital and people over others (Jessop, 2016). Neoliberalism is an inherently disruptive, variegated, and crisis-prone political-economic system which promotes competitiveness and competition through its instability (Jessop, 2018). The effects of these processes on the working-class will be explored below.

Political and Economic Pre-History

In the twenty-five-year period after the Second World War, the employment rate in the UK was reasonably high compared with the nadir of the Great Depression in the interwar period (see Figure 2, adapted from ONS, 2019). In terms of poverty and living standards, the expansion of the social security system, including national insurance, the National Health Service and a social safety net provided by benefits, provided far greater protections to British people. Income inequality was lower in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s then it is today: Figure 3 shows how income inequality was around 25% in this period, whereas it has never dropped below 30% since the late 1980s (Francis-Devine, 2021)[1].

[1] This analysis uses the Gini coefficient to determine income inequality.

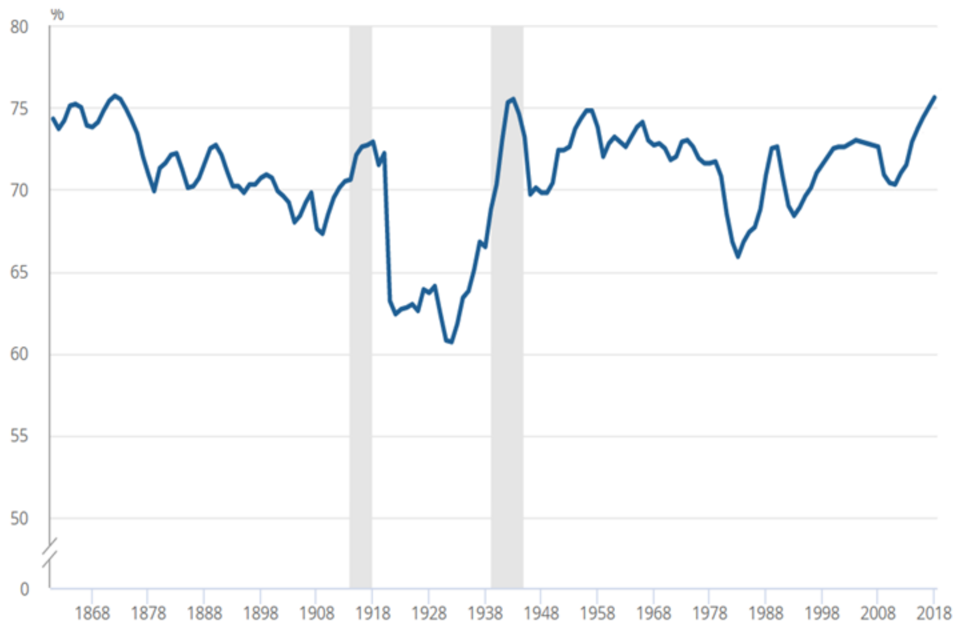


Figure 2 – Employment rate in the UK from 1861 to 2018 (adapted from ONS, 2019).

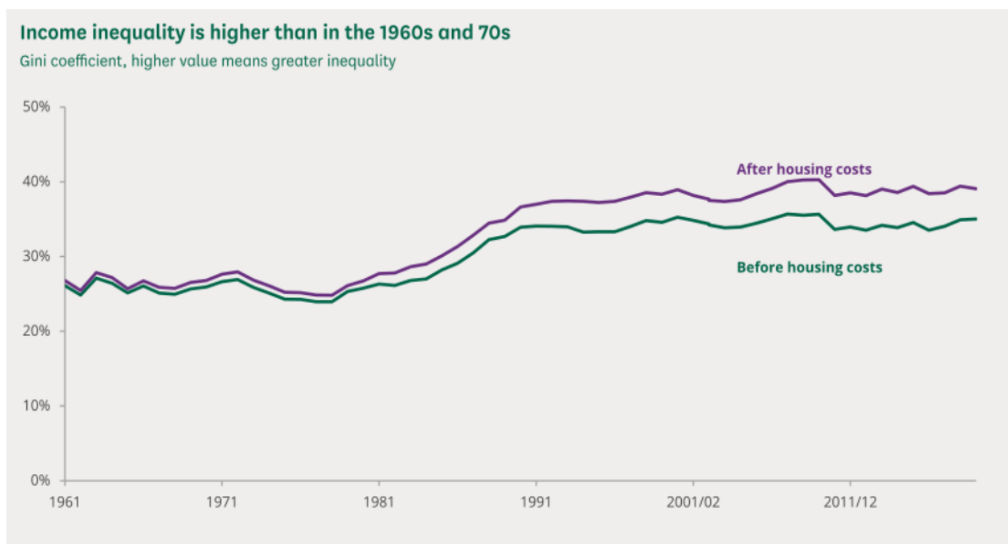


Figure 3 – Income inequality in the UK from 1961 to 2012 (adapted from Francis-Devine, 2021).

The most notable challenge to social democracy emerged in the 1970s. This was underpinned by concerns over Britain's low economic growth, rising inflation and limited real-wage growth (Gallas, 2015), and increasing reliance upon imported goods to meet domestic demand (Seyd, 1987). Not only this, but trade union militancy had also led to increasingly volatile relations between the working-class and government. The Labour Party won the 1974 election with a radical mandate

which signalled the start of a project to fundamentally restructure the capitalist economy towards working-class interests (Gallas, 2015). This was short lived because of the oil crisis throughout the 1970s which led to rising inflation under Wilson and his replacement with Callaghan would set the stage for Britain's neoliberal regime shift.

This was not neoliberalism as is known today, but Callaghan's 1976 Leader's Speech (Blackpool) marked a point in which the Labour Party's commitment to progressivism and egalitarianism was blended with monetarist policy and a more critical view of trade unions (Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2021). Intense disputes between the Labour government and trade unions in the winter of 1978/79 impeded their ability to appeal to the working-class in the general election later that year and saw the formation of a Thatcher-led Conservative government.

Thatcher: Rolling Back Class Compromises

The period of initial consolidation of neoliberalism in the UK involved the rolling back of class compromises made during the post-war settlement (Jessop, 2015a). Throughout the 1980s, Thatcher not only worsened the material lives of working-class people, but also challenged their identities and modes of value while delegitimising their institutions as a collective 'enemy within' (Bradley, 1999). By "attacking all forms of social solidarity that hindered competitive flexibility" (Harvey, 2005: 23), perceived blockages to labour productivity – particularly the powers of trade unions – were progressively broken down. Through a series of increasingly punitive statutes including the Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982, and the Trade Union Act 1984, closed shop agreements were undermined, secondary picketing was outlawed, and non-unionisation was incentivised (Dorey, 2016).

The Thatcher era saw the acceleration of industrial decline that began in the 1970s. Between 1966 and 2016, manufacturing employment fell from 8.9 million to just 2.9 million; at its peak, the coal industry had employed some 500,000 people – now this figure is close to zero (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016). Export competition from emerging Asian economies added pressure to core British industries (Pilat et al. 2006). However, job losses in industries where organisation

was strongest served as a symbolic victory in a war over class relations. Employment in manufacturing as a whole has declined from 42% of the labour market in 1951, to just 10% in 2011, with the service sector expanding by 36 percentage points in the same period, from 45% to 81% (ONS, 2016).

The significance of deindustrialisation can be understood in terms of class, gender and geography. Industrial job losses were concentrated in the Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber, North East and North West England, Wales and Scotland (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016) and closures had significant effects on regional economies and inter-regional inequalities (McCann, 2020). Service sector jobs that replaced industrial employment are polarised in terms of higher paying, more secure jobs in the financial and technological sector and the predominance of low-paid, precarious and insecure jobs in sectors such as retail, care, leisure and hospitality. Working-class people, and generally men, who lost their jobs in the core industries have tended to be concentrated in low-paying service industries or drop out of the labour market all together (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016). Nonetheless, working-class women have tended to always work in service sector jobs that are consistently poorly paid and less secure (Irvine et al. 2022) and have often performed a range of other unpaid forms of labour at home to ensure the reproduction of the family.

Roll Forward of Neoliberal Institutions and 'Blowback'

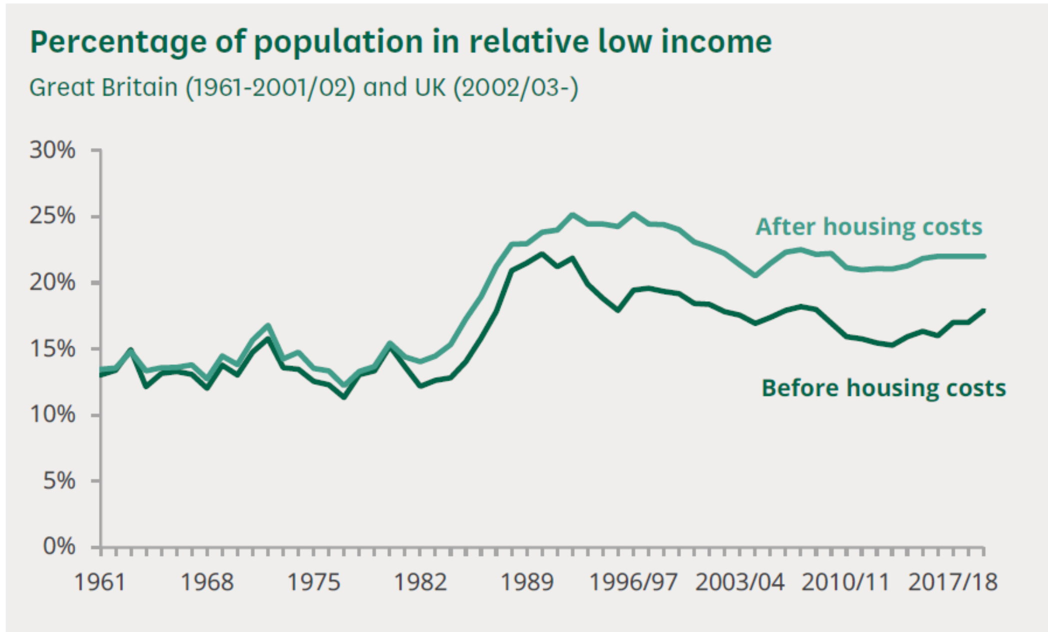
A second election victory in 1983 encouraged Thatcher to pursue policies which would create "deeper-rooted, if not irreversible, structural shifts in the post-war economic and political order" (Jessop, 2015a: 20). This included a neoliberal accumulation strategy, a strong state, and an ideology of authoritarian populism which was hostile to welfare, opposed immigration and made 'law and order' a central plan of government policy. Breaking the class compromise involved dismantling class institutions such as trade unions and weakening the welfare state. Thatcher's neoliberal accumulation strategy was to promote market competitiveness; deregulate the economy; privatise state owned industries and contract out elements of public services (such as prisons); and promote the trans-

nationalisation of capital and further open Britain up to global financial markets (Jessop, 2015a; 2018).

These processes have left the working-class increasingly at the mercy of their employers with the effect of increasing the exploitation of workers, driving down wages through competition and, by reducing workplace protections, breaking working-class bargaining power and wellbeing (Gallas, 2015; Umney, 2018). As Figure 4 shows (adapted from Francis-Devine, 2022), around the mid-1980s there is a sharp increase in the percentage of the population in relative low income (those earning less than 60% of the median that year). This was driven by a decline in the wages of low-paid workers at the time, persistent long-term unemployment and tax cuts for the rich which rebalanced the income distribution (Mack and Lansley, 1985).

Thatcher's state-crafting was a response to the 'cradle to grave' welfare system instituted as part of social democracy which was now thought of as being wasteful and economically burdensome. Thatcher gave increasing powers to repressive state apparatus such as the police force and prison system whilst cutting funding to housing, education and social security (Gallas, 2015; Gough, 1980; c.f. Wacquant, 2009; 2010). She also presided over the selling off of council houses at discounted rates and transferring housing stock from local authority ownership to private housing organisations (Ginsburg, 2005). This had the effect of reducing the overall number of council houses, contributing to the 'residualisation' of council estates (Jones, 2011) and pushing the prices of houses upwards shaping the dysfunctional housing market witnessed today. It is from the 1980s onwards that we see a widening gap between before housing costs and after housing costs poverty, which shows that rising house prices – an effect of Tory housing policy – were worsening poverty (see Figure 4).

Between 1988-1990, a series of 'blowback' effects would accumulate and lead to internal tensions within the Conservative Party (Jessop, 2015a; 2017), particularly in relation to the EU. Rising interest rates, a widening trade deficit, and frequent wage demands, coupled with the introduction of the widely unpopular 'poll tax' in 1990, sparked a series of popular protests around the country (*ibid*).



Note: Years refer to calendar years up and including 1992 and financial years from 1993/94 onwards.
Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies, using data compiled from the Family Resources Survey and Family Expenditure Survey; DWP

Figure 4 – Percentage of the population in relative low income 1961-2018 (adapted from Francis-Devine, 2022).

This prompted a challenge to Thatcher's leadership, forced her resignation, and resulted in Major taking over as prime minister. The Major years (1990-1997) are representative of, broadly, a continuation of the Thatcherite project of neoliberal accumulation and authoritarian populism. Major did attempt to distance the Conservative Party from the more extreme economic policies of neoliberalism under Thatcher, but his decision to privatise British Rail in 1993 would add to the party's internal divisions and low public popularity.

In terms of Thatcher's state and economic projects, the Blair and New Labour administrations of 1997 to 2010 offered less of an alternative (Gallas, 2015; Jessop, 2015a), other than in attempts to disassociate the party from neoliberal globalisation by characterising it as a process out of their control and a form of 'agentless change' (Fairclough, 1995). This does need to be qualified: whilst New Labour did not significantly alter the structural basis of neoliberal capitalism, they did make some key social policy interventions which offset some of its harshest effects. New Labour significantly increased spending on benefits and tax credits throughout their tenure, and between 1997 and 2010 absolute and relative rates

of poverty declined markedly for children and pensioners, even as they increased for those of working-age without children (Lister, 2001). However, this was undermined by their workfarist approaches to unemployment – which forced claimants to accept work placements or training in exchange for their benefits – and failures to repeal the restrictive trade union and employment laws brought in by Thatcher (Gallas, 2015). The shift to workfare has had important effects on those claiming unemployment benefits in terms of increasing stigma and institutional violence (Redman and Fletcher, 2022). This has also shaped popular interpretations of claimants in politics, the media and in everyday common-sense discourses which inform voting behaviour.

Global Financial Crisis and Politics of Austerity

Finance-led models of accumulation have the tendency to produce crisis effects, exemplified no more clearly than in the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) (2007-08), the period of recession it ushered in, as well as austerity implemented in response by Coalition and Conservative governments between 2010 and 2019. The GFC is best understood as multiple, intersecting crises comprised of a combination of financial deregulation, risk-taking lending practices, a housing crisis and the complicity of different national governments who incentivised financial malpractices in search of profits (Jessop, 2015a; 2015b). What is particularly important for the purposes of this thesis is to understand how economic and political recovery from the GFC was translated into a neoliberal politics of austerity which had disproportionate effects on the most marginalised class groups.

Central banks would go on to bail out the financial sector to prevent its collapse, at great public expense. As Jessop summarises, “notwithstanding a brief period when the global financial crisis was construed as a crisis *of* rather than *in* neoliberalism, massive state intervention has since created conditions for a return to neoliberal ‘business as usual’ in the neoliberal heartlands” (Jessop, 2016: 6). As part of the crisis-management strategy in Britain, local government budgets, civil service jobs, prisons and policing, and transport were the sectors hardest hit (Centre for Cities, 2019a). Funding for universal services such as health care,

education and pensions remained relatively stable, as did policy commitments to foreign aid budgets (Lavery, 2018), whilst "less popular areas of state provision" (Taylor-Gooby, 2013: 5) such as unemployment and disability benefits, and funding for local governments, were severely undermined.

Austerity also involved a package of punitive welfare reforms, meaning the hardest hit areas in the country would experience compounding effects of multiple cuts. Important research by Beatty and Fothergill (2016) shows how the destruction of industrial jobs witnessed most intensely under the Thatcher government "fuelled spending on welfare benefits which in turn has compounded the budgetary problems of successive governments" (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016: 3). It is not by chance that austerity was particularly damaging for those in receipt of benefits in Britain's ex-industrial towns and cities (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016; 2018). As will be explored fully in Chapter 5, Brexit is fundamentally connected to economic geography.

As some commentators have argued, the idea that we cannot afford the European Union has served to advance claims that Britain should close down its borders, redistribute wealth to (white) British people, and cut ties with other, economically weaker countries (Cooper and Whyte, 2017). Neoliberal austerity politics are part of the economic and ideological context in which a range of 'other' groups have become attached to specific symbolic representations (Tyler, 2013) as explored below. Economic crises such as the GFC have not led to any serious political challenge to neoliberalism but have allowed it to progress instead in a zombie-like form, as "dead but dominant" (Peck, 2010: 109), with energies directed to maintaining its stability rather than addressing the structural inequalities it continues to widen.

2.3.2 Symbolic Othering

This subsection focuses on the historical, social and economic context of immigration and welfare, exploring how net migration and unemployment benefit claimant counts have changed in line with key policy junctures. Immigration and welfare have been selected as two core sub-themes because of their prevalence in explanations for Brexit and how both are key developments in the wider story

of economic and social change in the UK. Crucially, *discourses about migrants and claimants are dominant symbolic technologies used for political gain by elites* and these inform the way people think and speak about particular groups. The final subsection develops this point and explores how symbolic representations of ‘others’ are used to shape perceptions and understandings of structural inequalities.

Social and Economic Context: Immigration and Welfare

Immigration

Several important policy junctures occurring since 1990 have patterned the overall rate of net migration and the ways in which immigration and immigrants are understood in UK society. Throughout New Labour’s tenure the party was seen to be proactively increasing migrant numbers (Somerville, 2007) as an unofficial means to regulate wages (Jones, 2011), with the foreign-born labour force expanding from 2 million to 3.5 million between 1997-2010 (Finch and Goodhart, 2010). New Labour’s Janus-faced approach to immigration was characterised by a more draconian and harshly repressive element towards asylum seekers and a more liberalised and progressive view of migrants seeking work (Somerville, 2007).

As Figure 5 (adapted from Migration Observatory, 2020) shows, between 1997 and 2004 rates of annual net migration increased by over 250,000 and this was primarily made up of those with work permits, who were seen to contribute to economic growth and job creation (*ibid*; Somerville, 2007). Net migration would increase further between 2004 and 2010, with a brief decline in the immediate years of recovery from the GFC (2008-2009) and a peak in 2015. This was largely due to the EU A10 Accession, which saw people from countries such as Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia able to migrate to the UK. What is particularly important about this is that many EU migrants tend to be concentrated in low-paid and low-skill sectors of employment. This may have had material and experiential effects on those already working in these sectors and changes of this kind are important to the way people think and speak about particular groups, especially when their

own experiences seem to correspond to common-sense discourses in the media (discussed further below).

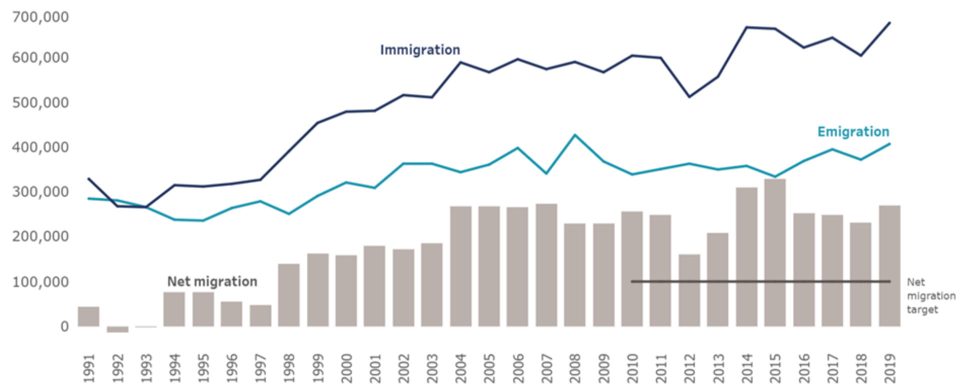


Figure 5 - Immigration to the UK between 1991-2019 reproduced from Migration Observatory (2020)

Against the backdrop of the GFC (2008), economic recession was used as the rationalisation for tighter immigration controls at the border and within the country in terms of more restricted rights to public services and resources (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010). Periods of economic insecurity at a national scale feed into symbolic representations and understandings of migrants (and 'other' groups) on the ground: this is legitimated through a common-sense discourse which suggests undeserving groups have been getting 'too much'. Short-term measures designed to limit economic migrants from new member states, such as Romania and Bulgaria, chimed with Gordon Brown's nationalistic platitude of 'British jobs for British workers' (Mulvey and Davidson, 2019). The immediate context in which attitudes towards immigration were constructed pre-2016 is punctuated by then Home Secretary Theresa May's 'hostile environment'. As part of the Coalition government's strategy to reduce immigration to 'tens of thousands', the 'hostile environment' was a flagship immigration package which made it more difficult for undocumented migrants to live within the UK. The introduction of two new Immigration Acts (2014, 2016) would see a range of different state agencies, landlords and banks become active agents in policing state borders from within (Goodfellow, 2019). However, this also had the effect of victimising thousands of commonwealth migrants who had settled in the UK

during the Windrush years, with a series of illegal deportations carried out by the Home Office.

Contradictory evidence exists as to the effects of immigration upon the domestic labour market and different occupational groups within it. In a review of twelve studies conducted between 2003 and 2018, the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) found that migration had little to no effect on the overall employment outcomes of the UK-born workforce. However, crucially, there was evidence to suggest that migration does have classed effects in terms of occupation: data show that rises in migrant workers within low skill occupations depressed the wages of lower-skilled workers (*ibid*). Research from Dustmann et al (2003) supports this finding. The authors found that greater ratios between migrants to non-migrants in the workforce resulted in wage decreases for the lowest paid earners, and similar effects were recorded by Nickell and Salaheen (2015) for those in unskilled and semi-skilled service sectors.

In recent years the distribution of immigrants within occupational groups has shifted from a more even spread between high and low skill occupations in the 1990s, to a greater abundance of migrants located in low skilled work (Nickell and Salaheen, 2017). Data from the Migration Advisory Committee (2018) show that between 2004 and 2016, the share of EEA migrants working in the manufacturing sector in the UK increased from 2.6% to 24.3%, and this was primarily in low skill jobs such as processing and filling. Greater employment insecurity is about more than immigration policy and rising immigration numbers and must consider the undercutting of employment rights and protections, and attacks on trade unions since 1979 (as explored in the previous subsection).

Welfare Reform

In the period of 1979-1997, rates of welfare expenditure remained at a consistent level and were comparable to those of the preceding Labour government (Hills, 1998). However, rates of people claiming benefits rose significantly across the Conservative's period of office (ONS, 2021a), as a result of an increasingly elderly population and higher rates of unemployment (Gough, 1980). Thatcher and Major adopted welfare policies designed to encourage people into paid

employment but, at the same time, pursued economic policies which accelerated deindustrialisation, and created greater employment insecurity and job losses. Part of this problem was the Treasury misrecognising “high welfare spending as the result of inadequate work incentives” which has “too often blamed individuals for their own predicament” (Beatty and Fothergill, 2016: 2) despite being a problem of the destruction of industrial jobs over four decades (*ibid*).

As shown in Figure 6, the number of people claiming unemployment benefits increased precipitously between 1979 and the mid-1980s. Unemployment rose sharply again in the early 1990s during a period of recession before falling way more gradually until the Global Financial Crisis (2007) and austerity induced reforms. As part of what Dwyer (2004) has called ‘creeping conditionality’, a series of rule changes saw a stricter benefit regime introduced from the late 1980s including the implementation of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) in 1996, which made benefit entitlement increasingly conditional (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018) and reinforced the penalisation of non-compliance. Unemployment rates did decrease from the mid-to-late 1990s but this was largely due to economic conditions of the time, a rising number of ‘hidden unemployed’ people on incapacity benefits (Beatty et al. 2017) and more people entering low-pay and insecure jobs (the working poor) for fear of losing their benefit entitlement.

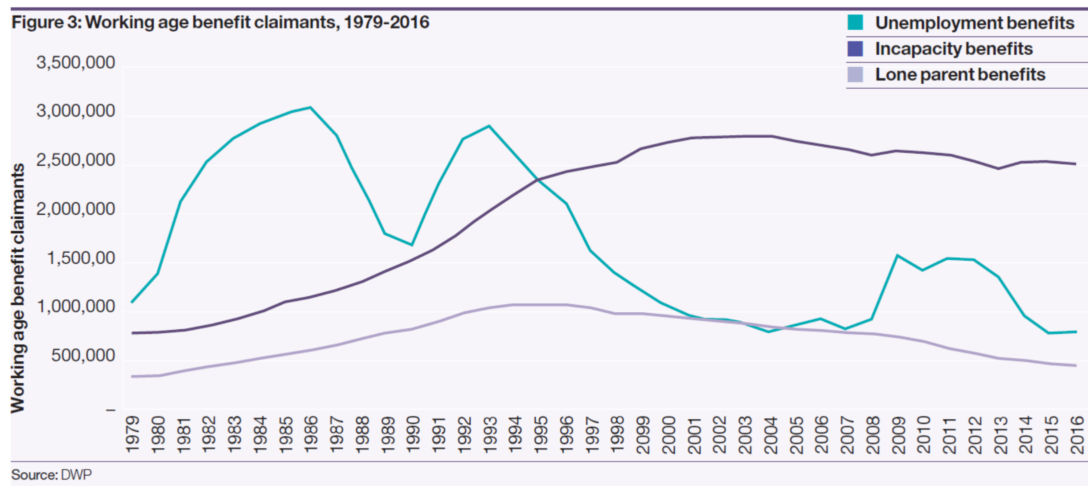


Figure 6 – Number of working age benefit claimants between 1979 and 2016 (adapted from Beatty and Fothergill, 2016).

The ratcheting up of conditionality continued in the 2000s and reached an apogee in the 2010s when Universal Credit (UC) replaced a range of tiered legacy benefits. The introduction of Universal Credit represented a form of 'ubiquitous' conditionality that introduced more repressive work-related requirements (Dwyer and Wright, 2014), including the use of sanctions to systematically punish and harm supposedly non-compliant claimants (Redman, 2020). Since the rollout of UC, direct comparison of claimant numbers over time (between JSA and Universal Credit claimant counts) has not been possible[2]. The next subsection will explore how welfare and immigration policy, and changes in net migration and claimant numbers, have been symbolically represented in the media and politics.

The Production of 'Internal Others' in Britain

The Victorian Poor Law 1834 distinguished between the deserving poor, who were older, sick or disabled and who – through no fault of their own – could not work and therefore, deserved fiscal support. This was counterposed to the undeserving poor: the feckless and work-shy who were seen as an economic burden to those around them and who were to receive only the most limited state

[2] From 2017 the Department for Work and Pensions changed the way they published data on benefit claimants and discontinued client group data sets.

support. These divisions continue to inform symbolic representations of Britain's poor today. The ideological politics of poverty tap into "longer histories of aversive emotions against minority subjects" which are "instrumentalised as technologies for garnering public consent for the shift from protective liberal forms of welfare to disciplinary workfare regimes" (Tyler, 2013: 26).

In a series of important contributions, a range of writers have shown how moral and physical boundaries are drawn around Britain's marginal groups, including 'benefits broods' (Jensen and Tyler, 2015), 'chavs' and 'chav mums' (Jones, 2011; Tyler, 2008), asylum seekers and migrants (Tyler, 2013), Roma Gypsies (Powell and Lever, 2017), council estate communities (McKenzie, 2015) and the working-class more generally (Jeffery et al. 2020; Lawler, 2005; Skeggs, 1997; 2004). These are not discrete symbolic categories and representations of this kind are often attached to specific populations as a way to anchor broader and shifting grievances about welfare, immigration and other displaced arguments about inequalities. Politicians and the media create and use common-sense stereotypes of symbolic 'others' to perpetuate misrecognitions of the causes of economic and class inequalities as cultural and individualistic problems. The way these symbolic representations become hyper-fixated on different social and ethnic groups is historically specific – in more recent years, Eastern European migrants and Muslims have become the most dominant 'folk devils' different problems are blamed on (Tyler, 2013); in the 1970s and 1980s, it was Black and Asian commonwealth migrants (Hall et al. 1978) and in the late 19th century, Jewish and Irish people (Virdee, 2014).

A central theme of a selection of pioneering works associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), namely *Policing the Crisis* (Hall et al. 1978) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (CCCS, 1982), questioned how and why Thatcher's authoritarian statism was underpinned by the elaboration and proliferation of popular racism in the 1970s (Solomos et al. 1982). The authors showed how this was exploited to manufacture consent by using racial divisions to ensure "hegemonic relations are secured in a period of structural crisis management" (Solomos et al. 1982: 11). This is as significant now as it was four decades ago. However, the changing political contours of 'race' and 'racism' – in terms of discourses which suggest we live in a post-racial world

where people of colour have disproportionately gained from social and economic policies (Garner, 2015; Patel and Connelly, 2019) – means race has assumed new modes of articulation (Bonilla-Silva, 2015).

The election of New Labour in 1997 was anticipated to lead to a confrontation with the racialised politics of previous Conservative governments, who had eroded space for anti-racism and entrenched the idea that Britain was under attack from 'enemies within' (Back et al. 2002; Solomos et al. 1982). New Labour did challenge institutional racism: the publication of the Macpherson Report (1999), and the introduction of the Human Rights Act (1998) and Race Relations Act (2000) were testament to the party's more progressive approach to racial and ethnic diversity. However, the party can also be charged with institutionalising xeno-racism in their asylum policy (see subsection 2.4) (Fekete, 2001), undermining its own commitments to multiculturalism (Back et al. 2002) and perpetuating individualistic and underclass explanations of poverty (Levitas, 1998; Watt, 2008).

Part of the attack on welfare, particularly unemployment benefits and healthcare, is due to perceptions that it is being unfairly claimed by migrants. Part is also down to a dominant neoliberal discourse of personal responsibility and the way economic value is centralised in explanations of neoliberal citizenship (Makinen, 2017). In recent years, the dominance of discourses of this kind seem to be evidenced in hardening attitudes towards welfare and claimants: in 1991, 26 percent of people agreed that if benefits were less generous, claimants would stand on their own two feet, by 2007 this doubled to 52 percent and increased again in 2011 to 54 percent (Clery, 2012). Between 1991 and 2011, a thirty-percentage-point drop (from 58 to 28 per cent) was witnessed in those who would like to see more public spending on benefits (*ibid*). However, by 2020, attitudes towards welfare softened and reversed a trend that had been in place from 1991 to 2015 (NatCen, 2020).

Concerns around access and entitlement to welfare become increasingly conflated with immigration. This relates to what some commentators in the US (Garand et al. 2017) and Europe (Burgoon and Rooduijn, 2020) have called the 'immigrationisation' of welfare politics, which is a similar argument to that developed by the Birmingham School forty years earlier, but in relation welfare

rather than law and order politics (see Hall et al. 1978; CCCS, 1982). Understandings of welfare become associated with attitudes towards immigrants in a way that migrants are seen as a dominant 'undeserving' group and removing their access to benefits trumps support for others. Recent examples of this in the media and politics include narratives of Poles characterised as stealing British jobs (Spigelman, 2013) and an economic burden with no skills, a poor grasp of the English language and difficulty assimilating (Portas, 2018).

2.3.3 Class and Class Politics

This section explores how and why class has ceased to be a dominant discourse in mainstream politics and what this means for different class groups in terms of the way they feel as though they are represented. The first subsection explored how the class structure in Britain has changed since the post-war period. The second subsection maps out the reasons why New Labour lost working-class support, how this has informed the way national populist parties such as UKIP increased in popularity, why the 'Red Wall' was lost to the Tories in 2019, and what this may tell us about the EU referendum and voting behaviour. Before moving onto this, the work of Atkinson (2017) can be briefly summarized as a way to map the broad contours of the relationship between class and political attitudes and what this may mean for voting patterns. This is useful context to understand how different political parties may or may not tap into the tendencies of different class groups to support particular social and economic interests.

Using BSA survey data, Atkinson (2017) develops a series of analyses inspired by the work of Bourdieu which map different occupational groups in terms of their attitudes towards: 1) left and right positions on material issues (e.g., redistribution, inequality), 2) strong or weak political views (e.g., those who answer 'don't know' would be weak) and 3) left and right positions on social issues (e.g., crime, same-sex marriage). The author's analyses show that those in high-earning occupational groups, such as professions and business executives, have the most economically rightward attitudes and the culturally dominant (lecturers, teachers, media/arts professionals) express some of the most socially and economically progressive attitudes. There is some variance in the politics of

typically ‘working-class’ (my wording) occupational groups: those in manual and routine occupations tend to be the most economically leftward, caring occupations are more socially progressive than the former and sales workers tend to more socially and economically rightward than both (Atkinson, 2017). Figure 8 plots occupational groups in relation to the attitudes to economic and social attitudes presented in Figure 7[3]. In Figure 8, lower scores on Axis 1 are

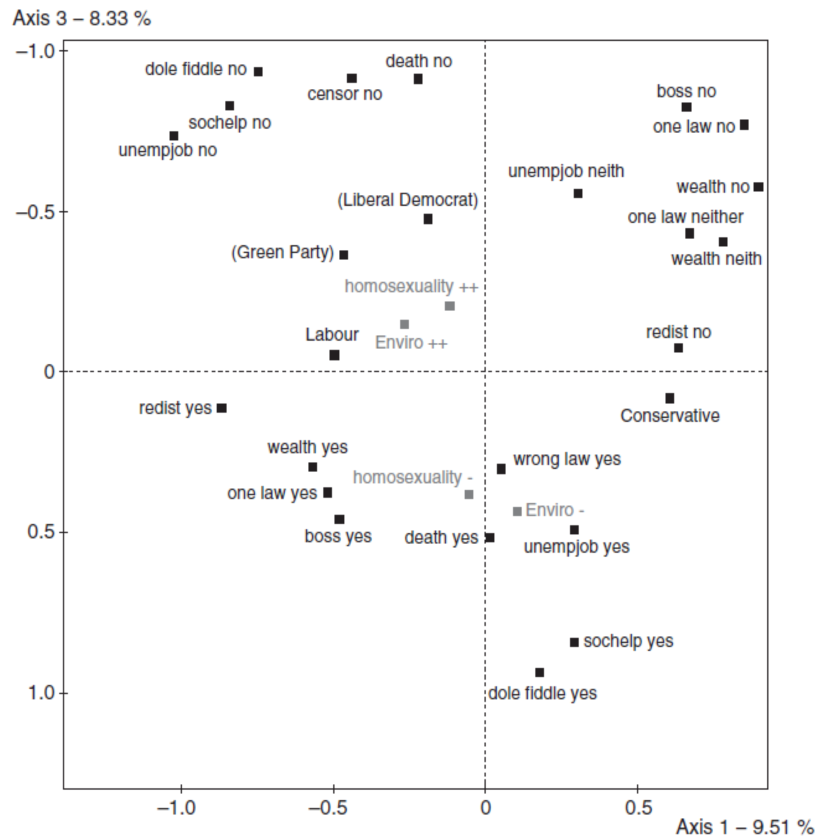


Figure 7 – Map of political space adapted from Atkinson (2017). Axis 1 denotes attitudes to economic issues, across left-right distinctions. Axis 3 denotes attitudes to social issues across left-right distinctions.

[3] The percentages used in Axis 1 (9.51%) and Axis 3 (8.33%) refer to the percent of total variation explained by that axis.
The abbreviations used in Figure 7 are as follows. 1) Abbreviations followed by ‘yes’, ‘no’, and ‘neither’ refers to the level of agreement with the following statements:
Dole fiddle: most people on the dole are fiddling in one way or another.
Sochelp: many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help.
Unempjob: most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one.
Wrong law: one should always obey the law, even if a particular law is wrong.
One law: there is one law for the rich and one for the poor.
Death: sometimes the death penalty is the only appropriate sentence.
Boss: a boss will get the better of their employee’s given the chance.
Redist: the government should redistribute income.
Wealth: working people do not get a fair share of the nation’s wealth.
Censor: censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold morals.
2) Abbreviations such as enviro/homosexuality +, ++, - are to show more accepting or unaccepting views towards homosexuality and the environment.

representative of being more economically redistributionist, and lower scores on Axis 3 are representative of being more socially liberal (Atkinson, 2017). Those professions in the north-eastern quadrant are seen to be most against redistribution and welfare, *and* more socially conservative, such as business executives.

In Figure 8 (below) the different class positions used are taken from Atkinson's (2017) model of the class structure.

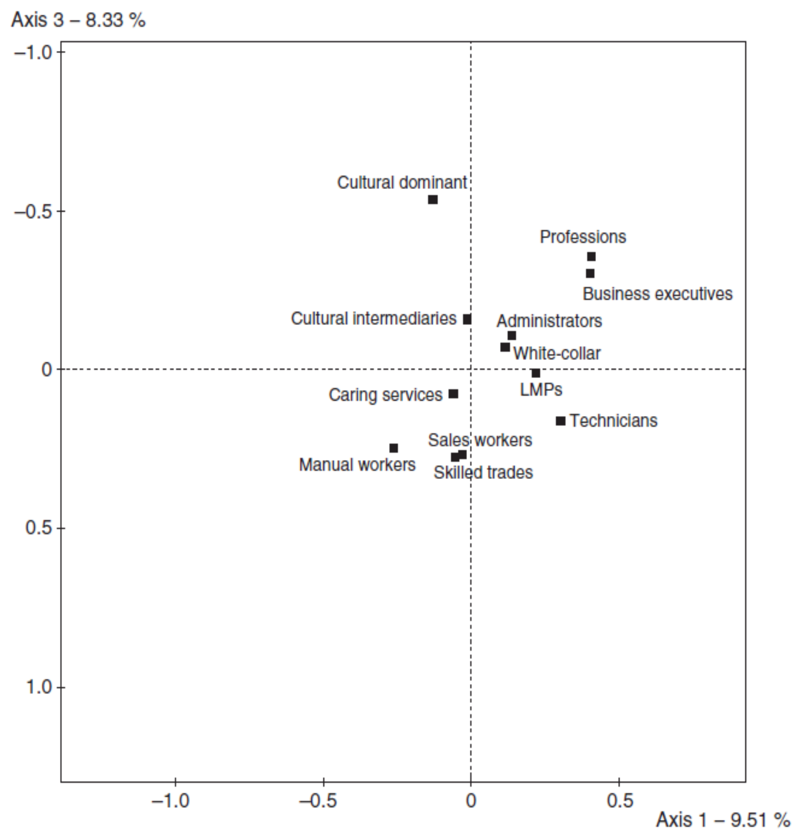


Figure 8 – Distribution of occupations in political space when plotting economic attitudes (Axis 1) by social attitudes (Axis 3) (adapted from Atkinson, 2017).

Class Structure and Class Politics in Britain

The measurement of class is less a focus of this thesis than are the effects of class relations and struggles on the working-class, however, a brief summary of different theories of the class structure can highlight why the abandonment of class politics is so significant. The working-class constitutes a large proportion of the total population. One of the key problems with the UK's official measurement of social-class, the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), is that it tends to be used in ways which underestimate the size of the working-class by rolling together occupational groups arbitrarily. For example, Atkinson (2017) finds that the working-class or what he calls the 'dominated class' – defined by aggregating skilled trades, sales workers, manual workers and caring services from SOC2010 codes, which are the basis of the NS-SEC – represented

a 50.4% share of the working-age population in 1991, a figure which had decreased to 45.2% in 2015 (Atkinson, 2017).

Atkinson's (2017) analyses exclude 'intermediate occupations' despite people in associate professional and technical occupations having annual incomes which are not substantially greater than 'traditional' working-class occupations (such as skilled trades, administrative and secretarial occupations) (ONS, 2021b). A more explicitly Marxist interpretation of the class structure, inspired by the work of Wright (1997), suggests that the working-class constitute 71 percent of the population (Vidal, 2018). This is significant given that the UK's neoliberal political economy is intended to transfer wealth from the working-class to the capitalist class through increasingly exploitative class relations (see subsection 2.3.1).

Class voting is the extent to which different social class groups tend to vote for parties which have traditionally been associated with economic and social ideologies and policies that align to, and maintain or better, their economic and social interests. In the first three general elections following the Second World War (1945, 1950 and 1951) there was a high degree of 'class voting' in the sense that the Labour Party tended to be supported by the working-class and the Conservative Party by the middle-class (Abrams, 1961). This was partly related to economic conditions of the time, a commitment to return to full employment and the concessions proposed by the Labour Party to offset poverty and deprivation in the midst of post-war recovery. The economic and social values of those in working-class occupations have remained stable since the post-war period (Evans and Tilley, 2017), but class voting behaviour has changed.

Traditionally, the Labour Party were the party of the working-class and tended to support their interests through, for example, alliances with trade unions, greater taxation for the rich, greater welfare spending and increasing the wages of the lowest earners. The institutionalisation of these interests are particularly important given the UK has been a predominantly Conservative-led country over the last century. Ideological shifts by the Labour Party around the time of New Labour saw the adoption of more punitive approaches to welfare, less focus on redistribution, and the abandonment of 'class' discourses and politics (Evans and Tilley, 2017). On this latter point, this is despite people being more likely to experience some form of financial insecurity, be unable to find adequate housing

and pay for their housing costs, and work in jobs which pay less and demand more (Dorling, 2013; 2015). Evans and Tilley (2017) argue that the Labour Party's rightward shift was because of a supposed shrinking of the working-class, meaning more rightward economic policies were necessary to court middle and upper-class groups. However, the 'working-class' constituted nearly 40% of the working-age population in the early 2000s (Census, 2001), even when using the NS-SEC measure. The following subsection will consider how and when New Labour lost the working-class vote and what this meant in terms of patterns of class voting.

New Labour, UKIP and the 'Red Wall'

According to Evans and Tilley (2017) it is only in the late 2000s that the vote share for the Labour Party by class group converges. Prior to this, cleavages of class voting tended to show three things: i) a decline in Labour support by all classes but most significantly the working-class between 1960 and 1980, ii) increases in support amongst all classes in the run up to New Labour gaining power, but this was lower for the working-class than the authors' other class categories, iii) followed by consistent declines in support across all classes from 1997 (Evans and Tilley, 2017) – see Figure 9[4]. From the 1990s increases in non-voting were most notable among the working-class (*ibid*), which is significant in relation to Brexit largely because the referendum was a different form of voting which resulted in higher-than-average turnouts.

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[4] The class categories used in Figure 9 are the working-class (WC), which is a group of people in jobs – such as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled routine, manual and care workers – which offer lower and more insecure incomes and poorer working conditions. The junior middle-class (JMC) which refers to routine non-manual 'white collar' workers in jobs such as secretarial work, bank cashiers and typists. The new middle-class (NMC) are those in middle-class occupations generally in the service sector and social and cultural industries, such as teachers, architects, nurses and social workers.
The old middle-class (OMC) was the dominant group in the middle-class immediately after the war and is made up of managers, small business owners, self-employed professionals and farmers. (See Evans and Tilley, 2017: p.4-5).

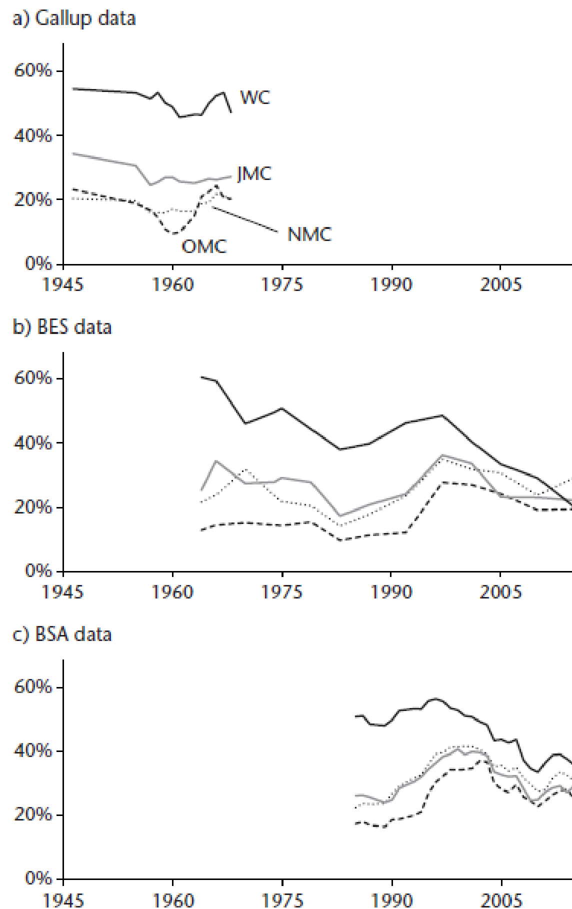

Figure 9 – Vote share of the Labour Party by class from 1945 to 2015. Reproduced from Evans and Tilley (2017).

British Election Study (BES) data derives class position from SOC occupational groups. The working-class is made up of lower supervisory/technical, semi-routine and routine occupational groups. British Social Attitudes (BSA) data uses NS-SEC socio-economic groups to define the working-class which is made up of skilled manual and semi/unskilled groups.

Members of the middle and upper classes have consistently dominated the make-up of the Labour Party's elected representatives. At the time of the 1951 general election one-in-three Labour MPs were formerly of a working-class occupation. However, by 1970 this figure declined to just over a quarter (House of Commons, 2017), and by 2010 to only five percent (Evans and Tilley, 2017). New Labour's ideological shift to the right (see Hall, 1998) had the effect of a creating a crisis of representation for working-class people in the sense that they no longer had a party who represented their interests in terms of economic redistribution (Hoare

and Nowell-Smith, 1999). This rightward shift may be seen to align with the social conservativism which working-class voters are often susceptible to, but the Conservative Party were *even more socially conservative* than New Labour, and specifically anti-immigrant, which meant they were often seen as a 'better option' for politics of this kind.

Blair's public and protracted abandonment of class discourses, claiming there was "no more bosses versus workers" (Blair, 1996: np), stood at odds with public opinion of the time. Using data from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey between 1983 and 1996, 76 percent of respondents who were state educated thought of themselves as belonging to the working-class and over 60 percent agreed with the statement there is 'one rule for the rich and one for the poor'[5] (Evans and Tilley, 2012). New Labour's politics signalled a departure from 'class' to other social concerns such as citizenship and cohesion which were intended to appeal on the basis of other aspects of identity. For example, New Labour's response to an 'underclass' discourse bequeathed to them by the Tory Party, which divided the working-class between workers and the unemployed, saw them adopt a new conception of citizenship that broke with socialist values (Bevir, 2000; Tyler, 2015) and emphasised responsibilities and community (Morrison, 2018).

The community cohesion agenda intended to deracialise the discourses and language surrounding 'race relations' but instead introduced racialised and nationalist themes by the back door, focussed on ethnic and religious cohesion at the expense of class and gender, and tended to problematise Muslim and white working-class communities (Flint and Robinson, 2008; Kundnani, 2007; Phillips, 2006; Worley, 2005). A series of events since 2001, such as the Iraq War, the London 7/7 terror attacks and the EU A10 accession increasing Eastern European migration, shaped the way that community cohesion served as a repository for other public and policy concerns about race and nation (Flint and Robinson, 2008). Then Chancellor, Gordon Brown, saw New Labour proactively increase migrant numbers as a way of expanding the size, and increasing the competitiveness, of the labour force (Bale et al. 2013). Statistical research shows

[5] This is derived from pooled British Social Attitudes Survey data between 1987 and 2009.

that higher levels of post-enlargement EU migration in urban areas in England weakened residents' perceptions of social cohesion (Andrews, 2015) and added to increasingly negative public perceptions of immigration between 2001 and 2008, whereafter the GFC took precedence.

New Labour's approach to immigration was premised upon filling labour and skills shortages whilst the economy was strong. However, there was no obvious political dividend to be gained from relaxing economic immigration policy so quickly and extensively (Consterdine and Hampshire, 2014). This, as well as the perception that the Labour Party were to blame for the GFC because of reckless spending, and Blair's growing unpopularity, alienated some of their traditional (white) working-class electorate (Dennison and Goodwin, 2015; Evans and Mellon, 2016). This opened up a political chasm in which right-wing populist parties hijacked a specific form of class politics, or what Davidson and Saull (2017: 6) term the "crisis of working-class white identity" which has been undermined by "'cosmopolitan' cheerleaders of neoliberalism".

Evans and Mellon (2016) use official election data to show how many former Labour voters switched to the Conservatives in 2005, with many of these new Conservative voters in turn switching to UKIP – the United Kingdom Independence Party, a right-wing populist, Eurosceptic, single-issue party advocating for Britain to leave the EU – in 2010. There were also large increases in non-voting from working-class occupational groups at the 2010 General Election (see also Evans and Tilley, 2017). One of the key reasons why UKIP were so successful in recruiting former Labour voters was because of their racialised class politics which blended concerns over immigration with anti-EU sentiments and a "populist critique of established politicians" (Dennison and Goodwin, 2015: p.172) as rich and out of touch. This had significant implications for Brexit in the way the party straddled a number of issues which were important to working-class people in parliamentary politics and rearticulated them in terms of an anti-EU sentiment.

The main story of the 2019 General Election was the loss of the 'Red Wall' to the Conservatives. These were once safe Labour seats across post-industrial England, including the Midlands and the north of the country, which had been the core basis of the party's support for numerous decades. Whilst both played a

part, there is more to this than the leadership of Corbyn and Brexit. Research shows that people living in 'Red Wall' working-class communities think that the Labour Party no longer represents their interests and the dominant story within these places is one of long-term shifts in political subjectivities as a result of the generational effects of deindustrialisation, service underfunding and cuts, and the changing nature of the labour market (Payne, 2021). This is also about changing public and popular narratives: the dominance of neoliberal common-sense discourses which misrecognise the causes of these structural problems have crystallised perceptions of migrants and benefit claimants as 'others'. In the absence of alternative class-based discourses, parties which perpetuate and (re)produce common-sense of this kind – largely the Tories, but to a lesser extent Labour – tend to be seen as more responsive to the 'truths' about inequality and decline.

The Working-Class and Trade Union Reticence Towards European Integration

In Subsection 2.3.1 the thesis explores the development of neoliberal capitalism and its effects upon the working-class since the late 1970s. However, what also needs to be considered is how and why there has been a historical reticence of organised labour and the working-class towards greater European integration, which precedes the development of neoliberal capitalism. This has important implications for understanding why some sections of the working-class may have supported Brexit and also wanted Britain to withdraw from the European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1975 referendum.

Even during a period of relative working-class strength, involving commitments to full employment, trade union strength and industrialisation in the decades after the Second World War, sections of the British Trade Union movement were wary of European integration, as were many working-class members. Those in working-class groups, with weaker socio-economic positions, lower levels of education, who rented their homes and were in a union, were most likely to vote to leave in 1975 (Clements, 2017). Many of these demographic cleavages continued in 2016 (see Subsection 2.2). In 1975, of those in social grades C2 and DE, 38% voted for Britain to end its membership of the EEC; whilst those renting

their homes (34%), who were in a union (34%) were all most likely to support withdrawal (Clements, 2017). Geographical analyses of the 1975 referendum show that those who were most likely to vote to withdraw from EEC tended to be living in less affluent areas in England (Kirby and Taylor, 1975).

The lead up to the 1975 referendum was set in a particular context of economic and hegemonic crises throughout the early 1970s, including struggles against rising inflation and the Miners' Strikes of 1972 and 1974. Nonetheless, attitudes against European integration seem to go deeper than this and suggest that the strength of trade unionisation at the time was a vehicle for at least partially shaping political attitudes. The development of Euroscepticism in Britain has tended to be associated with the Conservative Party, and particularly the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, in the years leading up to and following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty which was intended to deepen integration and cooperation between European member states (Davis, 2016).

As far back as the 1950s there has been parts of the British Trade Union movement which has either opposed or remained neutral upon Britain's ties with the European Communities. Throughout the mid-20th century, The Trades Union Congress was firmly against supranationalism, believing that any model of British-European interdependence was at odds with values of full employment and raising living standards for British people through national policy (Broad, 2020). The TUC opposed the Schuman Plan which, in 1952, saw 'the Six' original countries (Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) agree to pool their coal and steel resources; argued against Britain's initial attempts to enter the European Communities (EC) in the early 1960s; opposed entry to the EEC in 1971; and supported withdrawal in the 1975 referendum (Broad, 2020; Moss and Clarke, 2021).

Suspicion and hostility towards the EEC and EU from sections of the British Trade Union Movement and the Labour Party stems from an understanding of European integration as inherently business-orientated and at odds with many of the rights granted to workers, employment standards and job protection. Not only this, in the past, deepening ties with European countries was seen to be of less importance than those established through the British commonwealth; this did not

necessarily reflect imperial nostalgia but a concern over rising food costs in the UK caused by import tariffs imposed by the EEC (Hyman, 2017).

Leading up to and during the 1975 referendum, a series of unions supported non-EEC membership, such as the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW), and the Transport Salaried Staff's Association (TSSA), with others supporting EEC-membership such as the General and Municipal Workers Union (GMWU) and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW). Like in 2016, trade unions were divided upon European integration in the 1960s and 1970s, but, overall, have moved from a position of greater hostility in the past to be more supportive of EU membership (Hyman, 2017). What this suggests is that efforts to dismantle the British Trade Union movement since the late 1970s, have cut off opportunities for class-based politics to provide an alternative to neoliberal hegemony, disaggregated and atomised working-class people and subjected them to the harsh realities of economic policies which exacerbate inequalities of income.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the key trends, developments and processes that have impacted on and shaped working-class life experiences and their political dispositions and subjectivities over the last forty years. It does this because the broader economic, socio-cultural, political and geographical context is important to understand if analysis is to move away from an account of Brexit as determined by individual characteristics and behaviours. This chapter argues that Brexit is best understood as related to three interrelated themes that emerge strongly in later findings chapters: neoliberal capitalist restructuring and deindustrialisation; symbolic othering as articulated through immigration and welfare; and class and class politics.

The explanations for Brexit considered in this chapter do frame their analysis using some of these themes, but this tends to be more fragmentary, and authors are guilty of focussing on some key developments and processes whilst glossing over others. The main argument which can be drawn from these accounts is that they are all partial explanations of Brexit and have key weaknesses in terms of a

lack of empirical grounding (Bhambra, 2017; Jessop, 2017; 2018; Virdee and McGeever, 2018), a predominantly cultural conception of class (McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b), a focus only on white working-class people (Ford and Goodwin, 2017; McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b; Telford and Wistow, 2019) and are individualistic rather than structural (Patel and Connelly, 2019). Across four findings chapters, of which one is a narrative analysis (Chapter 6), I show how voting justifications for and against Brexit develop from the *interrelatedness* of experiences and understandings of deindustrialisation and economic marginalisation (Chapter 7), symbolic othering (Chapter 8), and class and class politics (Chapter 9).

As a brief recap of the key arguments within the thematic subsections of this chapter, subsection 2.3.1 explores how the UK's shift to a neoliberal political economy, as a series of processes intended to rebalance class relations in favour of capital (Gallas, 2015; Jessop, 2015a), has led to greater economic insecurity, heightened employment precarity, wage stagnation and rising costs of living for working-class people. Subsection 2.3.2 maps the historical basis of how different social and economic groups are racialised and individualised as being less 'deserving' of fiscal support, housing, empathy and compassion than others. Financial capitalism produces inequalities: this subsection shows how the capitalist class and its intermediaries, such as political parties and the media, attribute the causes of these inequalities to those who are the most marginalised. Subsection 2.3.3 explores changing understandings of class, the realignment of class politics and the effects this has had upon class voting patterns.

In Britain, a more atomistic and individualised understanding of society which is antithetical to notions of class is the dominant discourse through which voters have to make political choices. The material and symbolic inequalities explored in subsections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 provide an important contextual backdrop to this. Economic insecurity, immiseration and the pervasiveness of anti-welfare and anti-immigrant common-sense destabilise the foundations of class politics and class solidarities and leave the door open for division and resentment. The Conservative Party and national populist parties such as UKIP capitalised on a "popular xenophobia and racism" introduced by political parties as "a permanent stabiliser of class relations in Britain" (Gough, 2017: 368).

In the Theoretical Framework which follows, I take these different themes forward and think through them with authors such as Jessop, Bourdieu, Tyler and Gramsci as a way of understanding how people formed their EU referendum voting proclivities and their political subjectivities more broadly.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will outline a theoretical framework that is able to focus in on the range of key determinants of voting in the EU referendum and is sufficiently flexible to offer nuance and allow for divergent cases. A theoretical framework is used in this project to help deepen analysis, broaden insights and ground accounts and experiences in a series of wider processes (Miles, 2019). Theory is the bridge through which the highly contextualised, localised and idiosyncratic case studies that I develop can be related to structural changes and broader fields of knowledge and narratives. Theory is used to determine what elements of a complex and multifaceted research problem are important and legitimate to document (Schram, 2003) and what its challenges are; it provides a narrative to the data and allows me to generate a series of different hypotheses and research questions which guide inquiry (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Following from the core research questions outlined in subsection 1.3.1, theory allows me to:

1. Understand how past experiences inform the way people arrive at their political proclivities, and particularly how they voted in the EU referendum.

2. Show how these experiences are shaped by the impacts of wider political and economic processes occurring over time and across space.

3. Explain how the ways people think and speak about others may diverge from or support common-sense or good-sense discourses.

As explained more fully in Chapter 4, this project takes a broadly critical realist philosophical approach. Firstly, critical realism is committed to a post-positivist and realist understanding of the social world; it provides support for the non-reductive materialist element in political economic theoretical approaches by arguing that social structures exist independently of our awareness of them (Houston, 2001). Secondly, critical realist epistemology relates to my theories of class struggle from above and cultural class analysis of the construction of political dispositions by recognising that the complexity of Brexit cannot be fully

understood without combining and integrating different (and sometimes argued to be competing) theoretical traditions.

This project builds upon a theoretical synthesis of Marxist political economy which has an attentiveness to the symbolic and cultural articulation of neoliberal hegemony (through classificatory struggles/stigma and common-sense), and Bourdieusian cultural class analysis, developed across different works by Imogen Tyler (2013; 2015; with Jensen, 2015). What Tyler describes as 'cultural political economy' (see Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2015) is a theoretical approach which allows for "much deeper understandings of the mechanisms of exploitation which characterize neoliberal modes of governmentality" (Tyler, 2015: 507). Going further, the theoretical framework developed in this thesis is responsive to Flemmen's (2013) claim that cultural class analysis has lost sight of the economic dimension of social structures and the centrality of capitalist relations to class. The theoretical framework developed in this project argues that political-economic restructuring in the shift to neoliberalism is an elite project to restore class domination over the working-class (see Jessop, 2015a; 2017; 2018) and 'consent' for this is generated through the articulation of forms of (sometimes racialised) common-sense (Crehan, 2016; Hall and O'Shea, 2013; Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999; Tyler, 2013). Experiences of structural change, and exposure to the common-sense discourses legitimising it, are internalised as dispositions which guide (political) subjectivities (Bourdieu, 1977). This project follows a model of class which draws upon a Marxist division of the capitalist class and the proletariat (working-class), and the political-economic relations which sustain this division, which is modified by an appreciation of the cultural divisions within and between these two broad groups, informed by the work of Bourdieu (1984) and Tyler (2013; with Jensen, 2015).

The first subsection explores Marxist political economy, focussing upon the work of Gramsci (in Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1999) and Jessop (2015a; 2015b; 2017; 2018) as a way of understanding how the intensification of economic marginalisation is an effect of capitalism, and particularly the finance-focussed form it has taken in the UK since 1979. The second subsection starts with a discussion of Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and common-sense and then moves onto an exploration of how these have been articulated in the UK in recent

decades. It draws on the work of Tyler (2013; 2015; with Jensen, 2015), Makinen (2017) and Krivonos (2018) to explain how a range of undeserving groups are institutionalised as 'other' as a way to legitimise forms of political statecraft. In the final subsection, Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus and hysteresis are used to understand how the working-class form their political dispositions and subjectivities from past experiences. In the conclusion, it is shown how these different theories may work together to provide a more holistic understanding of Brexit.

3.2 Marxist Political Economy, Crisis and The State

Marxist political economy can help us to understand Brexit by offering a structural and historical account of class struggle from above and showing how processes of neoliberal capitalist restructuring have *intended* to rebalance class relations in favour of the capitalist class and its allies (political parties and the media) with *harmful effects* on the working-class (Cooper and Whyte, 2017; Gallas, 2015; Jessop, 2015a; 2015b). This causes resentment, frustration and apathy and makes people more susceptible to discourses which misrecognise and distort the causes of structural inequalities and insecurity.

Capitalism, as Marx understood it, was a system of class competition and struggle with greater efficiency of producing 'surplus value' or profit through processes of labour exploitation (Anyon, 2011; Edgell, 1993). In Marxist political economy, the state is understood to be influenced by, and to function for the benefit of, the capitalist class; it tends to promote their economic and political interests. There are, however, some instances where concessions are granted to the working-class (the sale of council houses, for example) in the interests of securing hegemony (Poulantzas, 1973). Marxist political economy considers economics, society and politics to be interconnected fields that form the stage for the struggles of the working-class over their exploitation. Class struggle remains central to analyses of the capitalist economy: profit is procured from the goods and services produced through the exploitation of wage labour and class struggle can modify (increase or lessen) that rate of exploitation. A class of workers – the proletariat – are forced to sell their labour power to survive; they exchange their

time, energy and skills for a wage which does not amount to the value of the product or service they produce. The capitalist class – the bourgeoisie – accumulate the difference between the costs of wages and the value that workers produce as surplus value or profits, which can then be reinvested to increase profitability.

Within Marxist political economy, several different forms of 'crisis' may be referred to as part of the development and restructuring of neoliberal economies. Three broad types of crises are important to understand how Marxist political economy is used to frame and analyse Brexit in this project.

- Crisis of hegemony: when the ruling class and the dominant social relations governing society are challenged and lose their legitimacy (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1999).

- Crisis of representation: when social groups become detached from or unrepresented by their traditional political parties (*ibid*).

- Economic crisis: when financial assets lose a large part of their nominal value, leading to other crises such as higher unemployment, widening inequality and economic stagnation.

The reconfiguration of society as it moves from an older to newer conjuncture – the dominant political and class relations governing a particular epoch – is generally mediated by crisis (Hall and Massey, 2010). The most relevant example of this is the UK's transition from social democracy to neoliberalism. Social democracy represented a compromise between capital and labour in a way that "the organised working class accepted markets and property rights in exchange for a range of democratic rights and social entitlements" (Lavery, 2019: 16). Because of the success of the New Right in portraying the economic crises (the oil shocks, stagflation, decreasing productivity) that marked the later years of social democracy – from 1973 to 1979 – as a consequence of the strength of the working-class and their allies, their institutions were most forcibly attacked by the Thatcherites.

Brexit may be understood as a project to manage a crisis of hegemony facing a Conservative government unable to reconcile a series of increasingly fractious social and political divisions within the UK and enduring economic crises wrought by neoliberal accumulation strategies (Jessop, 2015a; 2017). Crises are always overdetermined by a range of different historical processes and relations (Hall and Massey, 2010). Thatcherism was not only a response to a series of compounding economic problems, but premised upon fragmenting the organised working-class, their institutions and identities, and this relied on symbolic processes which reconstructed representations of race, ethnicity and national identity (CCCS, 1982; Hall et al. 1978). This was an attempt by the state and media to stabilise hegemony and garner consent for 'law-and-order' policies (Hall et al. 1978) by consolidating support from the white working-class around racialised ideas of deservingness and Britishness.

Jessop (2015a; 2018) considers the state as a social relation and unable to exercise power itself because the potential power structures embedded within it are only mobilised by politicians and state actors, who themselves have particular social and economic interests.

> "Thus, the state is […] involved in organising and reorganising class alliances among dominant class fractions and disorganising subordinate classes and forces, […] through articulating a national-popular interest that transcends particular class interests" (Jessop, 2015c: 80).

The state distributes material and symbolic concessions unevenly to procure consent for, and reduce resistance against, a range of different state projects and policies (Jessop, 2015a). When faced with effective threats from the working-class, these concessions can include wage increases, greater job security and benefits, or access to property and health services, which are offered in exchange for their continued labour and to ensure the long-term stability of the capitalist project (Panitch, 1986).

Neoliberalism has removed many of these privileges and has witnessed an intensification of class exploitation since the GFC (through 'new' employer strategies such as bogus self-employment and increasingly precarious contracts) and the undercutting of welfare services. The Thatcher administrations' hostility to some parts of the state was intended to reduce its size by rolling back and

dismantling its socially progressive elements such as welfare and public services and rolling out its repressive and authoritarian forms such as workfare (Peck and Tickell, 2002). This is because the latter smooth out blockages to labour productivity, by removing the capacity of workers to resist and forcing them to accept increasingly poor jobs (Peck, 2001).

This subsection has suggested that a series of economic and political processes as part of Britain's neoliberal regime shift were intended to rebalance class relations in favour of the capitalist class. These processes have had immiserating and marginalising effects on working-class people and shaped the opportunities and resources they have access to. In analysis which follows, I will explore how these processes have shaped interviewees' experiences of work, welfare and inequality over the last forty years and what these experiences mean in terms of the way they form their political dispositions and subjectivities. In the next subsection, I explore how different 'crises' and economic conditions tend to be exploited by political parties and the media as means of political gain and to attempt to garner consent for policies which tend to have violent, repressive and immiserating effects on marginal groups (Tyler, 2013).

3.3 Class, Race and Racialisation

The racialisation of different groups is a historical power relationship in which dominant ideologies are created to serve elite interests and are perpetuated in everyday exchanges, informing a series of assumptions about 'others' with particular physical, cultural and symbolic differences (Garner, 2015; Shankley and Rhodes, 2020). These assumptions are dynamic but tend to relate to the supposed social, economic and cultural value of 'others' in terms of, for example, migrant groups being a threat to 'British' jobs or not wanting to integrate with British people. This legitimises different forms of discrimination. Racialisation works to position different groups in a 'racialised social system' (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) that legitimises racial inequality on the basis of historical assumptions about different racial and ethnic groups, informing access to different social, economic and symbolic resources. This can be in terms of access to jobs, housing, healthcare and unemployment benefits, being able to use particular

spaces or being positioned in a symbolic economy as (il)legitimate or (un)deserving.

The content and foci of racialised common-sense discourses and ideologies, and understandings of different identities and groups, are contradictory, historically and politically specific and transformed in line with classed processes of political-economic restructuring (CCCS, 1982). Capitalism and racialisation are interdependent and involve processes of regulating and dividing an ethnically and racially differentiated working-class to extract more profit and stabilise class relations in periods of economic crisis (Virdee, 2014; Carter and Virdee, 2008). The historical roots of racialisation are not simply ideological phenomena but are grounded in the political, economic and cultural relations established by the historical development of Britain as a major colonising state (CCCS, 1982).

The intersections between class, race and nation are specific sites of struggle which, in contrast to their existence as relatively independent abstractions, work together to generate a particular group history (Hill-Collins, 1998). Racialised discourses are "the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and 'fought through'" (Hall, 1980: 341). Different racialised groups experience marginalisation differently because of their position within a 'racialised social system' (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) and understand and talk about the causes of such through a range of different common-sense discourses which frequently misrecognise and obscure the structural causes of inequalities as part of a political struggle for hegemony over Britain as a nation (Miles and Brown, 2003).

Experiences of insecurity and marginalisation as an effect of neoliberal political and economic restructuring processes have produced a specific form of nationalist politics, which has been taken up by some sections of the white working-class as a way to understand their personal circumstances in the absence of other competing political discourses (Virdee and McGeever, 2018). This has resulted in migrants, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and benefit claimants becoming the target of a series of racialised discourses which tend to be refracted concerns over structural inequalities. Race and racialisation are part of the crisis which led to Brexit, particularly in the way that a series of 'internal others' – ethnic and racial groups with particular physical and cultural

characteristics spoken about pejoratively in politics and the media – have been harnessed as scapegoats through which a series of different crises have been understood (ibid). These crises have been explored more fully in Sub-section 2.3.1.

What can be said here is that the combined effects of economic, political and ideological crises have meant politicians have "carefully activated long-standing racialized structures of feeling about immigration and national belonging" (Virdee and McGeever, 2018: 1804) as one way to maintain hegemony. This is because race has been, and continues to be, one of the key modalities through which hegemonic relations are stabilised during periods of political instability (CCCS, 1982). The types of racialised discourses which surrounded Brexit, and which are evident in the way people justified their vote to leave the EU (see Ford and Goodwin, 2017; McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b), have been shaped by the way Britain's international position has developed since the post-war period (CCCS, 1982). There is a tension here. Migrant labour was used and relied upon by different British governments to reorganise the industrial and post-industrial labour market in Britain, but at the same time politicians continued to create and perpetuate discourses which vilified migrants as a means to maintain ideological hegemony and legitimise ethnic and racial divisions (ibid).

Crucially, how the intersections of class and racialisation play out in the present take from – sometimes idealised – recollections of the past. Feelings of marginalisation may be exacerbated by understandings of UK history in terms of a sense that certain groups have lost out over time (Miles & Brown, 2003; Yuval-Davies, 1986). There is a tension between an understanding of Britain as being fairer and more equitable in the past – part of "a mythical golden age of sovereign nation-states defined by cultural and racial homogeneity" (Virdee and McGeever, 2018: 1803) – and a present state which is no longer thought to be attentive to the needs of the white working-class (Bhambra, 2017; Garner, 2015). Instead, Britain and its mainstream political parties are thought to actively encourage the development of policies which benefit ethnic and racial minorities (Garner, 2015). As Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 show, the way different groups understand the inequalities, marginalisation and periods of decline they experience are sometimes imbued with racialised and nationalistic overtones.

3.4 Symbolic Othering and Manufacturing Consent

Gramsci's concept of hegemony describes how the dominant class group in a society maintains and reproduces class relations in their own economic interests through cultural institutions and the perpetuation of common-sense ideas, values and beliefs (Crehan, 2016; Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999). Without reducing culture to an epiphenomenon of the economy, hegemony helps explain how different narratives and discourses largely produced by the intermediaries of the capitalist class – political elites and the media – are disseminated as ways of understanding social relations (Crehan, 2016). As Hall and Massey summarise:

> "Gramsci would say that a hegemonic settlement only works when ideology captures or 'hegemonises' common-sense; when it becomes so taken for granted that its ways of looking at the world seem to be the only ways in which ordinary people can calculate what's good and what's not, what they should support and what they shouldn't, what's good for them and what's good for society" (Hall and Massey, 2010: 62).

Gramsci's common-sense (defined more fully in subsection 1.1) is preferred to theoretically similar concepts such as Bourdieu's doxa, and relatedly illusio, largely because Bourdieu's conception of the working-class is premised upon a deficit model of thinking (Nash, 1990; Skeggs, 2011; Tyler, 2015) which suggests that those lacking capitals will necessarily be susceptible to the dominant ideology.

The working-class are not valueless subjects (Skeggs, 2011) and it is argued that whether people are richer or poorer, are more or less advantaged or have greater or lesser amounts of capitals, they can still be susceptible to common-sense ideology. Relatedly, Gramsci shows how common-sense can contain kernels of good-sense, which represent counter-narratives to hegemonic discourses (Crehan, 2016) and are the foundations on which political consciousness should be based. In a contemporary context, good-sense can be conceived of as those political, reflexive and critical beliefs and ideas which come from historical experiences and struggles which break with, and think beyond, the messages foisted upon working-class people through (neoliberal) propaganda (*ibid*; Crehan, 2016). Good-sense is not premised on othering and denigration (except in the sense of recognising the advantages of elites) and can be thought of as the series

of articulations which intend to “destabilise the meanings that fix the dominated in place” (Jeffery et al. 2020: 129).

As part of the way neoliberal propaganda plays out in the UK, common-sense hegemonic discourses tend to be those premised on the naming, othering and denigration of ‘undeserving’ and ‘low status’ groups as a technology to foster the misrecognition of the unequal distribution of wealth and resources as an individualistic rather than structural problem (Tyler, 2013). These are forms of classification – ways of knowing particular groups – imposed on people from above and designed to devalue specific bodies, and foster abjection and disgust, which make them easier to exploit, control and punish (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2015). This is a relational process: marginal populations tend to struggle *against* classification (in the sense that most classification ‘from above’ is denigratory and repressive), whereas, for example, political and economic institutions and the right-wing media, wage struggles *for* classification. Class groups may respond to the classifications imposed upon them through internalisation, displacement and/or rejection, and this can lead to the perpetuation of stereotypes about others perceived to be ‘worse’ (see Jeffery et al. 2020).

In an era where labour market insecurity, widening inequality and precarious employment is the dominant story of class relations for working-class people (Etherington et al. 2018; Umney, 2018) opportunities to accrue *economic* value are increasingly limited. Theories developing the concept of ‘classificatory struggles’ (Jeffery et al. 2020; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Krivonos, 2018; Makinen, 2017; Tyler, 2013) can help to better understand how in the absence of economic value, symbolic value may be pursued through forms of cultural distinction. Through a series of significant contributions, Tyler (2013; 2015; 2015 with Jensen; 2020) has illuminated how ‘consent’ for a range of punitive social policies has been negotiated through the cultivation of an anti-welfare and anti-migrant common-sense. This is not new.

Welshman (2013) has shown how since the late 1800s, there have been a series of conceptual terms used to speak about an ‘underclass’ in Britain, which denotes “the behavioural inadequacies of the poor” (Welshman, 2013: 175) as a way to legitimise policies which maintain their exclusion and marginalisation. The

particular form of common-sense that exists today has continued to be crafted in the neoliberal era through different Conservative and Labour governments and prime ministers, beginning with Thatcher's 'two nations' hegemonic project which distinguished between productive and parasitic groups (Jessop et al. 1988); Major's 'Back to Basics' campaign which was a weakly disguised claim to social conservatism; Blair's 'rights and responsibilities' rhetoric around citizenship, and the Coalition Government's discourse of 'slow motion moral collapse' (Cameron, 2011, cited in Stringer and Pogatchnik, 2011).

Common-sense neoliberalism is not only classed, but racialised and gendered (Solomos et al. 1982). Anti-immigration and anti-welfare politics are part of a process "where the assumed 'underclass' or surplus people become significant as a 'constitutive outside' that defines the contours of respectable citizenship" (Makinen, 2017: 218). Migrants play a hugely contradictory role as a symbolic group in the UK's economic and political life and how it is spoken about. The way migrants are represented in classifications produced by the state and media exist in a tension between 'folk devil' and essential workers which changes in line with different governments, labour market conditions and inter/national economic crises. The gendered dimension remains largely undeveloped in my analysis (see fuller discussion of the thesis' limitations in Chapter 4 and 10).

Disidentification from 'abject' groups and the denigration of 'others' as articulated by the working-class are distance-making practices waged in the context of their own struggles as a stigmatised and devalued group (Skeggs, 1997; 2004; Tyler, 2013). Racism, xenophobia and nationalism are not organic elements of working-class politics, but have a historical basis in mainstream political discourses, policies and ideology (see Flemmen and Savage, 2017). These discourses are *sometimes* taken up by working-class people because they are susceptible to classed arguments which help explain and understand their own economic and social circumstances. However, messages from politicians and the media are not passively absorbed by people on the ground, but tend to tap into existing prejudices and concerns, thereby reinforcing them, and paving the way for the ramping up of these discourses (Gough, 2017; Solomos et al. 1982). This relates to what Stuart Hall referred to as the 'encoding/decoding' model of communication and particularly how different audiences generate rather than

necessarily receive the meanings of (television media) discourses in line with their own subjectivities and dispositions (see Hall, 1973).

The foregoing discussion explores some of the motivations which may influence working-class understandings of politics and the way they come to think and speak about different social groups. It helps to understand distinctions made between useful and useless citizens; those who belong and those who don't. The analysis which follows (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9) will explore the extent to which my sample of participants adhere to or diverge from such discourses; it will show how most of those who voted for Brexit tend to articulate their views through symbolic representations of ‘others’ derived from neoliberal common-sense. The exceptions to this are a group of voters espousing more explicitly Marxist political views of the EU as part of a capitalist hegemony which exploits the working-class. Whilst remain voters may not subscribe to exactly the same forms of common-sense as leavers, in a similar way many of them do draw upon stigmatising discourses of the working-class and working-class leave voters to mark out their politics.

3.5 Economic and Cultural Class Analysis

This subsection explores a series of Bourdieusian concepts which can facilitate a micro-level analysis of the way individuals form their political subjectivities and values from discourses, experiences, narratives and meanings. The extent to which Marxist theories of class and political economy are compatible with Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic domination has been debated by scholars over the course of the last three decades. Some have suggested that Bourdieu operates within a Marxist vein of thought (Fowler, 2011) and that he extends Marx’s economic theory of value (Swartz, 1997), while others have offered more critical interpretations, problematising Bourdieu’s usage of the concept of capital (Desan, 2013) and his notion of habitus (Burawoy, 2012). A series of compelling (partial) defences of Bourdieu’s work emphasise the value of seeing class as struggle over classification but argue that this must also include the potential for forms of resistance by the dominated against dominant neoliberal ideals in order to avoid claims of deficit thinking, which Bourdieu is rightly charged with (McKenzie, 2015;

Skeggs, 1997, 2004; Tyler, 2013, 2015). This project argues that Bourdieusian cultural class analysis and Marxist political economy can complement each other to illuminate how "as class inequalities grow, competition for economic and cultural capital, and accompanying forms of classificatory struggle, intensify" (Tyler, 2015: 506) and to ensure class analysis does not lose sight of the economic relations which constitute it (Flemmen, 2013).

In the previous subsection, it was shown how different forms of common-sense discourses may be drawn upon by the working-class as ways to create distance and acquire value when occupying abject and stigmatised social positions (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2013). These discourses can become internalised in habitus as dispositions used to negotiate similar social experiences in the future (particularly when there is less opportunity for counter-narratives). So far, less has been said about middle-class distinction, which pertains to, and reproduces, common-sense political discourses created by political elites and the media; this is the process through which the working-class are *made abject* (Tyler, 2013). Because Bourdieu's cultural model of class is dependent upon a conception of class position constituted by the accrual of capitals, those groups already dominant in capitals (the middle-class) are the arbiters of 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984). By setting these symbolic and cultural boundaries, the working-class become the limits which cultural and symbolic distinction is judged against (*ibid*).

I argue that Bourdieu's theory of habituation (habitus) – the way different social groups acquire the structures and values of their environments – needs to be connected to the (sometimes changing) structural basis of these environments. Bourdieu explains how…

> "sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and subjected to similar conditionings, have every likelihood of having similar positions and interests and therefore of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances" (Bourdieu, 1985: p.725).

Here, Bourdieu is relating habitus to social space: the latter being a model of the social structure premised upon a space of position takings in which individuals' positions are structured by volume and composition of capitals (which can be economic, cultural, social and symbolic) (Atkinson, 2010; Bourdieu, 1985).

Habitus is the internalisation of life experiences as dispositions to guide future behaviour, thinking and practice (Bourdieu, 1977); it is "produced through practical adaption to the situations and the probabilities that come with certain conditions of existence" (Atkinson, 2015: 66). The meanings individuals internalise are never solely classed, but are also racialised, nationalistic and gendered. To understand the generative tendencies of habitus, qualitative research needs to uncover the 'deeply buried' structures of the social world (Reay, 2004) which develop over time.

In his earlier work, Crossley sees habitus as 'pre-reflexive' and generative rather than mechanistic and circular (Crossley, 2002; 2003); it can reproduce the structures it is structured by, but also leaves the possibility for agents to modify existing structures and construct new ones (Crossley, 2003). However, Crossley has tended to become more critical of Bourdieu's model of social structure over time. Bourdieu's focus on capital volumes and compositions as the vector of class differences and position takings is the basis of Crossley's (2022) criticisms. The author argues that Bourdieu's model focuses on "resources independently of relations" (Crossley, 2022: 174): being at a greater social distance from others (for example, having less or more cultural capital), does not necessarily mean individuals are part of a class group with similar dispositions and subjectivities. This is particularly important given that some working-class participants, who have similar capital compositions and who live in similar social and economic conditions to their leave voting counterparts, voted to remain in the EU referendum.

The focus on habitus and Marxist political economy, I argue, helps us to overcome this issue. Habitus is rooted in understandings of socialisation and life experiences must be understood as situated in a political-economy constituted by the ensemble of class, race and gender relations which structure capitalist society. Not only this, but ideology is also 'relatively autonomous' from class position and the way people arrive at particular political position takings can be simultaneously about inequalities of particular resources (which Bourdieu's focus on individuals can account for) and group-level phenomena, constituted by political and ideological relations, such as collective organisation (Poulantzas, 1973) – of which Bourdieu is less useful for understanding.

Hysteresis is a concept which suggests that when objective social structures and relations in particular fields or environments change at a faster rate than the dispositions of habitus – which were generated by past interactions in the same fields – the individual feels a sense of disjuncture and dislocation (Bourdieu, 1977; Strand and Lizardo, 2017). The hysteresis of habitus explains how mismatches between agents and their environments (Strand and Lizardo, 2017) can result in "the frequently observed incapacity to think historical crises in categories of perception and thought other than those of the past" (Bourdieu, 1977: 83). This also seems to be at least partially borne out in some explanations for Brexit.

For example, Ford and Goodwin (2017) argue that older members of the working-class are 'left behind' because of their inability to keep up with fast changing social values and that Brexit provided a vehicle through which they could reassert values of the past. A contrasting explanation, but still an example of hysteresis, is offered by Bhambra (2017), Patel and Connelly (2019), and Virdee and McGeever (2018), who all suggest that Brexit is related to a form of post-imperial nostalgia and melancholia and the difficulties of some of the white working-class to come to terms with a more ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan society.

In subsection 2.3.3, drawing on key literature which maps the contours of class politics in Britain over time (Evans and Tilley, 2017), I showed how around the time of New Labour, mainstream political parties removed class from their political lexicon. The way New Labour abandoned working-class interests, and how Labour Party politics since then have followed a similar trajectory (with the exception of Corbynism), can be conceived of as a cause of hysteresis in terms of the experiences of 'traditional' working-class voters. The policies of the Labour Party, the class demographics of the party, and the social groups *perceived* to be Labour supporters (younger, university-educated, liberal voters concerned with identity politics) are at odds with the dispositions of habitus embodied by traditional working-class voters, creating a sense of disenfranchisement and disjuncture. This disjuncture arises from what Gramsci calls a 'crisis of representation' – when political groups are detached from their traditional political home (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999). This ties in with analysis presented in Chapter 9, where I demonstrate how political disenfranchisement (as hysteresis)

lead some participants to conceive of the EU referendum as an opportunity to reinstate values of the past (Alan, subsection 9.3) and for real social and economic change (Steph and Paul, subsection 9.4).

Hysteresis is useful for understanding how a sense of dislocation is experienced by different individuals and groups when they become subject to social changes which create disjuncture between their habitus and the different fields they occupy. Authors working within this vein have suggested hysteresis can take different and more/less severe forms (Strand and Lizardo, 2017) in line with different types of reflexiveness and the structure of dispositions. How individuals *respond* to this disjuncture is less well explored by Bourdieu and advocates of his work. Accordingly, this thesis takes the concept further and explores how individuals respond to hysteresis effects. These responses could include (but are not limited to): those who adapt to new structures (e.g., finding new employment, upskilling, changing political and social views), and those who reject new structures and attempt to reassert value through stigmatisation, displacement of abjection and/or disassociation. The task of the forthcoming analysis is to develop an understanding of how (or if) participants experiencing hysteresis effects fell back onto, for example, historical class practices/older beliefs and how others created innovative responses that diverged from 'expected' regularities (see Strand and Lizardo, 2017: 12).

3.6 Conclusion

The theoretical framework developed in this chapter aims to support my analysis by setting accounts in wider, historicised explanations and narratives. One of the core purposes of this thesis is to understand how people construct their political proclivities and how they voted in the EU referendum. I bring together a Marxist political-economy and Bourdieusian cultural class analysis to better understand how in an era of class inequality and class recomposition, limited opportunities to acquire economic value mean symbolic struggles intensify and become increasingly fractious.

The political-economic system in the UK favours the interests of capital and is prone to crisis. Crises of divergent kinds are presided over by a state which

represents the crystallisation of class relations in a society (Jessop, 2015a). In recent times, policies on welfare reform, crime, immigration and identity/sexuality, have all been used as tools to denigrate and stigmatise 'other' populations. This is part of managing different crises by diverting attention away from structural processes and political statecraft as explanatory factors for deepening inequalities towards stigmatised groups and individuals. These discourses are internalised by some groups because there is a lack of alternative political discourses available in light of the expunction of class from the political lexicon and deunionisation.

This conceptual framework provides the tools for understanding how individuals voted in the EU referendum by enabling us to locate changing working-class subjectivities in wider structural changes and the effects of (economic, social and political) processes associated with neoliberalisation and urban deindustrialisation. Not only this, it helps us to understand the sources of forms of good-sense and common-sense in the accounts of interviewees and how these are mobilised; to consider how symbolic forms of identity work are used to create and sustain value and how these articulations shape and become part of voting proclivities; and to analyse how dispositions and perceptions are formed temporally and spatially through the mediating concept of the habitus.

4.0 Methodological Approach

4.1 Introduction

The main research question this project sets out to answer is '*why did people living within low-income neighbourhoods in England vote to leave or remain in the EU referendum (2016)?*'. This is supported by four sub-questions:

1. What are the economic, political, socio-cultural and symbolic factors that influenced the way working-class people voted in the referendum?

2. What does the Brexit vote tell us about wider working-class political subjectivities and class-based forms of politics?

3. What analytical and theoretical tools best support an understanding of the effects of the UK's changing political economy?

4. How useful are existing explanatory frameworks of Brexit for understanding the leave vote?

As a way to answer these core research questions, this study conducted 28 semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of residents (by ethnicity, age and gender) living within two contrasting low-income neighbourhoods in Selby and Sheffield. Interviews are used as a way to attain proximity to the lives of participants and better understand the nuances of their life experiences and attitudes.

This project uses principles of a critical realist philosophy as a guiding framework for research. This is because a critical realist-informed approach allows the research project to go beyond the individual interpretations of participants and reinsert the role of structure as a mechanism underlying their experiences (Sharpe, 2018). It also takes a case study approach as a way to examine how processes such as urban deindustrialisation, symbolic othering and immigration, and political disenfranchisement influence the local (and regional and national) contexts within which residents' lives play out.

What follows is a brief critical summary of alternative philosophical approaches to research and a more in-depth exposition of the greater suitability of a critical realist-informed approach. In subsection 4.3, a qualitative approach to inquiry is outlined. It establishes the value of a realist approach for qualitative research; explains the case study methodological approach; justifies the use of semi-structured interviews; and comments upon the sampling and recruitment procedures. The data analysis approach is explained in subsection 4.4 and ethical and methodological considerations are explored in subsection 4.5. Following this, subsection 4.6 explores the issue of researcher reflexivity and reflects on how the researcher may have influenced the data collection process, noting the importance of my own subjectivities and presuppositions in the way the study was conceived and produced.

4.2 Rationale for a Critical Realist Approach

One of the central challenges within sociological research concerns how a theory of human agency can be reconciled with an acceptance of the role of structure and its constraining effects (Houston, 2001). A critical realist philosophical approach to research is able to develop and explain the interplay between structure and agency more effectively than other dominant approaches such as interpretivism and positivism. Critical realism combines epistemological constructionism and ontological realism as a way to offset what the protagonists of this approach see as false oppositions between subjectivism/objectivism and structure/agency (Benton and Craib, 2001; Houston, 2001; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Interpretivist approaches largely follow a relativist ontology and a social constructionist epistemology and tend to argue that social research must go beyond the study of supposedly objective evidence (associated with positivism) and include human subjectivities: emotions, experiences, attitudes and beliefs. Ontological relativism asserts that reality is subjective and individually constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). As an epistemology, social constructionism treats knowledge as constructed and made through human interaction and experiences. Constructionism rejects the existence of ‘objective’

truth and focuses on the meanings imbued within different social categories and 'ways of knowing'. Interpretivists tend to follow an inductive approach to reasoning which builds theory and conclusions from the 'bottom up': moving from observations to interpretations and then theory. Here, realist/objectivist principles which emphasise "essences that are above and beyond the influence of humans" (Levers, 2013: 3) – unobservable structures such as different laws and mechanisms which influence events – are rejected.

By contrast positivism, widely seen as the 'scientific' paradigm, is an empiricist philosophical system that recognises as 'true' or valid only events or processes which can be scientifically verified through observation. Positivism tends to follow a realist ontology and objectivist epistemology. Realism is the view of reality that suggests that the objects the world contains have, at least partially, an existence which is independent of social agents' consciousness of them. Objectivist epistemology, in contrast to that of constructionism or subjectivism, believes in objective truth and suggests that to get closer to objective truth the world must be studied through reason and logic (Crotty, 1998; Scotland, 2012). Positivists use deductive reasoning which begins with a theory, seeks to develop a proposition or hypothesis and uses empirical testing to falsify it.

Critical realist principles offer, by contrast, a more suitable approach to research than interpretivism and positivism for a number of reasons. It accepts that knowledge can be socially constructed, but that this knowledge is bounded by a *real* (rather than constructed) physical and social world. Unlike relativists, critical realism argues that there are essential structures which exist within the world that shape the different possibilities of action available to human beings (Houston, 2001). There is statistical evidence for this in the patterning of differences in life chances, related to different structures such as class, ethnicity and gender. Where relativism may protect itself from the fallibility of knowledge by arguing that an external objective reality does not exist and that all interpretations of the social world are equally valid, fallibilism is one of the core principles of the critical realist approach. As Benton and Craib (2001) argue "the complexity of the world implies that our knowledge of it might be wrong or misleading" (Benton and Craib, 2001: 120) and it is important for social investigators to understand how different types of knowledge are formed and in what contexts.

Following a critical realist approach, this research rejects the idea that all knowledge is perspectival and context specific; it accepts instead that there are a series of different perspectives which exist within the world, and some are more valid and accurate than others (Benton and Craib, 2001). Critical realists differ from strict constructionists in the sense that the former start from "the acceptance of the possibility of knowing reality" (Easton, 2010: 123) and the latter tend to focus more upon the way social actors construct knowledge from their own multiple realities (*ibid*).

4.2.1 *Using Critical Realism: The Observable Effects of Economic, Political and Socio-Cultural Processes?*

The value and applicability of a critical realist philosophical approach in this research project relates to how well suited it is to a political sociology study of the interplay between objective structures and political subjectivities. Because the social world is made up of a highly variegated range of processes and relations, it is difficult to achieve 'experimental closure' and make visible the effects of different structures (Benton and Craib, 2001). However, in times of crisis "structures which are concealed in normal times become transparent" (Benton and Craib, 2001: 135). Brexit may be thought of as a product of a series of different crises in which structures such as class inequality, xenophobia, political marginalisation and nationalism came increasingly to the fore and were crystallised in people's justifications for voting to leave or remain.

Where an interpretivist philosophical approach may reduce people's political attitudes to the realm of constructions, this project traces the structural underpinnings of different political subjectivities using voting justifications as a starting point to better understand broader and historically deeper shifts in the UK's political economy. These shifts and developments have tended to be articulated through a series of common-sense discourses which divert attention from the structural relations which constitute them. To study class and race critically we must be mindful of not removing from discussion the power structures which sustain them (Bhambra, 2017; Quijano, 2000), the material effects of privilege and racial hierarchy (Kobayashi, 2004; Knowles, 2003) and how the

distinctions they make illuminate how we know, think and speak about 'the Other' (Virdee, 2014). The research questions this project asks are better answered using a critical realist-informed perspective because of the way it prompts the researcher to think about how existing theories may or may not provide a better or more 'truthful' account of reality than others (Fletcher, 2017).

The conceptual framework set out in Chapter 3 addresses the limitations of existing explanations for Brexit by providing a more holistic approach which draws on the strengths of different theoretical traditions. Gramsci's 'common-sense' and 'good-sense' (conceptualisations which are explored further in Chapter 1 and 3) are both "site[s] of political struggle" (Hall and O'Shea, 2013: 10). They allow the researcher to differentiate between forms of discourse which are used to distort reality in the interests of manufacturing consent – common-sense – and discourses which are forms of resistance to, and awareness of, the structural basis of different inequalities and insecurities – good-sense (Crehan, 2016; Hall and O'Shea, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Good-sense is itself partially subjective and contingent, but it is also sense which is committed to emancipation and drives out division and prejudice; it is "an intellectual unity…with a conception of reality that has gone beyond common sense and become, if only within narrow limits, a critical conception" (Gramsci, 1971: 333). This links to the notion of fallibilism in critical realism in the sense that certain propositions can be accepted as 'truthful' even if they cannot be proved.

The way this project develops Tyler's (2008; 2013; 2015; with Jensen, 2015) synthesis of Bourdieusian cultural class analysis and Marxist political economy, is reconcilable with a critical realist-informed approach. Habitus produces observable regularities at the empirical level: people in similar social positions have similar tastes and dispositions (as demonstrated by quantitative research by Atkinson, 2017) and they think and speak about particular groups and processes in similar ways. These regularities and actions are the consequences of a series of mechanisms which are a product of the internalisation of external structures (habitus).

4.3 Outline of a Qualitative Methodology

4.3.1 *Qualitative Inquiry*

This study adopts a qualitative approach to inquiry which focuses upon two neighbourhood cases – Selby North and Burngreave (Sheffield) – and the accounts of 28 residents living within them. The reasons for selecting a qualitative approach are twofold. First, it provides a means for the researcher to get as close as possible to research participants and the contexts in which they exist, which is fundamental to uncovering how histories and experiences influence people's political subjectivities, in line with the core aim of this project. Secondly, a qualitative approach following a realist perspective is able to add ontological depth which goes beyond an understanding of participants' experiences and actions as 'constructions' and seeks to understand them as products related to underlying structures and processes (Danermark et al. 2019).

Where quantitative methods can show us how broad and extensive a phenomenon is, qualitative methods allow us to explore with depth and clarity the meanings and processes which give a phenomena its underlying character. At the point of beginning fieldwork (November 2018), authors had already made a series of important contributions to the emerging literature on Brexit using large-scale, quantitative studies (see, for example, Dorling, 2016; Ipsos Mori, 2016; Portes, 2016; Swales, 2016). Studies of this kind tended to highlight the largely cross-sectional association between different structures and processes such as economic insecurity, immigration, political marginalisation and nationalism, and the leave vote. This project was premised, instead, upon better understanding how these different structures and processes have affected working-class people in particular geographical contexts, and this is best uncovered through the use of in-depth interviews which can drill down into the minutiae of experiences playing out over time.

McKenzie's (2017a; 2017b) work has gone some way to provide more qualitative understandings of how working-class people's experiences of economic marginalisation and political disenfranchisement informed the way they understood, and voted in, the EU referendum. However, this study goes beyond McKenzie's work in several different methodological and theoretical directions

(see Chapter 2 and 3 for fuller discussion). What can be said here, in brief, is that more qualitative research was needed which focused on structural changes as 'agent-full' and which have had disproportionate effects on a multi-ethnic working-class and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

4.3.2 *Life in Low-Income Neighbourhoods*: *Using a Case Study Approach*

Case studies are appropriate for studying a major event or decision and seeking to work out why it occurred, the processes which underpin it and to discern how particular structures exist within the case, as well as their underlying effects (Schramm, 1971). This study focuses on how "being in and moving through space" (Riley and Holton, 2016: 2) structures the lives of residents and how regional, national and international processes come to permeate local environments (Massey, 1991). It allows an in-depth approach to research which can uncover the structural underpinnings of phenomena within a specific context.

Two neighbourhoods within different regions were selected as contrasting cases. The primary justification for selecting each case hinged upon various differences and distinctions that were, at least theoretically, anticipated to produce contrasting results (Yin, 2013). These included referendum voting patterns and political history; localised and wider regional labour market restructuring; the ethnic composition of residents; the rate and flows of immigration; tenure type; access to services and amenities; population size and wider geographical context (city and town) – see Chapter 5 for more detail. The location of neighbourhoods within a small town versus a large city offered an opportunity to explore how deindustrialisation plays out in different labour market contexts where there are greater and lesser jobs and more and less sectoral diversity.

In Selby, the selection of the site was partly about my familiarity with the area and pre-established networks, relationships and knowledge. Burngreave was selected from a pool of other neighbourhoods in Sheffield using statistical comparisons to Selby across the aforementioned data points. Selby North and Burngreave are both working-class neighbourhoods within deindustrialising regions but there are key differences in that Selby North is part of a small town, is ethnically homogenous and tends to be less densely populated, with more

people who are in work, and low levels of immigration. Whereas Burngreave is part of a large city, is one of the most ethnically diverse wards in the country, has high levels of immigration, is densely populated and has less people in work.

The logics for selecting areas that exhibit these distinctions derives from existing explanations of Brexit and wider literature on class and class struggles, where they have been repeatedly cited as significant factors in voting to leave or remain. For example, within one popular explanatory framework of Brexit, the authors explore 'left behind' places, and so a focus on neighbourhoods located within deindustrialising regions was significant. At the same time, Bhambra (2017) and Patel and Connelly (2019) focus more on immigration, racism and nationalism (Bhambra, 2017; Patel and Connelly, 2019) which supports the importance of choosing case study areas which offer a contrast between areas with less/more migration and less/more ethnic diversity.

4.3.3 *Methods: Interviews*

Following a realist ontology, qualitative semi-structured interviews are used as the primary research method to attain proximity to the lives of those included in the study. Appendix 2 uses an example interview transcript to show how I drew upon questions which prompted explanation from the participant rather than that which relied upon my own neighbourhood expertise. Qualitative interviews are used to generate an in depth, biographical understanding of the different ways that perceptions, outlooks and actions emanating from the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) are formed through the interaction between structures changing over time. Interviews not only reveal the visible experiences and attitudes that people have, but through a deeper level of analysis can uncover the sometimes-hidden structures which constitute the different social relations and institutions within which different participants are implicated (Bourdieu, 1999).

The reasons why this study adopted a semi-structured interview design can be explained with reference to the theoretical synergies between Bourdieu's sociology and critical realism. Writing in *The Weight of the World,* Bourdieu (1999) devotes the final chapter of this edited collection to a series of methodological and theoretical reflections which are largely centred upon the notion of 'realist

construction'. Bourdieu argues that "it is only when it rests on prior knowledge of the realities concerned that research can bring out the realities it intends to record" (Bourdieu, 1999: 618). In order to get closer to what is considered to be a more truthful account of reality, research must work to uncover the way people construct an understanding of the reality around them and reveal the structures which underpin their experiences. Interviews are a suitable research method to do this because of the way that "narratives about the most 'personal' difficulties, the apparently most strictly subjective tensions and contradictions, frequently articulate the deepest structures of the social world and its contradictions" (Bourdieu, 1999: 608).

A semi-structured interview design was used to allow participants space to recount their own experiences but also to provide a necessary level of structure to be able to guide the interview towards chosen topics and themes while having enough latitude to explore unexpected themes of interest that were raised. The interview included some more open-ended narrative-based questions that tend to be more responsive to, and place value upon, the stories of participants and the way these were geographically specific (Gunaratnam, 2003). At the beginning of each interview, a narrative prompt – 'can you tell me what it has been like to live in this neighbourhood' – was used to allow the participant opportunity to introduce different stories and feelings which could be returned to and explored in greater depth. This elicited a historicised account of the participant's life which also stretched out beyond the neighbourhood and used a variety of other spatial reference points.

Interviews were audio-recorded using an encrypted digital recorder and lasted between forty minutes and two and a half hours, with recordings then transcribed and analysed only by the researcher to guarantee confidentiality. They were undertaken in a range of locations chosen according to participants' preferences; this included living rooms in private homes, community cafés, local pubs, libraries, offices, churches and classrooms. In Selby, all but one interview was carried out in interviewees' private homes, whereas in Sheffield, half opted to carry out their interview in a public place. This difference seemed related to Selby being the researcher's hometown and how this negated the need for a

gatekeeper to establish trust, with correspondingly fewer engagements in formal public settings (for a fuller discussion of this, see subsection 4.6).

The quality of interview was generally better when conducted in private homes: participants tended to express themselves more fully and be less mindful of other people overhearing their views. When in public spaces, interviews were sometimes more prescriptive, and it was sometimes harder to establish a sense of rapport and dialogue because of an interviewee's greater nervousness. Interviews which were conducted in private homes and in pairs (sometimes participants would be friends, other times partners) were generally of the best quality and tended to last the longest. In these instances, participants 'bounced off' each other and often engaged in a dialogue in response to questions; even where there was disagreement, this produced rich and organic discussions. This is not true for all cases, Yasmin's and Alan's interviews were two of the richest across the sample and these were conducted in busy local cafés.

One of the key problems encountered within, and findings revealed through, this thesis is that the logic of people's voting decisions are not always linear or immediately clear: people do not always say they voted for x because of y. Sometimes peoples' reasons for their voting decisions are opaque and rooted in dispositions which were formed through historical socialisation, which need to be uncovered through careful and subtle analysis of experiences and feelings. This needs to be caveated by saying that even when participants were explicit in some justifications, they also tended to have other justifications which were not articulated as explicitly but which were still important to their account and understanding. This got easier as the fieldwork process went on and I developed ways to direct the flow of conversation by asking participants to elaborate how a particular experience may have impacted their politics or views as well as having the confidence to allow lulls and pauses which helped in guiding the recounting of experiences back towards the formation of political subjectivities.

One part of the solution to this was to produce a narrative chapter (Chapter 6) which allowed me to connect together a range of experiences and perceptions in a historical, biographical timeline which culminates with the interviewee articulating their voting proclivities. The longer-term context in which participants' voting proclivities were constructed (whether this included an explicit voting

justification or not) is important to understand how they arrived at a particular political position. Asking questions about interviewees' upbringing, family history, politics, neighbourhood and local environment, jobs and workplaces, holidays and local encounters, revealed a range of experiences, feelings, attitudes and dispositions which were connected to the way they formed their political subjectivities and how they went on to justify their referendum voting behaviour.

In the three remaining findings chapters (Chapters 7-9), participants' articulations of their voting proclivities are set in thick contextual description which makes forward and backward links to key life experiences, changes and developments.

4.3.4 *Sampling and Recruitment*

This study was conducted in two different low-income neighbourhoods with residents from a range of demographically different backgrounds including ethnic heritage. This study is sympathetic to Bhambra's (2017) argument: more work is required to understand how working-class people from different ethnic backgrounds voted in the EU referendum and how their justifications are underpinned by a series of experiences that are informed by the intersections of race *and* class. In this vein, Rhodes et al (2019) make an important contribution to the literature on Brexit as their work "deliberately sought out counter-narratives" to the 'left behind' discourse and drew upon a range of participant accounts from minority ethnic and White ethnic groups. One way that this study differs to that of Rhodes et al (2019) is that it illuminates more clearly how people from minority ethnic backgrounds use forms of 'common-sense neoliberalism' – of which the 'left behind' could be a part – to articulate their own sense of racialised and classed marginalisation and insecurity. Given the predominance of the experiences of older people in existing explanatory frameworks (Ford and Goodwin, 2017; McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b; Telford and Wistow, 2019), this study also sought out the experiences of younger people.

In order to achieve a degree of representativeness, the demographic profiles of each ward (the unit of analysis used to delimit each case study area – Selby North and Burngreave) were used as rough guides to create a quota sampling framework. This is a non-probability method of sampling which obtains a sample

tailored to specific characteristics of a larger population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). Table 2 presents a breakdown of the different demographic characteristics that the study used as sampling parameters, taken from the Census (2021) and how the achieved sample matches up to these characteristics. Because of the sensitivity in asking participants about their personal characteristics prior to an interview, these percentages were not used as strict rules but general guidelines. The binary gender/sex categories of 'female' and 'male' are those used in the Census (2021), and these do not reflect the beliefs of the researcher, who advocates against gender binarism and its exclusionary effects.

The sample is broadly representative of the leave/remain split within case study areas, and in Selby North, the sample achieved a good level of representativeness in terms of age and gender but lacked representativeness in relation to the recruitment of ethnic minority residents. This seemed to be a problem of having no social connections to ethnic minority residents who were predominantly Eastern European and the lack of response from this group to recruitment flyers (see Appendix 3). The Burngreave sample is less representative. The leave/remain split of residents is broadly representative, however, in terms of ethnicity White British residents are overrepresented and those from ethnic minority backgrounds underrepresented (this is still half of all interviewees from this area). In more detail, participants from ethnic minority backgrounds (7) include three who identified as British Asian (Pakistani), two who identified as Black British, one as Black African, and one person from a White European background. The number of Asian/Asian British participants recruited is close to population parameters (see subsection 5.4). In terms of age, younger people are underrepresented and those between forty-five and fifty-nine are overrepresented.

Finding people to interview who were younger and/or from minority ethnic backgrounds was the greatest practical challenge encountered throughout the fieldwork process (this is discussed in relation to researcher reflexivity in subsection 4.6). In some cases, prospective interviewees had to be screened using a participant attribute questionnaire (see Appendix 4), which was often conducted at the point of their inquiry over the phone. This ensured that quotas

which were filled the fastest (older white people) could be stopped recruiting for and those in other required groups prioritised, although this was not enough to ensure complete representativeness.

	Selby North		Burngreave	
	Census 2021	**Sample**	**Census 2021**	**Sample**
Leave	59% (Constituency)	71% (10)	60% (Constituency)	71% (10)
Remain	41% (Constituency)	29% (4)	40% (Constituency)	29% (4)
Ethnicity				
White British	87%	100% (14)	25%	50% (7)
BAME	13% (mostly 'other white')	(0)	75% (of which Asian/Asian British 31% - majority population)	50% (7)
Age				
18-29	17%	14% (2)	24%	7% (1)
30-44	25%	21.5% (3)	31%	28.5% (4)
45-59	25%	28.5% (4)	24%	36% (5)
60-74	22%	36% (5)	13%	28.5% (4)
75+	11%	(0)	8%	(0)
Gender				
Female	51%	57% (8)	49%	50% (7)
Male	49%	43% (6)	51%	50% (7)

Table 2 – Demographic characteristics of sample population and sample. Data taken from Census (2021).

Leave voters were the predominant group this study intended to recruit because leave was a majority in both case study areas (Hanretty, 2017) and this focus enabled me to understand the desire for change and the reasons why working-class people expressed resentment and discontent with the status quo. It also provided a sample of interviewees through which stereotypes of working-class leave voters as racist and xenophobic, as suggested in some academic and media commentaries, could be explored and challenged. To counter assumptions and prejudices around the homogeneity of leave voters, I have selected a range of participants differentiated by age, ethnicity and gender to show the diversity of experiences and perceptions which inform voting proclivities.

The study utilised an iterative and multifaceted recruitment strategy which had three main parts (see Figure 10). The first was to draw upon personal contacts. In Selby, personal contacts tended to be people who I had prior social relationships with from growing up in the neighbourhood and by interviewing these four people, I was able to use snowball sampling to recruit a further five participants.

The second and more common approach in Sheffield was to work through gatekeeper organisations to try and gain access and create relationships with local people. Gatekeeper organisations were selected on the basis of whether I could participate in volunteering activities with them, so that I could become better known within the local area over a period of time and get to know local people in a way which was more organic. I undertook voluntary work with two local foodbanks (Trussell Trust Burngreave Foodbank and Fir Vale and Page Hall Foodbank) and participated in voluntary litter-picking organised by the Fir Vale Community Hub (formerly Pakistan Advice and Community Association). Through these experiences I was introduced to other gatekeepers, such as community development workers who were employed by the city council, leaders of educational organisations, and local people who ran tenants and residents' associations (both Selby and Sheffield). Three participants (two in Selby and one in Burngreave) were recruited through gatekeeper organisations, meetings and volunteering.

Because of limited progress in Sheffield using gatekeeper recruitment methods, I advertised my research in a local free newspaper (the Burngreave Messenger) and distributed a series of flyers to houses in the area (see Appendix 5). Houses were selected on a convenience basis and tended to be those in proximity to the gatekeeper organisations I regularly volunteered at. This method was particularly successful (especially the advert in the local paper) and allowed me to recruit participants quickly. Given this success, I used the same method in Selby to attempt to recruit a more ethnically diverse range of participants with limited success (recruiting three more participants, but with no contact from ethnic minority residents).

Snowball sampling methods tended to follow from and run parallel to the other two methods. In Selby, the majority of participants were recruited through

snowball sampling and this success seemed to be dependent upon my own personal connections to residents, being from the area and the way personal contacts who had been interviewed previously could vouch for my trustworthiness.

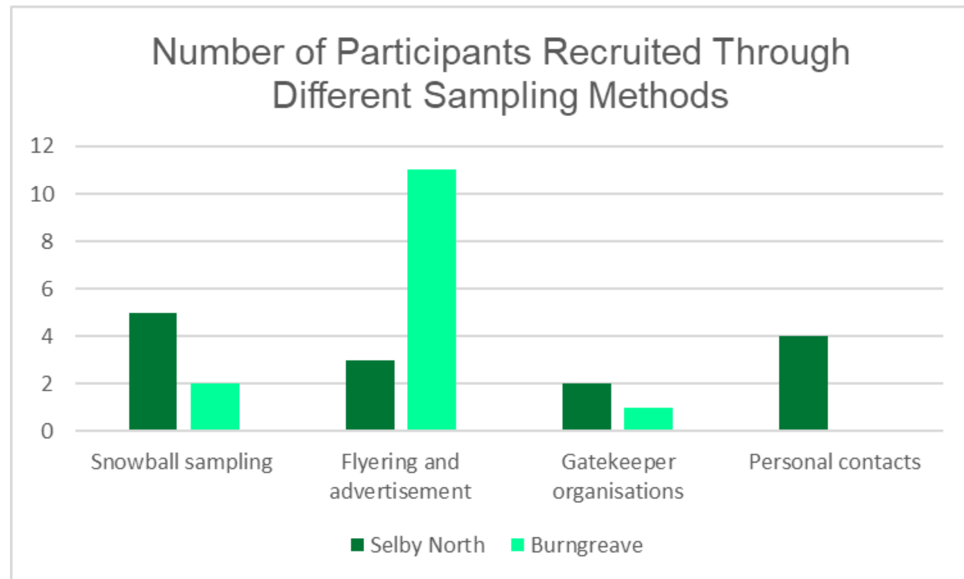

Figure 10 – Number of participants recruited through different methods in Selby North and Burngreave.

4.4 Data Analysis

Because of the complexity of different overlapping and interacting occurrences and events in society, it is not possible to establish 'laws' in critical realist qualitative data analysis (Fletcher, 2017). Instead, analysis is premised on uncovering and establishing regularities and patterns which emerge across participant accounts. These are "the occasional, but less than universal, actualization of a mechanism or tendency, over a definite region of time-space" (Lawson, 1994: 204). There is a limited amount of literature available to social researchers that provides practical guidance as to how a critical realist approach to qualitative data analysis should proceed (Fletcher, 2017). However, three basic premises can be outlined:

i) Human behaviours and experiences need to be explained by uncovering their underpinning mechanisms and structures (Meyer and Lunnay, 2013).

ii) Critical realist approaches to data analysis accept that theories are partial and contextually limited attempts to explain a complex series of different events (Maxwell, 2012).

iii) Abductive and retroductive modes of reasoning are fundamental to critical realist analysis, which require the researcher to establish an iterative dialogue between theory and data (Danermark et al. 2019; Fletcher, 2017).

Abduction aims to “interpret and recontextualize individual phenomena within a conceptual framework or a set of ideas” (Danermark et al. 2019: 104) and use this framework to arrive at a particular set of conclusions and arguments on the basis that they represent the best (but a fallible) account of reality (Fletcher, 2017). Retroduction intends to explicate the conditions which must be met in order for a particular event or phenomena to exist (Danermark et al. 2019). What follows is a summary of the different stages of analysis and how these contributed to an abductive and retroductive approach to analysis.

The analysis processes used in this study involved moving between the data, existing theories and a newly emerging conceptual framework, which can be summarised in seven stages. Data were primarily coded and organised using NVivo software.

1. Critically exploring existing explanatory frameworks of Brexit was the starting point to an abductive and retroductive approach to analysis. This involved thinking through the core logics of existing explanatory frameworks, evaluating the limitations and strengths of each (see subsection 2.2) and recombining different elements of these theories, and key themes from the wider literature focussing on class struggles and class politics, into a theoretical framework which could be returned to and refined.

2. The second stage involved a period of immersion within the dataset and an initial round of coding attached to key quotes from interviews. The initial

descriptive coding phase used an ‘in-vivo’ method of data labelling that uses segments or phrases from the participants’ account verbatim (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2013).

3. Thirdly, data were organised, and clusters of quotes were connected and made into themes based on the coherence of codes and their alignment to theory. I started to look within and across themes for patterns using a range of variables.

4. The fourth stage of analysis involved trying to explain participants’ experiences using the emerging conceptual framework (which was the culmination of stages 1 and 3) and continually refining the way it was constructed. This process revealed a shortcoming of thematic analysis – in terms of prising quotes/perceptions from the series of life experiences in which they are grounded (to fit in broad thematic groups) – which partially contradicted a theoretical framework which emphasised the embeddedness and historicization of dispositions. As a riposte to this, I returned to transcripts as life stories and focussed on a narrative analysis that could better explore the breadth and depth of individual’s experiences of change as it plays out over time and across places.

5. This stage involved using the themes derived from step 3 as a guide to thinking about how residents living in Selby and Sheffield experienced a series of economic, political and socio-cultural/symbolic processes. This process was about trying to tell a story of how interviewees’ experiences and perceptions linked to a broader range of structures (in some cases these processes were explicitly named, but in the majority of cases they were not) and how I could then split up these thematic groups into different chapters. The list of themes that eventually informed my three thematic chapters is presented below (Table 3). These clusters coalesced into three overarching themes – economic marginalisation; immigration, welfare and ‘others’; and political marginalisation.

Economic marginalisation	Immigration, welfare and 'others'	Political marginalisation
deindustrialisation, neoliberal capitalist restructuring, labour market experiences, jobs, inequality and poverty, the welfare state and entitlement to benefits, the NHS, manufacturing and trade, nationalisation, outsourcing and offshoring, the growth of finance and the service sector, the cost of living, inflation, class struggle, unions and deunionisation, Thatcher, coalmining and the strikes, and privatisation.	Immigration, citizenship, human rights, race, racism and discrimination, ethnic and religious diversity, Empire and the Commonwealth, living in stigmatised and devalued places, class distinction and cultural distance making, localised change, neighbourhood crime and reputation, terrorism and national security, belonging, insiders vs. outsiders, integration, housing and house prices, council housing waiting lists, class disidentification, un/deservingness, othering, denigration, class stigma and shame, nationalism and national identity, loss of community.	political disenfranchisement, political elites, party politics, the rise of UKIP, the Labour Party, identity politics, political correctness, class politics, political values and value changes, sovereignty, laws, governance, democracy, the referendum as direct democracy, EU bureaucrats and wages, Europeanness vs Englishness, and EU contributions.

Table 3 – Summary of clusters of themes.

Figure 11 is an example section of an analysis spreadsheet which was developed over the course of the project. It broadly illustrates how different structures within neighbourhoods, and more generally those stratifying participants such as economic insecurity, employment, class and ethnicity, informed the way individuals experienced the social world and constructed their dispositions. It makes some tentative steps to try and think about the structures which underpin different events and experiences (this was done in the finalisation of analysis and final write up period) and links this to existing explanations of voting pattens in other academic accounts.

6. The sixth stage of analysis involved the finalisation of the conceptual framework, and a detailed application of it to participants' experiences throughout the various analysis chapters, which themselves were continually revised and refined. The practical application of the theoretical framework allowed the researcher to evaluate the durability of different concepts and the extent to which the synthesis of different theoretical concepts could usefully explain how structures influenced the way

participants formed their political attitudes and voted the way they did in the EU referendum.

7. The final stage of analysis involved a reflection upon the broader arguments which can be drawn from the study, the refinement of key conclusions and a recognition of the more idiosyncratic findings which may deviate from expected tendencies and not map neatly onto the established framework. Each of these processes are part of explicating a better conceptual framework of Brexit and outlining the key contributions to knowledge the study makes.

	Themes	Voting Justification(s)	Existing Narratives	Spatial Layers	Temporal Frames
Tony	National pride 'Made in England' identiy and economic argument. National decline – unemployment, benefits. Local integration (Polish, 'West Indian shopkeeper'). Generational stff about not being able to cope with multicultural society. Undeserving/deserving migrants/poor. Slef-sufficiency, hard work.	Leave. Sovereignty (strongest). Joining of accession states (secondary). Not generally related to local experiences.	Relates most strongly to EU contributions argument in the economic fraction. Nostalgic past. Also has other links to the socio-cultural fraction and the loss of British 'identity'. Mixture of an economic and identity-based socio-cultural argument.	Local concerns about community loss and non-integration. National and local concerns about unemployment and scivers. Internation/global loss of status.	Accession states. Knew it was better before the EU. Older days. Prior to joining is seen as a better time. So I imagine 60s and 70s.
Mary	Immigration (Polish). Politcal disenfranchisement and unfairness. Feelings of political disregard – getting a worse deal than others. Respect for 'our country'. (Un)deserving distinctions.	Leave. Immigration and loss of 'our country' (mixed strength). Somewhat related to local experience – the presence of Polish people is a factor.	Has links most strongly to arguments relating to political disenfranchisement. In a way, of being 'left behind' or disregarded politically. Also links to 'taking back control' and anti-immigration sentiments (which seem to be tied to an	Local is intersected with international migration. Generally concerned with the nation/abstract views which are on the news. National/local concern with undeserving groups.	Old days. When my age. Generation without technology.
Eddy	(Un)deserving distinctions between poor/migrants. Neccessity for claimants to work. Valorisation as hard working himself. Class stigma and divisions. Felt it himself yet reproduced it upon	Leave. Immigration (strongest). Taking our jobs. Loss of our country. Localised concerns with Polish people in parks.	This isn't so much in my Venn Diagram but strongest links to undeserving arguments a la Shilliam. Taking back control and anti-immigration sentiments tied in with class/undeservingness.	National – fear of crime/change. Local/national/global – migration. Community decline.	When he started work. 1970s.
Howard	Undeserving poor/migrants. State of the country. Shocked at foodbanks, homelessness. EU corruption. Change to local social structure. Loss of community. Identity splits between leave/remain. Generational divides. EU as repositiory for social ills.	Leave. Soverignty mainly. Some links to immigration and loss of community locally, loss of status nationally. Related to local experience.	Clear links to reinstatement of sovereignty. Links to a 'nostalgic past' but these arguments must be criticised for almost pathologising w/c for remembering what was actually a better time in terms of the state of the labour market and community. Contributions argument.	International – disgruntled about UK position in EU. Local issues of community – intersected by international migrations. Global processes involved in the loss of industry etc.	When he was my age. Snowflake generation contrasted to his generation. EU 1975 to present. Often spoke about strike period and mining work (1970s onwards).

Figure 11 – Extract taken from analysis spreadsheet.

4.5 Ethics and Methods in Practice: Challenges and Difficulties

Ethical considerations enter into the research situation at all stages of the process including during planning, fieldwork, writing up, analysis and post-analysis reflection. Ethical principles include adherence to five interlocking values: nonmaleficence (to prevent harm), beneficence (to ensure research is beneficial), autonomy (having the right and ability to make one's own decisions), fidelity (to be loyal and truthful in the way the research is conducted), and justice (the fair, equitable treatment of all persons) (Kitchener and Kitchener, 2013: 10). Because these ethical standards tend to cut across the different ethical practices developed and undertaken as part of this study, it is a simpler task to use a distinction made by Guillemin and Gillam (2004) – between 'procedural ethics' and 'ethics in practice' – as a loose structure. Dialogue between procedure and practice helps the researcher to overcome 'ethically important moments' which arise as part of the research situation (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

Procedural ethics are those which are dealt with as a matter of gaining ethical approval to undertake research. As a starting point, it is important to note that this project was granted full ethical approval by Sheffield Hallam University's ethics committee. Procedural ethics tend to be about different standardised ethical practices which qualitative research involving human participants must satisfy to show how the study will ensure it meets the five dimensions of ethical values discussed above (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Participants in this study were made aware of their right to withhold information, to answer only the questions they wish and to halt or withdraw from the study/interview at any time without reason or consequence (see Appendix 6 – information sheet). In the same vein, it is worth clarifying that participation within this project was completely voluntary and relied on the provision of informed consent (see Appendix 7 – consent form). Procedural ethics alone cannot "provide all that is needed for dealing with ethically important moments in qualitative research" (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 262). Rather, we must also consider 'ethics in practice': an everyday ethics which must adapt to the research process as it attempts to deal with the complexities of human social relations, historical experiences and emotions in situ.

Anonymisation aims to protect the research participant by preventing the disclosure of any information "which may cause the participant distress should

other parties learn such information" (Clark, 2006: 4). Anonymising data is a process which needs to balance the right of participants to confidentiality and privacy and preserving the integrity of the data (Saunders et al. 2015). Ethical handbooks and data protection policies and guidance suggest that the anonymisation of participants' identities is a standard practice in social research – see for example, the Statement of Ethical Practice (BSA, 2017) and Guidance on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and data protection for social research (MRS and SRA, 2020). Accordingly, reasonable steps have been taken to remove any identifying information from data and data related documents and materials (such as names, addresses, specific personal information) and all interviewees were assigned a demographically suitable pseudonym for their protection. All sensitive data and data-based documentation is stored on Sheffield Hallam University's password protected and encrypted network systems in accordance with the UK Research and Innovation Common Principles on Data Policy.

Place names are not anonymised on the basis of the ethics of anonymisation being about the identification of individuals rather than specific geographical locations. This study argues that the depth of contextualisation used throughout the presentation of participants' life histories (particularly in Chapter 5), in neighbourhood profiles and in the broader analysis of data, could not be achieved if place names were anonymised. The case study areas this study uses have large populations making identification difficult, with 27,284 (Burngreave) and 10,086 (Selby North) residents. Analysis does not focus on particularly problematic or sensitive behaviours and the views and experiences expressed are not particularly inimitable. Spatial contextualisation is important because place matters in terms of understanding lived experiences and how people form their politics. Given that this study is primarily about Brexit as related to life within working-class neighbourhoods and the everyday struggles working-class people face, place names could also be removed to avoid perpetuating and providing 'evidence' for stigmatising discourses associated with poor people (Clark, 2006). However, this study is itself a counter-narrative to many of those stigmatising discourses associated with working-class identities and neighbourhoods. It uses

specific place names in the knowledge that the wider aims of this project are to think beyond stereotypes of poor people and the places they live.

The benefits of research to participants were the opportunity to talk about political issues and financial compensation in the way of a £10 shopping voucher. This latter point raised an important ethical issue: some people may have only participated in the study because of the financial incentive. For example, one interviewee, Ben, who helped in the recruitment of two other participants, claimed they would "*happily speak to you about anything for that voucher*" (Ben). This was not the case for all participants. Some found value in speaking about politics and political issues when their lives had tended to be characterised by political disenfranchisement and abandonment. For example, Mary and Eddy told me how the study had given them chance to talk about political and social issues without feeling as though they were being judged or ridiculed. Using financial incentives is not necessarily problematic: people on low incomes were encouraged to participate in this study and giving up an hour of their time deserves some form of compensation.

Achieving complete power neutrality in an interview is impossible, but the researcher used an empathetic approach when acknowledging the experiences of participants to attempt to achieve a more egalitarian research situation (Parr, 2015). This was generally about a broadly similar sense of class struggle. I grew up in a council house, my mum worked a series of part-time and insecure cleaning and retail jobs to keep us afloat and much of what I knew from a young age was about the difficulties of getting by with little money and feeling as though what others had was unfair and sometimes unearned. It could be argued that a less confident interviewee may feel under pressure to talk about the kinds of things they anticipate the researcher wants to hear, even if this is distressing or difficult for them (Brooks et al. 2016). There was only one clear and identifiable instance where a participant expressed a sense of discomfort or unease about a particular topic. In Margaret's interview, having been asked a potentially sensitive question about her homelife and childhood, she exercised her right to choose to decline to comment.

By carrying out fieldwork within Selby, the researcher studied residents living in his hometown and the neighbourhood in which he grew up. As a resident of

Selby, I was able to gain entry to these spaces and access participants without the need for a gatekeeper. The local relationships I had established with other residents over time were drawn upon as ways of recruiting participants and sampling others. As a brief overview, I have lived in Selby all of my life and in the case study site for over fifteen years, I have some understanding of the flows of people and the physical landscapes which give the neighbourhood its structure; how people use space and understand and negotiate with others who live there, but this was always partial and open to interpretation.

I did not pretend to be unaware of the majority of these characteristics – doing so would appear unnatural and disingenuous to those people I interviewed and who I looked to establish rapport with through common knowledge of the area. I constructed and asked interview questions which would provide space for the participant to recount perceptions and experiences of living in the area in their own way. Of the 14 participants living in Selby, four of them were familiar to me. In theory, this participant-researcher dynamic can facilitate a more relaxed and fruitful exchange that draws on the pre-existing knowledge shared between each of the actors within the interview situation (Brooks et al. 2016). However, power-balances are multidirectional and like other authors have reported (McConnell-Henry et al. 2010), interviewing peers and acquaintances can lead to a sense of discomfort and unease.

In interviews with those I knew most closely and had spent much of my childhood growing up around, the interview situation created a feeling of vulnerability. There are very few PhD researchers living in Selby and the classed trajectory this affords and the different ways a higher-level education has impinged upon me as a classed individual (in terms of politics, cultural knowledge, and speech codes), are things I would actively conceal when in more 'working-class' situations at home. This is indicative of what Abrahams and Ingram (2013) term the 'chameleon habitus' and how the local world becomes a site of struggle when exposure to contradictory fields (home and university) incurs certain psycho-social costs. One-to-one interviews meant that the middle-class dispositions I have acquired through higher education could not be hidden and this caused an unease that led to a less organic dialogue between interviewer and interviewee, producing more limited data.

My experiences of interviewing Sheffield residents were quite different to those in Selby. Given that I was an 'outsider' to Burngreave, this distance made interviewing easier in the sense of not having to adopt a chameleon habitus (Abrahams and Ingram, 2013) and being able to be and act more 'middle-class' without wondering if I was being judged as somehow different and untrue to myself and upbringing. This gave me a more assured sense of self when taking up the role of an interviewer and made me more confident asking probing and follow-up questions which were necessary for me to understand how local processes and dynamics worked and what this meant in terms of participants' experiences and political views. I was able to establish rapport with the majority of participants in Sheffield and this sometimes relied on a basic level of local/regional knowledge (I had lived in Sheffield for over five years at the time of fieldwork) but this was a specific classed series of experiences which were probably quite different to the lives of interviewees living in Burngreave.

4.6 Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

Reflexivity can be defined as the "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994: 244). Without it, researchers risk producing a disingenuous account which fails to show how their own dispositions influence the research process and how their subjectivities may have informed their findings (Dean, 2017). If this study thinks of participants as individuals who form their opinions and attitudes from dispositions through the internalisation of practical experiences, it follows that the way I think and speak about particular social processes, political positions and social groups is similarly influenced by social history. What follows is an exposition of my identities and background, education, social trajectory and politics. This social vignette will be used to think about how the researcher's subjectivities may have influenced the way inquiry played out in practice and, conversely, how the research process has impinged upon the different schemes I used to think about the social world.

Joe: Working-Class, White, Male; Left-wing, Labour, Remain

I am the son of a sales assistant and a butcher, who comes from a generational line of individuals who all had 'working-class jobs'. I spent much of my earlier life living in a privately rented home, until the Global Financial Crisis (2008) affected house prices in the local area to the extent that my single mother could afford to buy her own home: a three-bedroom terraced house (for ~ £50,000). The neighbourhood in which I grew up and where most of my family continue to live is one of the 10% most deprived in the country across multiple axes (DCLG, 2015; 2019). It is the same neighbourhood used as one of the case studies for this thesis.

Throughout my childhood, I was brought up to understand the value of politics and the value of voting despite the sense that people like us had very little say in the way the country was run and who it benefited. I was pushed to value education and told to pursue a more academic career which would allow me to not have to 'work with my hands', which I did. My experiences of Higher Education have given me a more socially liberal worldview than many of my friends and family members: I endorse social justice, believe in equal civil and political rights for all groups; do not discriminate and stigmatise people because of their skin colour, gender, sexuality, race, or religion; and think the welfare system is a necessary and valuable safety net which is used by those who need it. Today, I continue to be critical of the way politics is conducted and feel ignored by political parties of the 'left' and 'right'. I would broadly describe myself as a Marxist (one who is still learning), I am critical of capitalism, am interested in challenging class exploitation and creating better understandings of the way employers' profit from the labour of workers, through instigating workplace conversations. I am a Labour voter with reservations – being that the party no longer represents the working-class but generally offers at least some broadly inequality-focussed, revisionist approach to Tory policy.

Arriving at the topic of my thesis – a desire to further understand the way working-class people living in low-income neighbourhoods constructed their political proclivities – was a product of my own experiences of life within the same arenas as those with a politics different to my own. Part of this practical experience was listening to my grandad, born in the mid-1930s and a former heating engineer,

who would blame a range of different social and economic problems on the 'common market', immigrants and the Germans. He would read the Daily Mirror and respond to stories about immigrants and immigration with a similar phrase: 'send the bastards back'. He would tell me he wasn't racist but say things that could be only interpreted as such. Other members of my family would repeat more common-sense understandings of immigration and welfare ('they're all lazy', 'they don't want to work', 'I am paying for them to sit at home') and would think I was the one who knew nothing and was blinded by ideology.

In 2016, I voted to remain in the EU referendum because I saw the EU as more of a cultural and political institution than my family, which was about the movement of people and the protection of member states from war. At the time of voting, I had a limited but generally positive understanding of the EU and how it benefited the UK in terms of trade and a sense of political unity. In part, I had voted to remain because I felt as though my own politics were intrinsically different to those in my immediate family network who were voting to leave. They didn't like immigration; they didn't like Europe telling them what to do and what food they could eat; and they thought things could be better for their own economic interests outside of the EU.

As a result of my development as a researcher and through my own learning and reading since 2016, including a greater awareness of class-exploitation, I have grown increasingly sympathetic to the reasons why working-class people voted to leave the European Union. I continue to stand by my justifications for voting to remain but accept that my own class trajectory and educational history allows me to occupy different and more privileged spaces than many of my participants. This needs to be caveated by saying that I better understand and oppose how the free movement of capital through European markets is part of the way neoliberalism is baked into EU policy. I consciously sought to avoid denigrating participants for differing views, without trying to deny that their discourses may racialize and stigmatise other groups. I immersed myself within working-class neighbourhoods and conducted in-depth interviews to appreciate more fully how peoples' social circumstances and their experiences of work and politics are different to my own and lead them to certain political attitudes.

By virtue of my class position, as a member of the working-class, I shared certain commonalities of a classed existence with residents of Selby and Sheffield. Despite my own classed 'ways of knowing' being contextually specific (Allen, 2005), I was able to develop an empathetic understanding of the struggles and sufferings expressed by participants. How participants told me politicians only thought about themselves and the practices they used to 'cut their cloth' in times of greater economic need (cutting out luxury foods – chocolate, sweets etc, putting on a jumper rather than the heating) were reminiscent of the way my mum, aunt and grandma had raised me and taught me about the world. In these instances, the way participants recognised me through class had the effect of opening up possibilities for the development of rapport. There were, however, instances where I was misrecognised by participants and stakeholders as being middle-class and looked upon as complicit in denigrating the working-class as uneducated and racist. In one example, one gatekeeper who was the leader of a local Tenants and Residents Association in Burngreave had cancelled a focus group I had arranged at very short notice, which I later found out from a friend of the individual was because they thought I was a journalist looking to write a story about leave voters in Sheffield being racist.

Whilst it is important not to essentialise differences between ethnic groups, it may well be that research participants of ethnic minority backgrounds may have spoken to a researcher perceived to be of the same or similar ethnic background in different ways (Dean, 2017). There were certain instances where my ethnicity, and the cultural understandings and experiences I have had as a result, played a part in the flow of the interview. I had felt uncomfortable and unsure as to how to respond to parts of an interview with Yasmin, a British Pakistani woman, where she would speak with confidence and ease in recalling situations where she had been referred to as a 'Paki'. This elicited a sense of guilt and shame in relation to how people from my own ethnic background and friends have used this term as an 'everyday' way to speak of people from Asian ethnic backgrounds.

In terms of my positionality as a (white) male, the structuring effects of gender relations within the interview procedure may create different interpersonal behaviours from women and men (Herrod, 1993). In male-male interview situations, the interviewee (and potentially interviewer) may adopt traditionally

‘masculine’ and racialised displays of behaviour: including, for example, the exaggeration of stories or a certain brashness of performance (Herrod, 1993). One experience comes to mind here which occurred when travelling from an interview with a participant:

> “*As we pulled into one street, with parked cars lining each side of the road, another car had also begun to drive towards us, with little room for both cars to pass at once. As we neared the car, he exclaimed that here was 'another one of them' (the man driving the car appeared to be Asian). He then proceeded to abuse the man, shouting about how he doesn't care if his own car gets ruined. As the cars passed each other the wing mirrors collided. This then sparked off a conversation about how Slovakian migrants don't pay insurance nor tax and that they don't want to 'play by the rules'. This was just one part of a more developed disparagement of Slovakian Roma migrants which ensued for the remainder of the journey*”. (Research diary, 27/06/2019).

I responded to this by saying nothing. This is one example of how I may have been complicit with structures of oppression to achieve a specific goal. That is the collection of data that I hoped might lead to the challenging of oppression and data which was rich in the sense of highlighting how *some* interviewees thought and spoke about other groups when they were not in an interview situation.

For women, and amongst minority ethnic women, I may be perceived as ‘another white man’ trying to interfere with, intrude within and disturb their lives (Sherman, 2002). In terms of the practicality of the interview setting, as Bhopal notes sharing her experiences as an Asian woman: “we would not have allowed a strange man to enter into our private homes. Yet this would have been acceptable if the interviewer was a woman” (Bhopal, 2010: p.193). This wasn’t something participants spoke of, but there is a clear pattern across each of the research sites which is mainly related to a sense of ‘insiderness’ but likely accentuated by my identities as a white male in Sheffield. None of the ethnic minority women living in Sheffield wanted to conduct their interview in their homes, and this is part of a wider trend in which those living in Sheffield were more likely to want to conduct their interviews in neutral locations.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the epistemological and ontological, methodological, analytical and ethical approaches and decisions this study used to answer its core research questions and objectives. To summarise, this study used semi-structured interviews with 28 residents of two low-income neighbourhoods – Selby and Sheffield – to uncover the deeper experiences and patterns of thinking which underpin their political subjectivities. It does so as a way to think about Brexit as related to a longer series of economic, political, symbolic and socio-cultural processes and developments which have provided the contextual backdrop to how class struggle from above has played out for the last forty years. What follows in Chapter 5 is a deeper exploration of each research site and how these local areas are set in wider regional and national contexts.

5.0 Economic Change, Symbolic Othering and Political History in Selby and Sheffield

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the spatial and temporal contexts in which working-class political subjectivities are formed, with a particular focus on the two case study areas interviewees live in. Economic geography is an important factor shaping voting behaviour, with people living in deindustrialising and declining areas tending to vote leave. Subsection 5.2 sets out the context for this chapter by reasserting the importance of economic geography in relation to the EU referendum result and demonstrates how Brexit is caught up in a series of economic, social and political processes which have specific spatial effects. This subsection also explores the playing out of deindustrialisation in the Yorkshire and Humber region to show the unevenness of political-economic restructuring.

The presentation of case study sites begins in subsection 5.3 and draws upon a range of Census (2021) data to build up demographic profiles of Selby North and Burngreave and compare these to national, regional and local averages. To briefly summarise, Selby North and Burngreave are both working-class neighbourhoods situated in areas which have experienced deindustrialisation, albeit to different degrees and over different timescales. They differ most significantly by ethnic composition – Selby is relatively ethnically homogenous (predominantly white British) while Burngreave is highly diverse; and by levels of economic inactivity – Burngreave having a far higher than average number of people not involved in the labour market. Following this are three thematic subsections which comment on wider local trends and experiences of: wider demographic change and population characteristics (subsection 5.3.1), economic change in terms of the different types of industry and employment opportunities (subsection 5.3.2) and political history, voting patterns and local political events (subsection 5.3.3).

5.2 Geographies of Brexit: Deindustrialisation in Yorkshire and the Humber

Place is important in understanding Brexit because there were spatial patterns underpinning the vote and those living in more deprived areas with histories of significant deindustrialisation tended to vote to leave (Beatty and Fothergill, 2018; McCann, 2020; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018). Since 1990, the UK has become one of the most inter-regionally unequal and unbalanced economies by international standards and this has happened at the same time other countries have tended to see reductions in spatial inequalities (Carrascal-Incera et al. 2020). Carrascal-Incera et al (2020) collate data from the OECD regional statistics database and plot the ratio between the regional GDP per capita of the top 20 percent of the population over the bottom 20 percent. The authors show how between 2000 and 2016, UK inter-regional inequality has consistently increased whereas in Germany, a country with similar population scales and densities, it has consistently fallen (*ibid*).

At the regional scale, studies have shown how areas that have tended to show greater support for Brexit have lower average wages (Clark and Whittaker, 2016; RSA, 2022) and less prosperity and low productivity (McCann, 2020; McCann and Ortega-Argiles, 2021). This is not just about poor places but economic trajectory and 'uneven development': towns and cities that experienced recent poor economic growth were more susceptible to right-wing populism (Rodriguez-Pose, 2018). In subsection 2.2 a series of different explanations for Brexit were critically evaluated. One key criticism of Ford and Goodwin's (2017) 'left behind' thesis which needs fuller exploration is how the authors focus on 'left behind' *people* rather than setting people in a *spatial and economic context* of 'left behind' neighbourhoods and regions.

It is the older industrial regions and subregions in the UK, which bore the brunt of industrial job losses in the 1980s and 1990s, fuelling welfare spending and now witnessing the largest welfare cuts, which are said to constitute the "heartland[s] of the Brexit vote" (Beatty and Fothergill, 2018: p.5). The UK has some of the greatest inter-regional inequalities in the industrialised world and McCann (2020: 256) claims that this is "essential for understanding the 'geography of discontent' and political shocks which are evident nowadays in many countries". As Figure 12 shows, the vast majority of high leave voting areas (over 60%) are places

where a higher than UK average proportion of people (25%) are earning less than the real living wage (RSA, 2022).

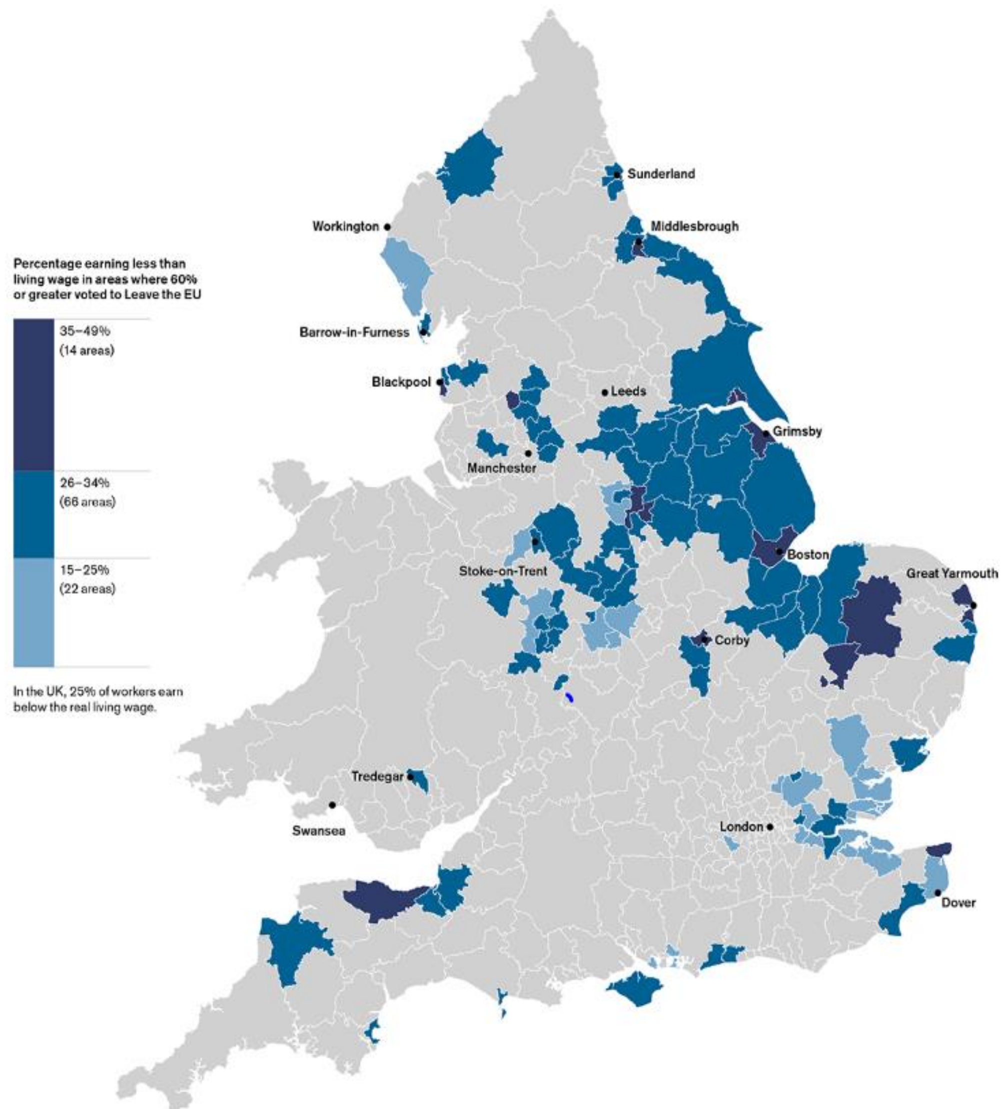

Figure 12 – High leave voting areas in the UK where proportion of residents earning less than the real living wage is higher than the UK average. Adapted from RSA (2022).

In industries, such as coal, steel, and petrochemicals, deindustrialisation is both about the effects of global trends – such as the globalisation of trade and finance industries and the increasing openness of international markets, for example – and the *deliberate* political choices made by British governments and their failures to manage these processes in the interests of all groups (Gallas, 2015; McCann,

2020). Sandbu (2020) argues, for example, that the UK's story of industrial restructuring, when compared with Germany, did not have to be so damaging and painful. Industrial policy and the rise of finance-centred growth in the UK was a class process imposed from above.

The UK's industrial job losses have been concentrated in areas where core industries (such as coal, steel and textiles) tended to be located: in England, this is most notable in Yorkshire and the Humber, the Midlands, the North-West and North-East (Beatty and Fothergill, 2020). This has led to a geographical polarisation of growth: since 1990 northern cities have consistently underperformed in comparison to those in the south (see Figure 13 – adapted from Martin et al. 2018). The reasons for this are related to the scale of job losses which were concentrated in Yorkshire and the Humber and the north (Beatty et al. 2007; Beatty et al. 2017), weaker skills profiles and education levels of the workforce (House of Commons, 2016a), the predominance of sectors which tend to provide low-paid and low-skilled work (Etherington et al. 2018), and a lack of investment in research and development (ONS, 2021c). Places with high-skilled, exporting businesses – such as finance, insurance and communications – tend to be places where growth is stronger, wages are higher, jobs more secure and labour market opportunities more plentiful (Centre for Cities, 2021).

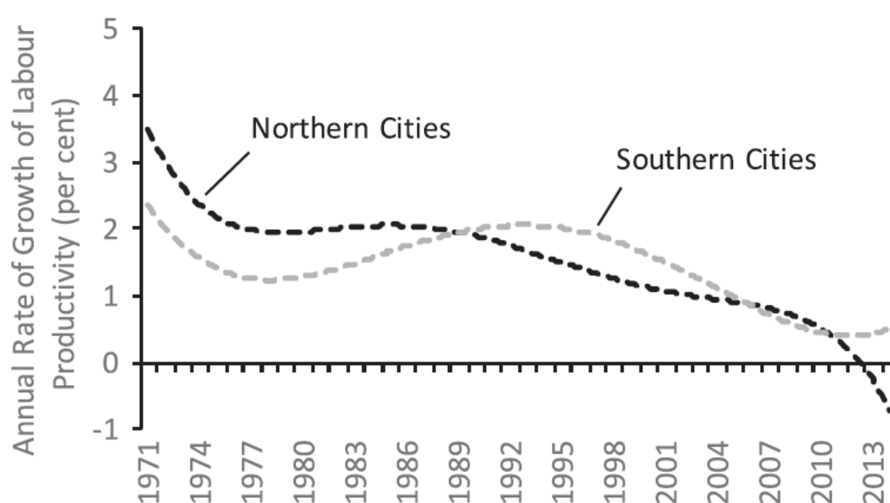

Figure 13 - Long-run trends in the annual growth rate of labour productivity in southern and northern cities, 1971–2014. Adapted from Martin et al. (2018).

A key aim of economic policy in the 1980s was to make British industries, and particularly heavy industries in the north where the Conservatives had less support, increasingly competitive (Gallas, 2015; Jessop, 2015a; 2018). Between 1979-1984, the Conservative government maintained high interest rates despite economic recession, and this reinforced negative growth, causing a series of substantial losses in core industries and increasing unemployment (Gallas, 2015). Capital was focussed on sectors where growth and profitability were less restrained by labour, such as finance and services, which were concentrated in London and the south-east. In industries where driving down wages could not be achieved because of the strength of working-class organisation, such as the coal industry, orchestrated confrontations with miners and anti-trade union legislation were intended to dismantle it completely.

Between 1981 and 2004, Yorkshire witnessed the largest regional loss of coal industry employment in Britain with 67,000 (male) jobs lost; this constituted 95 per cent of all male coal jobs in the region and 27 per cent of all male coal jobs in 1981 (Beatty et al. 2007). Industrial decline is highly gendered and initial rises in economic inactivity were predominantly the effect of men losing industrial jobs. However, in the wake of deindustrialisation in the English and Welsh coalfields, male and female labour markets have become increasingly integrated as men now continue to compete with women for 'non-coal', service sector jobs (Beatty, 2014). This has had the effect of increasing unemployment rates for women (*ibid*) and, seemingly, had contributed to the increasing competition for service sector work which is chronically underpaid and insecure (Etherington et al. 2018; JRF, 2022). Since the closure of British coalfields and the loss of jobs in major industrial sectors, many former workers withdrew from the labour market and began claiming incapacity-related benefits (Beatty et al. 2017). The key point here is that labour market status is not always clear from benefit status: some people on incapacity benefits may be considered 'hidden unemployed' as they could have been expected to work if market demand was higher and Britain were to pursue a model of full employment (*ibid*).

In Yorkshire and the Humber, levels of poverty have decreased by three percentage points (from 27% to 24%) in the twenty years since 2000, but this has tended to be related to declining pensioner poverty; the proportion of working-

age adults in poverty has never been higher and numbers of workers in poverty have been slowly trending upwards for the last 15 years (JRF, 2022). A recent report by the Northern Health Science Alliance (NHSA) shows that child poverty has risen in the Yorkshire and Humber since 2013/14 and is now at its highest rate since 2000/01 (NHSA, 2023). In the last decade there has been a five-percentage point increase in employment rates in the Yorkshire and Humber region, yet this figure has tended to be consistently lower than UK averages over time (ONS, 2022a). The Trades Union Congress (2021) draw upon Households Below Average Incomes data and that derived from the Labour Force Survey to claim that the Yorkshire and Humber is one of many other regions where the number of those living in working-age poverty – which is over 750,000 and 23 percent of the working-age population – has failed to decrease as employment rates have risen (TUC, 2021).

The relationship between Brexit and economic geography does not suggest deindustrialisation was the only or most important factor shaping leave voting proclivities. It does, however, indicate the importance of understanding how this process played out in local areas and regions and how it was linked to other economic, political, social and cultural processes occurring simultaneously.

5.3 Case Study Sites and Local History

This subsection explores the case study sites of Selby North and Burngreave (Sheffield) and the surrounding town/city and region in which they are situated. Sites were selected on this basis that they were low-income areas with histories of deindustrialisation and that they contrasted in terms of ethnic diversity and levels of immigration (discussed more fully in Chapter 4). Table 4 presents a range of official demographic data at the national, regional, district and ward level to explore the context of each case study site (taken from Census, 2021; ONS, 2020; 2022c; 2022d). Key points of comparison include high ethnic heterogeneity in Burngreave, with the majority population being from Asian/Asian-British ethnic backgrounds (30.8%), compared with relative ethnic homogeneity in Selby North with 93.9% of the population being White British. Selby North (35%) has higher than national (24.7%), regional (26.6%) and district (24.7%) averages of people

located in NS-SEC categories 6 and 7 (semi-routine and routine occupations) and this is higher than in Burngreave (28.1%). Finally, population growth over the last decade in the wider Selby District (+10.2%) is significantly higher than that of Sheffield (+0.7%), and this seems to be about both new housing built in the town itself and the growth of outlying commuter villages.

	England	**Yorkshire and Humber**	**Selby (district)**	**Selby North**	**Sheffield (district)**	**Burngreave**
Leave vote[5]	52%	58%	59%	~ 58%	51%	~ 59%
Normal residents (Census, 2021).	56.5 million	5.48 million	91,988	10,085	55,6521	27,288
Population change 2011-2021	+6.6%	+3.7%	+10.2%	Data unavailable because of ward boundary change	+0.7%	-1%
Age structure[6] (Census, 2021):						
18-29	19%	19%	15%	17%	25%	24%
30-44	25%	24%	23%	25%	24%	31%
45-59	25%	25%	28%	25%	23%	24%
60-74	20%	21%	23%	22%	18%	13%
75+	11%	11%	11%	11%	10%	8%
Ethnicity (Census, 2021):						
White British	73.5%	80.9%	93.9%	87.8%	74.5%	25.3%
Other White	6.3%	3.8%	3.2%	8.7%	3.6%	4.9%
Asian/Asian British	9.6%	8.9%	0.8%	0.8%	9.6%	30.8%
Black/Black British	4.2%	2.1%	0.2%	0.2%	4.6%	16%
Mixed ethnicity	3.0%	2.1%	1%	0.8%	3.5%	4.4%
National identity (Census, 2021):						
'English only'	15.3%	15.3%	16.7%	17%	14.3%	6.3%
'British only'	56.8%	58.7%	58.7%	53.7%	57.5%	60.6%

	National (Eng.,)	Region	Selby (district)	Selby North	Sheffield (district)	Burngreave
Labour market (Census, 2021):						
NS-Sec 1 & 2	33.1%	29.2%	35.6%	26.2%	29.5%	14.6%
NS-Sec 3-5	27.3%	26.8%	29.6%	26.2%	23.6%	21%
NS-Sec 6 & 7	24.7%	26.6%	24.7%	35%	23.7%	28.1%
Never worked and LT unemployed	5.7%	9.5%	5.7%	8.5%	6.7%	24.8%
FT Student	7.7%	7.9%	4.5%	4.3%	13.4%	11.4%
Claimant count (ONS, 2022c; 2022d)	3.9%	4.2%	2.4%	/	4.2%	/
Job density[7] (ONS, 2020)	0.84	0.79	0.75	/	0.75	/
Education (Census, 2021):						
L4+	33.9%	29.5%	32.1%	25.2%	33.4%	22.5%
L3	16.9%	17.4%	18.2%	16.6%	18.6%	12.1%
L2	13.3%	13.6%	14.6%	13.6%	11.7%	12%
L1	9.7%	10.1%	10.2%	11.7%	9.1%	11.3%
No Qualifications	18.1%	20.6%	16%	22.2%	19.4%	33.7%

Table 4 – Summary of national, regional, district and local demographic characteristics.

Selby and Selby North

Selby is a small market town in North Yorkshire, located around twelve miles south of York and twenty miles east of Leeds. It is an area best known for its rich history of shipbuilding, and to a lesser extent mining and milling, all industries dependent upon the water networks provided by the River Ouse around which the town was built. The case study site Selby North – see Figure 14 – is located towards the northern edge of Selby town, within the 20 percent most deprived areas in the country and surrounded by rural agricultural land with public transport connections to outlying villages in the district, which are amongst the least deprived areas in the country (DCLG, 2019). Selby has witnessed a significantly higher than regional and national average population change since 2011, with over eight thousand additional residents moving into the area. The Selby case study site has a slightly older than national average age profile, which contrasts

to Burngreave's young population which has higher proportions of residents aged between 18-29 than national and regional averages.

Selby has a well-connected public transport system. Trains frequently run from the town to key centres of employment such as Doncaster, Hull, Leeds and York, and London. Employment in Selby tends to be dominated by routine manual jobs in warehouse logistics and food production; two large secondary schools, a retail park/high street and two industrial areas make up the other significant employment opportunities. Selby North and Burngreave are both working-class neighbourhoods in occupational terms. In Selby North, a significant proportion of the population are concentrated in routine and non-routine jobs (42.9% - Census, 2021) which tend to be most available in the town; there are a higher-than-average number of people who are long term unemployed or have never worked. In the wider district, there are several large employers including Drax PowerStation, Saint-Gobain glass manufacturing, and three breweries. Around half (48.4%) of residents living in the Selby District commute out of the area for work, with the largest commuter destinations being Leeds and York (North Yorkshire County Council, 2016).

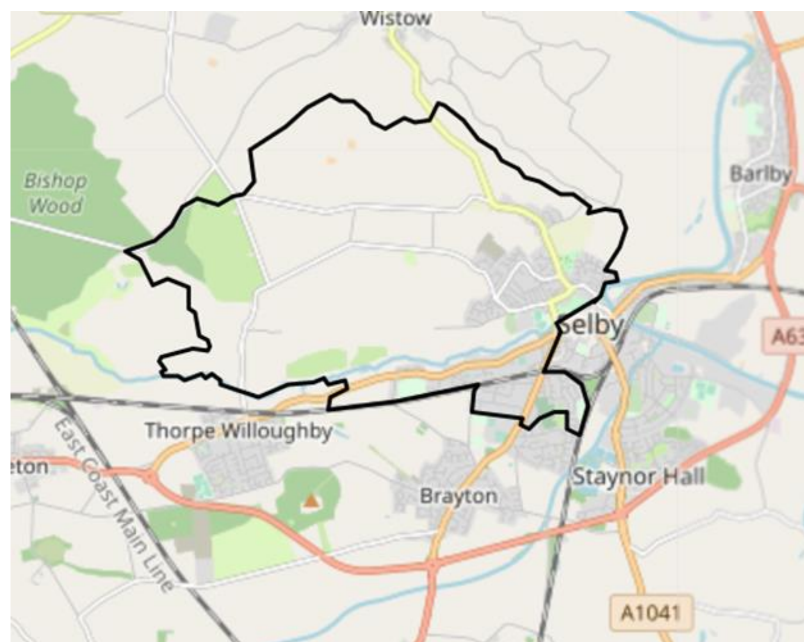

Figure 14 – Selby North Case Study Site adapted from Nomis Ward Maps (2022).

Since 2011, the case study site has witnessed slightly more residents identifying as White British, with 87.8% of residents doing so in 2021 compared with from 87.2% a decade prior. ‘Other white’ continues to be the second biggest ethnic group, decreasing 0.9 percentage points between 2011 and 2021 (from 9.6% to 8.7%) with the majority of people in this group being of Polish or mixed European ethnicity (Census, 2011, 2021). The majority of residents in the case study site and Selby more generally now identify with a ‘British only’ national identity (53.7% - case study site). Across the country the Census 2021 has revealed significant changes in the way people identify with national identities, with the proportion of people identifying as ‘British only’ now more dominant than ‘English only’ identities, a trend which has reversed since 2011. This is suggestive of a shift in the way people understand Britishness and Englishness outright but may also be an effect of changes to the Census questionnaire structure since 2011.

The housing stock in the case study site is made up of: a series of back-to-back terraced properties across four parallel streets, which were constructed at the start of the 20th century; adjacent streets of slight newer (circa 1930-1949) semi-detached houses and bungalows formerly owned by the council (with many sold onto to former tenants); and two relatively autonomous housing complexes built to accommodate the growing population between the 1970s and 1990s. Tenure in the case study area is predominantly owner occupation (59.9%), with smaller volumes of social rented (21.4%) and private rented (17.4%) housing (Census, 2021).

The services available within the estate are limited to a single row of small shops and takeaways, which have ranged over time from more independent traders of fruit, vegetables and baked goods throughout the 1990s to corporate chains and independent takeaways over the course of the last twenty-years. The hollowing out of local retail provision is linked to the rise of larger supermarkets – Aldi, Co-op, Lidl and Sainsburys have all opened stores in the town in the last 25 years – which are built on new, out-of-town retail parks with other big-name brands (see also Dobson, 2022). This has had the effect of reducing the number of retail outlets, with the closure of clothing, home maintenance, and food and produce outlets being notable over the last twenty years. A health and leisure complex and a small retail park are situated less than a mile away, with shops such as

Wilko (a general provisions store) and Sainsburys, and access to a council-operated gym, swimming pool and free outdoor skatepark.

Sheffield and Burngreave

Sheffield is located in South Yorkshire and is demarcated by proximity to a number of other core cities, with Manchester to the west (around forty miles away), Leeds to the north (thirty-five miles) and Nottingham to the south (forty-five miles). The Sheffield City Region has an international reputation as one of England's major industrial heartlands and was part of the South Yorkshire coalfield – which also covered most of West Yorkshire and parts of North Yorkshire – with an extensive network of now disused collieries throughout Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield. Sheffield is part of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), formerly Sheffield City Region (SCR), a formal partnership of councils comprising Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley with a remit to improve social outcomes across the subregion. There are twenty-eight electoral wards in Sheffield, of which Burngreave is located toward the north-east of the city-centre (see Figure 15). Burngreave is a highly stigmatised area within Sheffield and continues to be spoken about pejoratively in local politics and the media, which tends to focus on immigration in the area and the perceived cultures of ethnic minority residents as to blame for structural problems.

Figure 15 – Burngreave Case Study Site adapted from Nomis Ward Maps (2022).

Burngreave is one of the more diverse wards in the country, with large Asian/Asian-British (30.8%) and Black/Black-British (16%) communities living in the area and less than 30% of residents identifying as White British. In Burngreave, levels of identification as English only (6.3%) are nine percentage points lower than the national average (15.3%). There are a variety of different ethnic communities such as Black African, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Roma, Somali and Yemeni living in Burngreave Ward. Burngreave has a significantly higher than national (5.7%) and regional (9.5%) average number of residents who are long term unemployed or have never worked (24.8%). Several factors could be important here, including racial or ethnic discrimination from the labour market, higher levels of poor health/disability, lower than average levels of skills or qualifications, and comparatively high levels of students. Burngreave is one of the most deprived places in Sheffield: the ward is comprised of a series of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are all among the 20 per cent most deprived LSOAs in the country (DCLG, 2019). One LSOA in Burngreave is in the one percent most deprived in the country for income deprivation and there are a series of others that register as being within the 3

percent most deprived areas in England across different deprivations (DCLG, 2019).

Burngreave has good public transport connections and is easily accessible from Sheffield City Centre by a frequent bus service. Residents can also access Sheffield's tram network in nearby Attercliffe which provides connections to the Meadowhall shopping centre and Sheffield City Centre. There are numerous large employers within, and near, Burngreave including the Northern General Hospital, Meadowhall, an Amazon logistical hub, Sheffield Forgemaster's steelworks, Tesco supermarket plus smaller industrial areas in and around the Lower Don Valley, and several local shops and businesses.

There are over 9,400 households in the ward with a population of 27,288 (Census, 2021). In terms of tenure type, there is a fairly equal distribution among owner occupation (39.7%), socially rented (36.4%) and private rented (23%) (Census, 2021) homes. The proportion of people who socially rent is very high in terms of national comparisons (17%) (Census, 2021). There is a diverse range of accommodation types in the ward, with sharp contrasts between and within different neighbourhoods: large, detached properties set back from the main arterial roads running through Burngreave and Fir Vale are juxtaposed by the rows of terraced houses in the centre of Page Hall. The research area is much larger than Selby North: there are ten schools, a series of independent shops and chain supermarkets, the Northern General Hospital and large, open green spaces.

5.3.1 Demographic Change

The structure of the remainder of this chapter is different to that which precedes it. In what follows, is authority level analysis which is organised across three thematic subsections (demographic change, economic change and political history). This provides a wider contextual backdrop to ward-level analysis conducted in earlier subsections.

Selby

The Selby District has a population of 92,000 people, and over the last decade has witnessed the largest population increase of any district in the Yorkshire and Humber region and significantly higher than the regional average of 3.7% (ONS, 2022b – see Figure 16). Rising house prices across the area may be driven by Selby's commuter geography – with residents tending to commute to Doncaster, York and Leeds (Selby District Council, 2013). Data show that the average sale price of houses in Selby has increased 300% (from £51,000 to £205,000) between 2000 and 2022 (Home, 2022a). This is higher than national average increases which rose by 216% between 2000-2021 (from £102,000 to £322,000) (Statista, 2022).

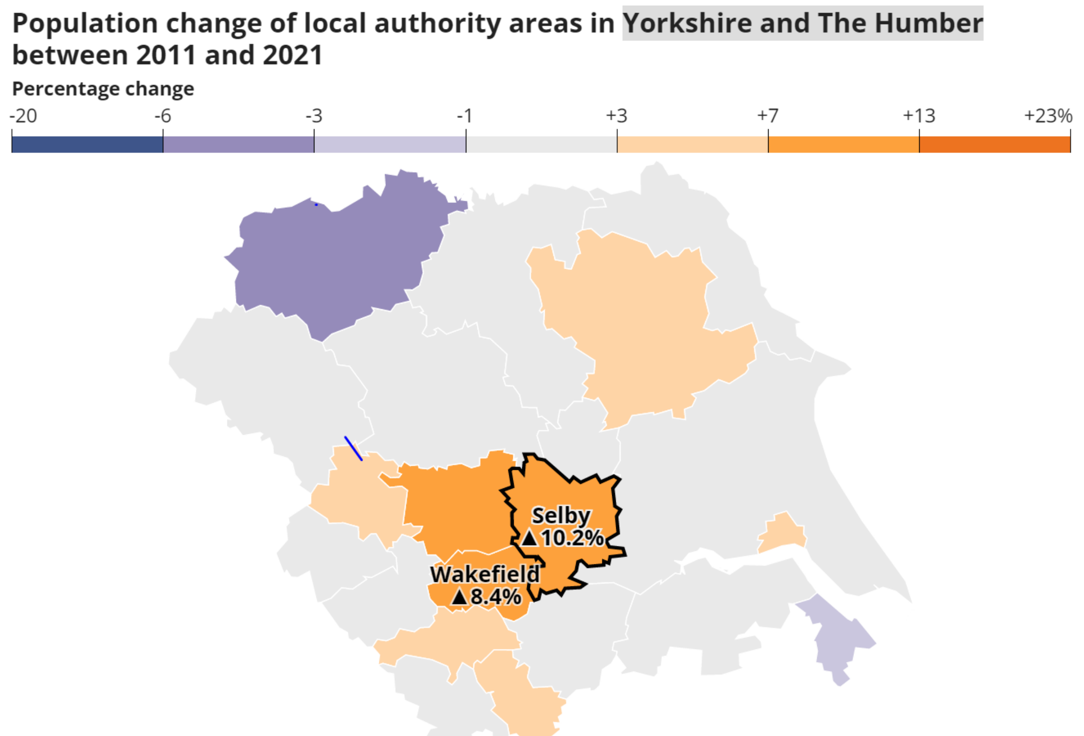

Figure 16 – Population change of local authority areas in Yorkshire and The Humber between 2011 and 2021 (adapted from ONS, 2022b).

Selby District is predominantly White British but there are low numbers of migrants living in the area and when they do, they tend to be from Eastern Europe. Selby has quite a significant demand for low-skilled routine manual work in its warehousing and logistics sector and this seems to attract migrant workers

to the town in small numbers. New international arrivals in Selby tend to come from Poland, Bulgaria and Romania but the actual number of arrivals is very small and less than two hundred in total (in 2018/19) (Migration Yorkshire, 2020). Official migration data show that in 2016, the number of long-term international migrants per 1,000 residents of the normal population was far lower in Selby (1.3) than the national average (5.1), as is the number of short-term international migrants (1 per 1,000 residents in Selby compared with the UK average of 3 per 1,000 residents) (ONS, 2017). This is at odds with interviewees' comments (see subsections 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4), with many of those living in Selby speaking about localised immigration as being far more extensive than statistics suggest.

Sheffield

Sheffield is England's fourth largest city with a population of over 556,500 residents; it has witnessed a 0.7 percent increase in population numbers since the 2011 Census (ONS, 2022b). Sheffield is a diverse city and has large Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani, Roma and Yemeni populations. With an international reputation for steel-production and metallurgy, migrant workers and their families were encouraged to migrate to the city, particularly those of Asian and Black African-Caribbean origins (Runnymede Trust, 2012). This was most notable in the years after the Second World War when economic opportunities were more plentiful because of labour shortages, but migration from abroad has been occurring in Sheffield for a much longer period (*ibid*).

In recent years, many of Sheffield's newer arrivals have sought refuge in the city from political tensions, civil unrest and war in their home countries. Official migration data show that long-term[6] international net migration per 1000 residents is higher in Sheffield (8.3) than it is on average across the UK (5.1) (mid-2016); as is the short-term[7] international migration inflow per 1000 residents (Sheffield = 5 people, UK average = 3 people) (ONS, 2017). Since 2012, net migration in Sheffield has recorded an overall outflow (ONS, 2021d); however, there were 17

[6] Living in a country other than that of the individual's birth for longer than twelve months.
[7] Short term international migration is defined as living in a country other than that of the individual's birth for at least three months but no longer than twelve months.

new migrant GP registrations per 1000 residents in 2016, compared to 11 as the UK average.

With the expansion of the EU in 2004, some Roma migrants from countries such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia exercised their right to free movement and migrated to Sheffield to seek work. The settlement of Roma in Sheffield was a process of 'chain migration' where families from the same villages in their home countries would settle in the same areas of the UK – in Sheffield this tended to be in Burngreave, Darnall, Fir Vale and Page Hall (South Yorkshire Roma Project, 2017). Official demographic data collated through the Census 2021 shows that Roma constitute at least 4.9% of the resident population in Burngreave, but this is likely highly underreported because of high levels of house overcrowding in Roma communities (Census, 2021). The Casey Review (Casey, 2016) estimates that there were 6,000 Roma living in the Page Hall area in 2016 (the main neighbourhood where Roma live in the Burngreave Ward), while other estimates are more conservative and suggest somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 (South Yorkshire Roma Project, 2017).

5.3.2 Economic Change

Selby

Selby's early industrial history is mostly related to Cochrane's shipbuilders, founded in the late nineteenth century and located on the banks of the Ouse, which gained a reputation for building fishing trawlers for fleets working out of Hull and the Humber Estuary. At its peak during the Second World War, the shipyard is reported to have employed around four hundred skilled workers, with decline beginning in the early 1960s until eventual closure in 1992 (Mayes and Thompson, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c). Alongside ship making Selby has a brief but important mining history. The Selby Complex – a 'super pit' constituted by five interconnected deep mines in surrounding villages such as Riccall, Stillingfleet and Wistow – began construction in the mid-1970s. It was one such beneficiary of the 'Plan for Coal' (1974), a Labour government strategy designed to source inexpensive indigenous energy amidst the rising costs of oil exacerbated by the Oil Crisis of 1973.

Many of the miners displaced by the series of pit closures in West and South Yorkshire in the 1980s and 1990s transferred to Selby but tended to commute from surrounding districts, with some moving to new housing estates in the area (Shutt and Henderson, 2005). Competition for what was seen as long-term security for miners after a series of defeats was strong and attracted workers from as far afield as the Welsh and Scottish collieries. At its peak, the Selby Complex produced twelve million tonnes of coal per year between 1993-1994 (*ibid*). Geological issues which blocked access to some coal seams in the area and the wider political and economic climate that led to the breaking up of British Coal in the mid-1990s saw the closure of the Selby Complex announced in 2002. As Henderson and Shutt (2004: 30) argue, the closure reflected the "wider regional energy market, including possible future changes to, or de-commissioning of, local coalfired power stations at Drax, Eggborough and Ferrybridge". Eggborough and Ferrybridge power stations closed in 2018 and 2015 respectively and have recently been demolished but Drax continued to burn coal alongside renewable woodchip until 2020 (Drax, 2022).

The closure of the Selby Complex in 2004 led to over 4,000 job losses – 2,071 of those directly related to mining, and another 2,000 ancillary workers in the supply chain – and a loss of £165 million in regional output (Shutt et al. 2002). In a district with a population of 76,468 residents at the time (Census, 2001), the loss of 4,000 jobs is devastating. The demographic groups mostly impacted by the closure were skilled and unskilled men living in the town itself (Shutt et al. 2002); however, Selby Complex had drawn many miners from the wider Yorkshire region and losses were felt across a wide range of areas (Henderson and Shutt, 2004). One of the fundamental problems of such significant local job loss was that Selby was not an area that consistently received EU structural funding support which exacerbated the extent to which many of the newly unemployed could not retrain and find suitable alternative employment (Henderson and Shutt, 2004; Shutt et al. 2002). Selby lost its Intermediate and EU Objective funding status in 1999 because of reductions to the level of coverage provided across the UK, with the areas deemed to be most in need being prioritised (Shutt et al. 2002).

Selby has since witnessed the creation of jobs in new and emerging sectors, particularly relating to food production, warehousing and logistics, but these tend

to be low paid and have poor working conditions. For example, employee accounts of the poor working conditions inside the Clipper Logistics warehouse throughout the pandemic had been reported in local news outlets (Gray, 2021). There were also similar issues in Clipper operated sites in Sheffield (Robson, 2020). Despite these changes, the largest sector in Selby remains manufacturing (23.5%), followed by administrative and support services (11.8%) and wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles (10.3%) (ONS, 2022c). The proportion of people employed in the manufacturing sector in Selby (22.9%) is more than twice that across the Yorkshire and Humber region as a whole (11.8%) and just under three times as high as the national average (Great Britain) (7.6%) (*ibid*). Labour market analysis shows a high proportion of jobs in Selby paying below the Real Living Wage (28%), a lower rate of employment than the national average (73% vs 77% - Annual Population Survey, 2019) and below average jobs density (0.76, national average being 0.87 in 2018) (Glover, 2021).

Sheffield

From the 18th century up until around the 1980s, Sheffield was at the forefront of industrial activity in England and was renowned for its production of stainless and crucible steel and a large cutlery trade. By 1907, two of the ten largest employers in the UK were located in Sheffield with Vickers, Sons and Maxim (armaments and navel engineering) employing around 22,500 people and John Brown and Co., (shipbuilding and steel manufacturing) having a workforce of over 16,200 (Shaw, 1983). Like many towns and cities across the Yorkshire and Humber region, the manufacturing sector in Sheffield declined precipitously between the 1960s and 1990s. At the point of its formation in 1967, British Steel presided over a series of problems which weakened its global competitiveness. These included failures to maintain and invest in new plants, outdated technology, and low investment in research and development (Blair, 1997). Over a 40-year period between 1971 and 2011, the manufacturing sector in Sheffield witnessed a decline which equated to 120,000 job losses (Centre for Cities, 2019b).

Post-industrial recovery in the Sheffield City Region (SCR) is characterised by efforts to transform the economy into one which focuses more on higher-skilled

and knowledge-intensive sectors (Centre for Cities, 2019b). Sheffield has a two-tier workforce divided by educational qualifications: the manufacturing sector in SCR having lower than national average proportions of workers with degrees (Centre for Cities, 2019b). Since the 1980s, successive UK governments have pursued "monetarist policies and austerity" which has "led to an acceleration of deindustrialisation and job destruction in the Sheffield economy" (Etherington et al. 2018: 6). Deprivation in eastern Sheffield is a lasting effect of deindustrialisation in the Don Valley region (in eastern Sheffield and towards Rotherham and Barnsley), where steel industry was concentrated, and which shouldered the effects of tens of thousands of job losses (Thomas et al. 2009).

In 2020, the largest employers in Sheffield were those in the following sectors: human health and social care (16%), wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles (14.4%), and education (12.8%) (ONS, 2022d). Given that there is a high reliance on publicly funded jobs in the case of health and social care, this may mean Sheffield felt the impacts of austerity-induced public sector cuts disproportionately. Manufacturing jobs represented only 7.8 percent of the city total, around four percentage points lower than that of the Yorkshire and Humber region (*ibid*), and significantly lower than Selby. There are small pockets of higher-skilled industries in Sheffield, notably in the creative and digital sectors (Bennett, 2017), and the advanced manufacturing of metals, technology and engineering (Centre for Cities, 2019b). However, these are developing sectors and are far less dominant than the regional specialisms of Manchester, particularly the media industry, and Leeds, which is thought of as the UK's second city of finance.

It is estimated that 185,000 people in the SCR are in low paid and insecure employment (Etherington et al. 2018). Labour market data indicate that in 2020 job density in Sheffield was 0.75, lower than that of the Yorkshire and Humber region (0.79) and significantly lower than the national average (0.84) (ONS, 2022d). Average job density has been increasing across the UK since 2010 (from 0.77, to 0.86 in 2021) but has remained between 0.75 and 0.78 in Sheffield over the same time period (*ibid*). Lower labour demand has contributed to Sheffield having a consistently higher than the UK average proportion of residents claiming job seekers allowance (*ibid*).

5.3.3 Political History

Selby

Selby District, which is made up of Selby town itself and a number of outlying villages and parishes, is a local government district served by the local authority of Selby District Council which shares functions with North Yorkshire County Council. Apart from a 13-year hiatus during the terms of the last Labour governments (1997-2010), the Conservative Party have controlled Selby District Council. General election data is not available at the ward level; however, district council elections indicate that there is a tendency for Conservative voters living in outlying villages and parishes to outnumber Labour voters in Selby town itself. In the EU referendum, Selby voted to leave the European Union, with a majority of 59.2% (House of Commons, 2016b).

There are key differences in the way that the local councils in Selby and Sheffield experienced and responded to deindustrialisation. Selby experienced its most significant industrial job losses at a much later date and in a phase of closures which were mostly related to "environmental and global energy market-driven" (Henderson and Shutt, 2004: 27) changes. There is at least some cursory evidence of a political response to industrial job losses in Selby. Yorkshire Forward, the then Yorkshire and Humber Regional Development Agency (RDA), established a Selby taskforce (Henderson and Shutt, 2004) to investigate the effects of the closure. Over a twenty-month period following the closure of the Selby Complex, local agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council ran a series of training programmes to help former miners into new jobs through retraining and reskilling.

Selby is situated in two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) areas, Leeds City Region (LCR) and York and North Yorkshire (YNY), and the economic strategies of both focus on unemployment and job creation in the town. The LCR strategy describes Selby as having a "key role to play in providing space for business growth" (Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, 2016: 38), particularly for the development of manufacturing parks, including one on top of Kellingley Colliery, a former deep mine, and others which are designed to create jobs for skilled and

professional workers in high-growth sectors such as bioscience and agricultural-technology (*ibid*). The YNY strategy focuses on funding learning and skills programmes (through Selby College), developing the fastest growing local sectors and connecting economically inactive people to employment opportunities within them; however, these tend to be where the most insecure and lowest paying jobs and sectors are located in Selby (warehousing and food production) (York and North Yorkshire LEP, 2020).

Sheffield

The Labour Party has historically been the most dominant political party in Sheffield: it held control between 1973-1999, lost control between 1999-2003 and again between 2007 and 2011, but regained power for a decade until 2021, when there was, and still is, no overall control. Throughout the 1980s, Sheffield's local politics were focussed upon class and the city was said to be "the site of a vibrant left-wing political culture that formed part of the new urban left" (Kenny, 2019: 558). By the 1990s, Thatcher had succeeded in defeating municipal socialism and the city's commitment to class politics, under former leader David Blunkett, had given way to a more collaborative approach between the local Labour Party and other leaders, and both public and private institutions (Seyd, 1990). The 1991 World Student Games was one outcome of the city council's focus on economic regeneration and entrepreneurship (*ibid*) and was seen as an opportunity to rebrand the east-end of Sheffield in the aftermath of deindustrialisation (Madanipour et al. 2018). The Student Games hugely indebted Sheffield and at least up to 2021 the City Council were continuing to pay costs for it, with only small amounts of long-term jobs created in the Ponds Forge Swimming Pool and Sheffield Arena.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Sheffield Council tried to address poor post-industrial growth through a series of city centre planning strategies (1994, 2000 and 2004) to drive economic recovery and urban regeneration programmes (Madanipour et al. 2018). Burngreave was subject to large-scale regeneration funding (circa £52 million) through the New Deal for Communities (NDC) (2001-2011), a 39-area policy programme intended to improve levels of deprivation,

raise standards of education and health and reduce worklessness (Batty et al. 2010). The interviewees in this project tended to be critical of the NDC programme: those living in Burngreave thought the funding was poorly spent and that the impacts have been negligible. Participants living in other neighbourhoods (Fir Vale, Pitsmoor, Page Hall) thought the benefits of funding – both from the NDC and more generally – tended to be disproportionately allocated to Burngreave itself rather than their own neighbourhoods further north in the ward.

5.4 Concluding Discussion

This chapter helps to set the scene for forthcoming chapters which analyse the formation of working-class political subjectivities in relation to economic and political restructuring in the neoliberal era and how it has been articulated and experienced in urban areas. People in Selby or Burngreave may not explicitly think or speak of their lives in regional terms, but regional or sub-regional economic trajectories underpin how people living in local places experience and access the labour market, how they negotiate services and resources and how they think about opportunities and other people. For this reason, it is important to explore if and how the way participants voted in the EU referendum is related to the backstory of economic decline playing out across the wider regional landscape in which the towns and cities they live in are located, as some research suggests (see McCann, 2020; McCann and Ortega-Argiles, 2021; Rodriguez-Pose, 2018).

To recap, both the Selby and Sheffield research sites tend to be populated by people with lower levels of education and who work in routine occupations (Census, 2021) and can therefore be reasonably thought of as working-class neighbourhoods. The research sites are most significantly differentiated by ethnicity and national identity: the Sheffield site is ethnically heterogenous, and the Selby site is predominantly white. Residents of both areas tend to think of themselves as ‘British’, but this is more pronounced in Burngreave and the proportion of people that see themselves as ‘English’ is significantly lower (Census, 2021). Both Selby and Burngreave are located in wider deindustrialising

regions and as later analysis will show, this is important to the way residents form their political proclivities.

Given the closure of the Selby Complex in 2004, with losses of 4000 jobs, the effects of industrial job loss are both powerful and the trauma more recent. Sheffield has been able to diversify into other sectors such as advanced manufacturing and the creative and digital industries (Bennett, 2017; Lane et al. 2016) in a way that Selby has not. In the latter, growth has been most pronounced in poorer paying industries such as warehousing and this may partially explain how economic marginalisation plays out in the town.

Migration to Sheffield and the Burngreave ward is more extensive and more historical than that of Selby and Selby North, which is expected given the differences in settlement type and labour market opportunities available. However, the way interviewees from both Selby and Burngreave speak about immigrants and immigration is broadly similar (see Chapter 8). Research has shown that leave voting was higher in areas where there were initially few migrants, but population numbers have increased over time (the period used in the study was 2004-2015) (Clark and Whittaker, 2016).

There are a series of caveats and nuances required to fully understand how participants construct their political dispositions in and through the places where they live. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3 is sufficiently flexible to account for divergent cases: people may live in similar economic circumstances but respond to economic and political changes in different ways. To understand why, it is important to ground political dispositions in the nuances of life experiences and their sedimentation into ways of thinking and acting as they build up over time (Bourdieu, 1977). The first of four analysis chapters that follows explores this in depth, focussing on a small number of participants to provide a closer and more fine-grained narrative analysis of political dispositions.

6.0 Class Experiences of Socio-Economic Change and the Formation of Political Attitudes – a narrative analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter adopts a narrative approach to analysis in order to allow "people to convey to themselves and to others who they are now, how they came to be, and where they think their lives may be going in the future" (McAdams and McLean, 2013: 233). This analysis is inspired by Bourdieu and illuminates the complex and multifaceted timeline of life experiences which form the structure of participants' habitus and how these dispositions inform political subjectivities. This chapter tells historicised stories of a small number of interviewees' lives: what their upbringing was like; how they were taught to think and speak about others; what it is like to live where they do; and how they have negotiated the labour market and the opportunities presented to them. It takes a biographical approach which focuses on the breadth of participants' accounts and explores how interviewees negotiate changing economic, social and political contexts.

Atkinson's (2017: 73-75, see Figure 7 and 8) models of UK social space show how those in similar class fractions, by virtue of their proximity in terms of capital volumes and compositions, tend to have similar social and political attitudes and viewpoints. This chapter also finds that shared class experiences tend to inform similar dispositions specifically in relation to EU referendum voting behaviour. There are some irregularities and inconsistencies to this and, as will be shown, political subjectivities are shaped by a wide range of experiences and structures and do not always follow from class circumstances and positions within the labour market. In the absence of alternative political discourses, common-sense understandings of the causes of different structural inequalities become the dominant scripts available to people to understand class relations and class differences (Crehan, 2016; Hall and Massey, 2010). This relates to classificatory struggles in the sense that the displacement of abjection onto others is related to the absence of – or a more fragmentary – class consciousness which cuts off access to forms of knowledge that apportion blame on the capitalist class and their intermediaries (Jeffery et al. 2020).

Each subsection focuses on interviewees with similar circumstances and looks at how particular contexts may produce a series of similar political dispositions. Subsection 6.3 concentrates upon three older, white working-class, leave-voting participants who experience ‘hysteresis effects’ (Bourdieu, 1977) where individual and class-based dispositions no longer correspond to the state of the fields that compose social relations. The contextual backdrop to this is connected to experiences of political marginalisation, social value changes and labour market restructuring.

Subsection 6.4 explores how three female, leave voting participants of diverse ethnic backgrounds attempt to maintain a sense of social value while living in a stigmatised neighbourhood. Attention is paid to the ways participants ascribe value to different places using markers of cultural distinction and how the presence of immigrant groups problematises efforts to maintain a class respectability. The final subsection (6.5) explores how an older, female participant living in Selby engages in othering practices which stigmatise the white, British working-class as racist and insular as a way to articulate the symbolic value of voting to remain. To date, there has been limited critical engagement with remain voting proclivities given that it is often not considered worthy of investigation because it was the ‘correct’ position: this chapter, and the thesis more generally, challenges such assumptions.

6.2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter draws upon Bourdieu’s multidimensional reading of class and culture to understand how political subjectivities are informed by structural processes and change (Atkinson, 2017; Harrits, 2013). Habitus is a theoretical tool that allows the researcher to think about how individuals’ struggles and experiences in the past, sedimented as schemes of thought and dispositions, can illuminate their political attitudes in the present (Atkinson, 2017). The chapter combines Bourdieu’s habitus and Gramsci’s ‘common-sense’ to show how political views are generated through practical experiences (habitus), what the content of these views and dispositions are (common-sense vs. good-sense),

and why some people may be more susceptible to common-sense discourses (particularly as they relate to 'undeserving' groups) than others.

Common-sense is a term used by Gramsci to describe the series of self-evident and pre-existing truths that serve to maintain hegemony by fostering misrecognition of the reality of the unequal distributions of wealth and resources (Crehan, 2016; Tyler, 2013). Common-sense contains kernels of good-sense which are counter-hegemonic discourses and beliefs which people arrive at through critical reflection (Crehan, 2016). Marxist political economy is brought into dialogue with cultural class analysis to show how dispositions are always constructed in the context of processes intended to rebalance class relations from above. These have made the working-class the recipients of a series of physically and symbolically violent processes (Broom et al. 2022; Harvey, 2007; Jessop, 2017; 2018; Telford, 2022; Tyler, 2013).

6.3 Hysteresis as an Effect of Capitalist Restructuring in the Neoliberal Era

In this subsection, it is argued that three older, white working-class voters living in Selby (see table below) experience 'hysteresis effects' as a result of a range of processes which can be broadly understood as consequences of economic restructuring in the shift to neoliberalism. Hysteresis effects occur when individual and class-based dispositions experience a cultural lag and are no longer attuned to the current dispositions and structures of the field of social relations (Bourdieu, 1977; Hardy, 2008). These effects are not only material in the sense of unemployment and greater insecurity but are also symbolic and relate to the emotions attached to interpretations of loss and the meanings of deindustrialisation. The way participants articulate their political subjectivities sometimes draws upon understandings of economic and symbolic change which are based upon racialised discourses of Britain being no longer recognisably 'British' (Virdee and McGeever, 2018).

Name	Age	Residency	Ethnicity	Education	Work	Individual Income	Vote
Eddy	60	3 years Selby	White British	City and Guilds	Driver	£5-10k	Leave
Howard	60	28 years Selby	White British	CSE	Retired miner	£10-15k	Leave
Mabel	59	4 years Selby	White British	CSE	Passenger assistant	£10-15k	Leave

6.3.1 Eddy

Eddy is a 60-year-old, White British man, who has lived in Selby for the past three years. With his wife, Mary, he occupies a small council-owned property in a quiet area of the neighbourhood. Eddy tells me he moved to Selby five years ago having spent most of his life living on a council estate nearby. He has previously worked in sales for a trade supplies company where he held a variety of management roles. Eddy's experiences of work and the labour market were positive until he was forced to leave his position as store manager because of cost-cutting and staff redundancies.

He currently works in a permanent, part-time (roughly 10 hours per week) delivery driving job which earns him between £5,000-10,000 per annum; his contract is precarious given his working hours are dependent upon demand. As a direct consequence of his reduction in salary, Eddy's economic circumstances have become far more insecure. He speaks of the embarrassment of not being able to buy his grandchildren expensive Christmas presents and having to shop in charity shops for clothes. It is this state of insecurity which seems to buttress Eddy's predominantly cynical view of politicians and their ability to deliver positive changes in his life.

When asked about social class and whether he thought of himself as part of a class group, Eddy was keen to tell me that "there is a definite class divide". The way Eddy speaks about those with more money, as lacking compassion, as being over-indulgent and as self-obsessed is counterpoised to the way he thinks of himself as valuing community, collectivism and having a more modest lifestyle.

These ways of speaking about class are forms of classificatory struggle which demonstrate some of the "affective consequences of understanding oneself to being positioned as 'lower class'" (Jeffery et al. 2020: 134). Eddy considers working-classness not as something to disidentify from (Skeggs, 1997), but a form of identity that can, especially in negotiations of upward mobility, serve as a base for value. As he tells me at a later point in the discussion:

> Eddy: The best advice I could give you is, and I wish my sons would listen to it as well as my daughter, the best advice I could give you is wherever you end up, don't forget where you started from.

It seems part of Eddy's hysteresis stems from perceived rejection by his own upwardly mobile children which seems to compound the affective consequences of economic marginalisation and a sense of self as working-class (Jeffery et al. 2020). For the majority of his life Eddy has tended to vote for the Labour Party, a loyalty which crystalised through the Conservative Party's role in the miners strikes of 1984-1985. The following extract hints at a sense of voicelessness and precariousness in a political economic system in which trade unions have been deliberately weakened:

> Eddy: If we go back to the miners' strike right, in the days gone by, we had really strong unions that stood up for you and defended your rights. They don't now because they have all been squashed, there is no say; now if you threatened to go on strike or anything like that, they dismiss you.

Eddy voted to leave the European Union for two reasons: because of immigration, particularly the idea that immigrants were taking British jobs, and the loss of British industries. These concerns are powerfully connected to Eddy's economic circumstances. Job loss, economic insecurity, precarity and the stigmatising effects of a downward class trajectory underpin an understanding of leaving the EU as necessary to improve economic prospects.

When asked whether he considers himself to belong to a particular ethnic group, Eddy returned to the EU referendum to express a sense of disidentification.

> Eddy: If it works out for this country, and we do start to stand on our own two feet and we do start to produce…then I will say I am a White British citizen. It's just that I feel as though we have sold ourselves. There doesn't seem much to be proud of. We were being dictated to as to what and when and how we could do things.

His justifications for voting to leave are characteristic of a wider sense of insecurity associated with the selling off of British industries to foreign competitors. Eddy's extract is reminiscent of a nostalgia for "feelings of stability and belonging" (Muehlebach and Shoshan 2012: 318, cited in Thorleifsson, 2016: 555) through which industrialism is recognised as providing for working-class people.

In the absence of more class-based identities and political discourses, a racialised conception of deservingness and value can sometimes reassert itself as the dominant way of thinking about and speaking about social differences (Makinen, 2017). Eddy laments the idea that White British people can no longer express their Englishness or Britishness because of political correctness and the offense it may cause to other ethnic, religious or cultural groups, as he claims:

> Eddy: It's all about politics, oh yeah if I put a union jack flag up whether be St. Georges day or what have you, the police have every right to tell me to take it down. But yet it's my country. You know, erm, so there is all that sort of political goings on.

The idea that the police can legally request individuals to remove national flags is more common-sense thinking around migrant groups and perceived social change than fact. This seems to bleed over into other social anxieties:

> Eddy: Just with all this political...atmosphere and one thing another with what's going on maybe this is why people are frightened of interacting with people, even whether it is your neighbours or not. I cross the road if there is a group of lads coming towards me. In my days gone by, I used to be a body builder and I used to be massive.

Decreasing levels of social trust and weaker community relations are all (c.f. Putnam, 2001), in different ways, primary indicators of increasing class atomisation. Eddy expresses both economic and physical insecurity linked to his experiences of hysteresis in which the world around him is no longer structured by familiar and long-held values, beliefs and emotions which have been rendered obsolete by economic and cultural change. Some of these values seem to be informed and conditioned by long standing discourses which devalue 'internal others' as being representative of wider symbolic and economic changes and decline which white working-class people feel they have lost out from. He uses

his vote to try and recapture the security and pride he associates with the past and his place within it.

6.3.2 Howard

Howard is a sixty-year-old, White British man, who has lived in Selby for the last twenty-eight years. His account is dominated by a perception of the European Union as responsible for a range of social and economic problems, including the loss of community and weakening social cohesion; unemployment and poverty; and rising levels of crime. Howard is a former coalminer, originally moving to the neighbourhood from a small Scottish mining village. With his wife, Howard owns a three bedroomed ex-council property in a small scheme of houses which were originally built to accommodate pit workers moving to the town. Howard followed his father's occupation as a miner and his habitus was shaped by the classed and heavily masculinised cultures of the occupational community (Ramsden, 2015) in which he grew up. He tells me:

> Howard: I was one out of five boys, four of us went down the pit, one didn't. The one that didn't, he ended up the brainiest. Because we never wanted him to go down the pit because we had seen what it was like. Five of us, my dad and four sons, all worked in the pit.

Despite having been forced to take an early retirement from mining over twenty-years ago due to ill-health – a consequence of extensive dust inhalation – Howard continues to think of his class identity as part of an industrial history in which mining was "symbolic of broader cultural, geographic, and class divides" (Kojola, 2019: 371).

> Joe: Why do you think of yourself as working-class?
>
> Howard: Because I have come up through the ranks. I started at pit as a button laddie as they used to call them, and I finished up as middle management. But I have always classified myself as working-class because I have actually done physical work to contribute to the country, right, because all miners used to contribute, we used to keep the lights going as they said.

Being working-class is a symbolic identity that is associated with values of toughness and a bodily and mental strength required to undertake manual work (Rhodes, 2013). Certain roles derived their value and respect from the dangerousness and dirtiness of work involved. These physical and mental

characteristics become sedimented as a form of social value into the perceptual schemas of a class habitus over the life course, as Howard notes in our conversation:

> Joe: Do you think people treat you differently for being working-class?
>
> Howard: Personally, no. Because I have been brought up in the pits so you're not soft. If you are a softie, then the pit is not for you. I just feel that I am working-class and that's it. I will never be anything different.

Howard's interview was dominated by talk of a series of social changes. Notably, crime is perceived to have become more prevalent and community spirit has disappeared to be replaced by competitive individualism. In the extract below, Howard speaks of a contradictory and complex relationship to the police. An erosion of trust in institutions associated with a partially idealised period of social order and stability is related to a softening of attitudes towards punishment:

> Joe: Why do you think crime has worsened?
>
> Howard: A lot of crime these days is because of what I call the 'snowflake generation'. Your generation now are snowflakes because there is no deterrent, you know, for any criminal now…When I was younger you were brought up to respect your elders and to respect police. But I've gone through err, a yearlong strike in 1984/85 with the miners. That's when the police state kind of started because the Tory government wanted to take on the miners. They knew if they beat the miners, they would beat everybody else. When she [Thatcher] became prime minister her number one target was the miners. *So, she took on the miners and obviously that's history now, it's gone to me, it's gone but I can still remember you know* (my emphasis).

The last sentence of this quote encapsulates the hysteresis effects Howard experiences: attitudes have been sedimented and despite the passage of time, they continue to shape a sense of unease and loss. Howard thinks younger generations are 'softer' because they have not experienced 'real' suffering like the miners did through undertaking tough masculine work and as a result, they have less respect for authority and rules. Attitudes of this kind bleed over into understandings of leave and remain voters:

> Howard: Getting back to the snowflake generation, I mean not you personally, but your generation are blaming the old ones for voting to leave the European Union. But to me, I am saving you lot because we are going to stop this carry on. […] They have decimated the UK, they have actually used our money to poach business, workers, industries, car industries for example they have poached.

Howard's class identity as a miner, which derives a strong sense of value and pride from the industry being seen as of critical national importance, is an implicit part of his justification for voting to leave. He thinks 'snowflakes' are to blame for different social ills in the UK and characterises them as being too weak and unwilling to stand up to an extractive form of EU-facilitated neoliberalism that has allowed the 'poaching' of British industry, the opposite of older working-class leavers. Narratives of intergenerational conflict are an increasing part of contemporary common-sense.

6.3.3 Mabel

Mabel is a fifty-nine-year-old, White British woman, who has lived in Selby for the past four years, having moved from South Yorkshire. Throughout her working life, which began at the age of sixteen, she has undertaken a range of part-time and full-time jobs: "bingo caller, fish and chip shop, you name it, I did it" (Mabel). Having primarily worked in the service sector, owning a pub in her thirties and later a restaurant abroad (totalling 17 years), Mabel now works as a part-time (less than 16 hours per week) care assistant for vulnerable adults, a position she has held for three years. She currently earns between £10,000-15,000 per annum.

In a discussion around the apparent unwillingness of younger, British workers to undertake unskilled types of employment (food picking and warehouse logistics), Mabel speaks of generational values as being particularly significant:

> Mabel: When I was born in 1960, erm, war was still heavy on everybody's mind, so I was brought up differently. I was brought up to respect things. I was brought up to respect my elders. I was brought up to…when this food is put in front of you, you eat it. Erm, we didn't have luxuries and then as the decades have gone by that memory of living in poverty has gone. Nowadays you have got more and more people who have got luxuries. They don't have to eat the food, they don't have to respect their parents, and the parents can't chastise them. So, there is a whole generation of people grown up with a couldn't care less attitude and it is them that are destroying it all. When you meet, I would have said someone who is fifty-five and above, that is when you will see the people who were brought up in the fifties and sixties and they were brought up the proper way.

The idea that poverty was worse in the post-war decades than it is now needs to be treated with caution: Households Below Average Income data show relative

poverty has increased between 1961 and 2016 (Resolution Foundation, 2021). Nonetheless, Mabel's characterisation of the post-war decades as marked by poverty and collective struggle is a powerful story through which her relationship to social change can be understood, especially when contrasted to the perhaps superficial affluence (in terms of the proliferation of consumer goods) of more recent times. Dispositions formed in early life experiences prove enduring, carrying forward the classed structure of attitudes, values and feelings which were dominant in a particular historical epoch into the present.

Throughout her account, British 'youth' are invoked as a type of 'folk devil' by Mabel – a conduit for different social problems. Pearson's (1984) historicised account shows that fears about younger, unruly and 'dangerous' populations are not new and have a history dating back to at least the Victorian Era. As part of an extended discussion around Britain as a 'fair country', Mabel, unprompted, tells me:

> Mabel: The youth of today they are a standing joke. I don't mean your age group, I mean, you know, I am on about teenagers of today. Oh, I can't do that, I can't do that, you have offended me. Oh, that upsets me, oh I don't like that. That is all you hear.

Intended to deride the more liberalised worldviews of young people, associated with widely ridiculed notions of 'political correctness' and identity politics, this sense of social change seems to feed into the ways in which Mabel understands the European Union:

> Joe: Do you think Great Britain is fair? Do you think it was ever fair?
>
> Mabel: If you were to ask me if it has got worse, I would say it has got worse since the EU. That's why I hate it so much. It has got worse in the fact that they have brought in silly rules about you can't even chastise your own children, we are getting softer and more snowflake-ish as the years go by, err the kids are getting more unruly because nobody can tell them off. I think it is going wrong.

England is one of few European countries where corporal punishment of children has yet to be made illegal and can be used as long as it is 'reasonable'. Therefore, Mabel's perception of EU policy as prohibiting such chastisement seems to be part of a number of articulations of folk tales that inform a political common-sense that blames the EU for a variety of social changes which it has not caused.

6.4 Living in Marginalised Neighbourhoods: Experiences of Immigration and Spatial Stigma

This subsection draws upon the accounts of Jean, Sarah and Yasmin. They are all residents of the Sheffield research site which means they are far more likely than Selby residents to encounter and experience a more ethnically diverse range of people in their neighbourhoods (Census, 2011). Their justifications for voting to leave the European Union are based upon the perceived social, economic and symbolic effects of localised Eastern European migration. It is argued that the way participants' experience and understand spatial stigma now is related to recollections of a neighbourhood perceived to be more homogenous and more symbolically valuable in the past. In this subsection the temporality of spatial belonging is significant. Participants' accounts suggest that there can be shifts from 'elective belonging' (Savage et al. 2005) to a more 'prescribed belonging' (Jeffery, 2018) by virtue of immigration and these changes inform interviewees' voting proclivities.

Name	Age	Residency	Ethnicity	Education	Work	Income	Vote
Jean	67	30 years Sheffield	White British	Degree	Retired nurse	£15-20k	Leave
Sarah	45	10 years Sheffield	White British	A-level	Store assistant	£10-15k	Leave
Yasmin	55	30 years Sheffield	British Pakistani	NVQ L4	Stay-at-home spouse	£15-20k	Leave

6.4.1 Jean

Jean left school without any qualifications and worked in a variety of low-paid jobs in her earlier working life. She then entered Higher Education and achieved a degree which suggests a moderate level of social mobility and upward class trajectory. Jean worked as a children's nurse for a number of years before retiring two years ago. She considers herself to be working-class and part of a group of "people that work hard, who maybe don't get recognition financially and their politics, the majority of working-class people have Labour politics".

Throughout her account, Jean articulates good-sense (Crehan, 2016) understandings of poverty and hardship as having structural causes which require political and economic interventions. However, she also uses common-sense distinctions between more deserving (asylum seekers, people with disabilities, long term sick) and less deserving (economic migrants, some benefit claimants) social groups to explain her own economic and symbolic marginalisation. In the extract which follows, Jean speaks of her experiences of localised immigration:

> Joe: So, the first bit is can you just tell me your story of living where you do?
>
> Jean: I bought this house and moved here from [different area in City Region], gorgeous house, loved the neighbourhood, next door to a park with beautiful views…wonderful neighbours and a sense of community. Made the house into a very beautiful house, spent a lot of money and really love it, but over the last few years what we have seen is a decline in the area…we have seen a big influx of Eastern European migrants.

Attachments to place tend to be strongest when our dispositions for particular kinds of places align to where we actually live (Jeffery, 2018). As a result of her localised experiences of immigration, Jean now thinks of her neighbourhood as a "dump", as somewhere to avoid driving through and as having a bad reputation, to the extent she often withholds or obscures where she lives when talking to others. The presence of 'undesirable others' has unsettled what Bourdieu calls "symbolic profits" (Bourdieu, 1985: 4) which are procured from owning what is *perceived to be* valuable.

Symbolic value is closely related to economic value and Jean tells me how she thinks immigration has lowered the value of her house:

> Jean: What else has made me angry, sorry, because of what has happened we will never be able to sell our house in the future and move to anywhere else because it is not worth what it was. It is beautiful inside; it has got everything new; somewhere smaller that is like it we couldn't afford now because the prices have dropped. The only people that are buying around here are landlords.

Because of the perceived relationship between local immigration and declining house prices, Jean perpetuates a series of cultural stereotypes of Eastern European migrants and particularly Roma people. Speaking about one of her friends in the neighbourhood who lives next door to a Roma family, she says "they [Roma] are noisy, and they are dirty and, you know, it is hard for him". Jean

counterpoises her own experiences of localised immigration to the expectations of multiculturalism:

> Joe: How has it made you feel seeing this sort of change [levels of immigration] in your neighbourhood?
>
> Jean: I would love to live in an area that was multicultural and enjoy it. Because we learn things and people learn things from each other and that's how it should be, but that is not happening. I am angry that it has been allowed to happen and the interventions that should have taken place have not taken place.

As the extract above shows, Jean formed her voting justifications in the context of experiences and interactions with the 'wrong' sort of immigrants. These experiences seem to be classed and do not marry up to an understanding of immigration formed in earlier life (as being about learning from one another), nor how multiculturalism has tended to be spoken about by the Labour Party, the party she supports. Jean hoped Brexit would lead to a 'better' way of dealing with immigration but came to later regret her leave vote. For Jean, there seems to be a tension between more liberal attitudes towards immigration and ethnic diversity and how localised immigration has played out around her. She tells me about her vote to leave:

> Joe: So, you voted to leave?
>
> Jean: Yeah.
>
> Joe: And you regret that?
>
> Jean: I certainly do, what a big, big mistake. I know other people that voted to leave, and they regret it as well.
>
> Joe: Why do you regret it?
>
> Jean: Because of trade and because I don't think it will make any difference in terms of immigration and I think it might make it difficult for us to go into Europe and people to come here. I watch a lot of programmes about hospitals and without immigration we would struggle. Most of the top doctors that you see on these programmes are from abroad and they do very stressful jobs. We need immigration, but I thought we don't want immigration as it is.

There are two interrelated arguments here. Jean regrets voting to leave because she doesn't think Brexit will change immigration and the presence of low value others in her local area. This is buttressed by what could be considered a more critical explanation, but one which is not necessarily good-sense. Brexit is seen to be damaging to a national interest which is itself imperialistic in the way it thinks

Britain should be able to benefit from the 'poaching' of economically and culturally valuable professionals from the Global South.

6.4.2 Sarah

Sarah is a 45-year-old, White British woman who has lived in the neighbourhood for over a decade. She has no major forms of savings, and her primary asset – a small, terraced property – has, over time, reduced in value. Sarah thinks the loss in her home's value is because of Roma migrants moving to the neighbourhood, although there may be other explanations such as the effects on house prices of the financial crash. She explained her initial preference for living in a place which had practical benefits:

> Joe: What were your reasons for moving here in the first place?
>
> Sarah: We thought it would be ok didn't we and we thought it is close to work, it is easy for me to get to town with not driving…

Soon after, groups of Eastern European migrants began to settle in the neighbourhood; this encouraged negative perceptions of the area and its residents.

> Sarah: I would say maybe two years [after moving in], we noticed more and more [immigrants] coming. When we have spoken to other neighbours because we have some Polish lads who lived nearby as well, they said that they were sorry, but they were leaving because the Roma Slovaks were coming. They said yeah, we don't get on with them, we don't get on with them, they fight. We just thought ok and then over the time we have seen well yeah, they do, they don't live particularly great, don't live how we live, don't respect how we live...

Sarah speaks of a lack of intervention in the area from the local council and how state agencies such as the police pay lip-service to addressing different social problems. In her account, she references David Blunkett who has made inflammatory comments about the local area and migrant residents. However, she is frustrated at the way the council and private landlords have not prevented migrant families from living in overcrowded properties and causing excessive noise and disruption. These feelings and emotions impact upon how Sarah is able to maintain a sense of value whilst living in a stigmatised space:

> Sarah: Yeah, you can just look at what is said on the Facebook group [local community page] yourself. I often think, do you know what, you don't even live here why are you jumping on the bandwagon? It's like come and live here for a bit and just...its erm its difficult. But most people we want to know where we live, do know, and they know it is not us.

Sarah internalises the stigma associated with place (Watt, 2020) and engages in a classificatory struggle to reassert her own cultural value by displacing abjection onto others (Jeffery et al. 2020). She does this by marking cultural distances between herself, as having class respectability, and Roma and Eastern European migrants, as being dirty, disrespectful and feckless.

Sarah’s experiences of spatial stigma and devaluation inform how she thinks about different political parties and how she forms her political subjectivities. The extract presented below suggests a less certain or conflicted sense of political position taking; as well as elements of good-sense (Crehan, 2016) in negotiating alternative political representation:

> Joe: Which way do you tend to vote?
>
> Sarah: I think it's Labour, yeah.
>
> Joe: Is there anything in particular about Labour that you like or dislike?
>
> Sarah: It is hard to know who can sort it out and who to believe isn't it, I think it is worse than it has ever been.
>
> Joe: What sort of politicians do you tend to listen to?
>
> Sarah: Apart from when he is being racist Farage makes a lot of sense to me sometimes…I wouldn't go along with all those, what are they called the EDL, the English Defence League that is just wrong, but some things.
>
> Joe: What sort of things do you tend to agree with him on?
>
> Sarah: Just that immigration has got definitely out of hand.

An important point which needs to be emphasised is that Sarah identifies problems with Farage’s politics but distinguishes a concern over immigration as not inherently racist. Her understanding of local immigration adds further nuance:

> Joe: Do you think it has been quite a locally influenced decision that you voted to leave or national as well?

> Sarah: A bit of both for me actually. I do understand that there are people that can come and live here, and they seek asylum, I get that because they are coming from these countries where it is just horrific and they are trying, the majority of them are trying to make a better life. But this particular group that are around here they are not working, the council have already told us they are getting their houses paid for, we see it probably at least once, twice a week where the landlords are banging on the door for their money. Erm...I don't know, we are just being told that they are poor all the time, but they are in the bookies aren't they around the corner, in and out, in and out.

The starting point for Sarah's understandings of immigration – based on good-sense social and political discourses (e.g., asylum seekers are deserving of universal support) – are eroded by her lived experiences of immigration. More common-sense narratives associated with fecklessness and cultural lack seem to better correspond to Sarah's interpretation of local immigration. Living in a stigmatised neighbourhood where the causes of that stigma are attributed to concentrated and localised immigration has, for Sarah, had the effect of bolstering a political standpoint which is more critical of immigration, and which values a position on the EU (Brexit) that has claimed to be able to offer change.

6.4.3 Yasmin

Yasmin is a 55-year-old British Pakistani woman who has lived in Burngreave for over two decades. She is a second-generation migrant who currently works as a homemaker, having previously undertaken work as an interpreter (speaking Urdu and Punjabi). Throughout her account Yasmin is critical of local government and speaks of long-term underfunding within the area; she plays an active role in the community to try and make it a better place to live. An extended extract from her account tells us more about her experiences of local change:

> Joe: How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?
>
> Yasmin: Err...I have lived here 25 years.
>
> Joe: On [street name]?
>
> Yasmin: I lived at, in [adjoining neighbourhood] for a good few years before I moved up to [current neighbourhood] and I thought it was the bees' knees because the road was very nice, it was clean. The roads were tree lined with lovely blossom trees and it felt like I had moved up a notch. It was a nice house we had. After a few years we had an extension and we had a kitchen extension and the houses

were all nice and neat, the gardens were all prim and proper and beautifully laid out. It seemed a nice place to live.

Joe: And then it changed?

Yasmin: It has changed slowly over the last twenty years. But I think it has changed particularly this last five to ten years.

Joe: Ok. What sort of changes?

Yasmin: The school is just full of Eastern European migrants; I know they have got to live somewhere and go somewhere but it's changed the perspective. I don't know whether it, it seems dirtier, there is litter everywhere, it seems like people haven't got a sense of pride in where they live.

Neighbourhoods and attachment to place are significant in the way we generate social distinction (Savage et al. 2005) and allow for the negotiation of a sense of respectability (Watt, 2006). However, what this extract also highlights is how 'belonging' as a relationship between habitus and field is fluid and processual rather than fixed; it can shift in response to different social changes that make places more or less tolerable.

As a result of localised immigration, Yasmin suggests that she is now "stuck living where we are living" by virtue of the falling value of her house, something she attributes to immigration. She speaks of immigration as a classed issue which plays out within working-class rather than middle-class neighbourhoods; later in her interview she spoke to me about the impact's immigration has had upon local services:

Joe: You said the area has got worse, erm, do you have a specific example of what has got worse and when that happened?

Yasmin: Well, I am going to be really racist and prejudiced, it happened when err, the doors were opened to let other people from other countries in. I am not specifically going to say who…they were all squashed into this area you know. Housing, the schools, everything suffered. The doctor's surgery you can't get an appointment for love nor money, you have to be dying...literally. Erm, it's just made things really difficult.

The way Yasmin speaks about localised immigration takes from dominant political and common-sense discourses used to blame the oversubscription and underfunding of public services on greater demand generated by the proliferation of underserving populations, such as migrants and other white 'underclass' groups (Tyler, 2013). Interviews for this thesis were conducted at the end of an unprecedented period of public sector funding cuts and articulations of this kind

may take from discourses produced through the parallel project of neoliberal common-sense which has attempted to garner consent for welfare reforms by blaming ‘uncontrolled’ migration.

This way of thinking about others is counterpoised to an understanding of herself, and the perceptions of her, as a different type of migrant. Yasmin recalls an interesting conversation she had in her neighbourhood which illuminates more clearly how classificatory struggles can be about class and citizenship simultaneously:

> Yasmin: Somebody said something to me a couple of weeks ago…we were just standing at the bus stop, and she got talking and she said, 'that's one thing about you love, you Pakistanis when you came over you were hardworking, you didn't give anybody any trouble' she said 'these, so-and-so's have come over and they are making a mess of the area, the street, they are standing on street corners, they're rowdy, they're boozy you know'.

The themes within this extract seem to take from a neoliberal conception of citizenship which divides people on the basis of their economic and cultural values, often reduced to labour market participation (Makinen, 2017). Despite being said by someone else; the significance of this exchange is derived from the way Yasmin uses it to reassert the “contours of respectable citizenship” (Makinen, 2017: 218) and to create distance between herself and less desirable migrant groups in the area who she thinks cause trouble.

Yasmin voted to leave the EU because of the series of social problems she has experienced and witnessed in her neighbourhood, but now regrets her decision:

> Joe: So, you voted to leave?
>
> Yasmin: Yeah. But at the time you voted on what you thought was right.
>
> Joe: What did you think was right?
>
> Yasmin: Well, they said all the money we will save that will go into education and the health service, which is a big lie. And with immigration.

In a similar way to Jean, the way she explicates her leave voting regret suggests a more cynical view of Brexit and the extent to which it can deliver real material change in her life. This is not about her voting justification per se, but about the likelihood that the extent of immigration will change as a result of Brexit.

6.5 Class and Cosmopolitanism in Classificatory Struggles

Of the 28 interviewees within this project, nearly a third (8) voted to remain in the EU referendum. Only one participant was selected for discussion in this section (Hazel) because of the way an interesting and novel finding is most aptly and clearly expressed throughout her account (there are more dispersed and fragmented examples of this explored in other accounts, see subsection 7.4). Further, remain voters are a smaller group and are therefore given less weight. Hazel articulates her political subjectivities as characterised by progressive political attitudes; these are framed as a marker of class legitimacy and are deployed in struggles to accrue value by denigrating 'others'. Hazel distinguishes herself from the working-class using these symbolic markers. Her classificatory struggles are informed by lived experiences in higher and lower income neighbourhoods and these generate a series of (sometimes contradictory) views and attitudes which then crystallise in her vote to remain in the EU. Leave voting is associated with white, working-class racists and remain voting is seen to be the more progressive and cosmopolitan voting choice.

Name	Age	Residency	Ethnicity	Education	Work	Income	Vote
Hazel	55	3 years Selby	White British	Degree	Unemployed disability	£10-15k	Remain

6.5.1 Hazel

Hazel is a 55-year-old White British woman that has lived in the Selby research site for the past three years. She has one of the highest levels of education in the sample having obtained a degree and has previously worked as a secondary school teacher. Hazel is currently unemployed because of her ill health and receives a form of disability benefit as her main source of income. Hazel's account is one which repeatedly frames her own experiences as legitimate, respectable and normal; she reasserts her middle-class identity through a form of distinction that – in sometimes contradictory ways – exists in relation to the supposed otherness of the working-class (Lawler, 2005). What can be said of

Hazel's politics, broadly speaking, is that she values redistribution and "trying to level the playing field a bit" (Hazel); she is against the cutting of welfare funding; and she is pro-immigration, pro-Europe and pro-environment. This is set against a range of different comments in which she characterises the white working-class as having children for economic gain, being feckless, cliquey, an 'underclass,' uneducated and narrow-minded.

Hazel was brought up in a middle-class privately-owned home, she was "one of four kids, they [her parents] very much loved each other and that's how they had four kids. Rather than thinking 'oh we will get rich if we have four kids'" (Hazel). She believes her political attitudes were transmitted through her family and informed by the educational trajectory of her parents, who both attended university.

As part of Hazel's political orientation, a contradiction seems to exist between the need for redistributionist economics and the cultural value of the working-class more generally:

> Hazel: Since education, and it is a wonderful thing, is getting more open to all, you are getting people in professional jobs who are the first professional layer in their family. This makes me sound as if I think they are bad values, but they are carrying their values forward...I am sounding like a snob aren't I... Err I don't know if you ever saw that film about the football hooligans, they were estate agents and solicitors, but they were Millwall fans and they were bastards...But you know there they were *supposedly* professional people, but they were out of the gutter at the same time. I think you are getting more and more upwardly mobile, that is the word isn't it, and they are still harbouring some of the cliquey (sighs), cliquey behaviour of White British people.

Evidence suggests that occupational mobility is lower today than it was for Hazel's parents' generation, and income mobility has declined at the same time (Social Mobility Commission, 2022). However, the reason why Hazel has these views seems to be about a concern over the increasing proximity of working-class values. This is partly determined by her own economic circumstances and downward class trajectory which has cut physical distances between herself and working-class people by living in the same neighbourhood.

What can be observed in the series of extracts that follow is a sense of disjuncture between habitus as a product of its field of origin (Bourdieu, 2018) and habitus when it is forced to negotiate a field alien to it. Hazel spent over twenty years

living in a council estate in York, where she brought up her children, after this she moved to an outlying village in the Selby area for several years – which is of the 10% least deprived in the UK – before moving to the case study site three years ago. She thinks of herself as being 'middle-class' but having an understanding of "how people, ordinary folk, are you know" (Hazel).

Hazel has grown acutely aware, rather than accepting, of class differences. In a discussion centring upon her experiences of living in Selby, a selective form of class hatred is evident in her valorisation of non-British residents:

> Hazel: It is quiet generally, there is no rowdy people. There is a lot of Eastern Europeans as well and they seem to have a more family orientated lifestyle, err…you rarely hear children playing on their own or just with other children, they play at home and stuff. I love it. You can pretend you are on holiday sometimes if you sit in the back garden and you can hear voices and languages, I have no idea what they are, but you know you sort of think 'oh crikey' it's not screaming and shouting, 'you little shit come here' (laughs). As you can probably tell I am very pro-Europe.

This is not only a classed account. Hazel's othering draws upon a racialised conception of white, British, working-class identities that has a long history of excluding and marginalising working-class people by devaluing "the quality of their whiteness" (Haylett, 2001: 352).

Hazel's justification for voting to remain in the EU is partially determined by the symbolic value of Europeanness (c.f. Makinen, 2017) and the otherness of a white working-class whom she positions as abject (Tyler, 2013) and retrogressive (Lawler, 2005) and to have homogenously voted to leave. Hazel derides leave voters as being racist and concerned only with immigrants 'taking British jobs' and dismisses their claims as exaggerated and intolerant:

> Hazel: I have seen interviews on the television with people 'oh they are coming here taking our jobs' (mocking tone) blah blah blah you know, other areas similarly I have seen 'oh it is not Britain anymore'. You know, every other shop is Polish or...come on get real, it is not.
>
> Joe: If you were to make a list in order of priority as to why you voted remain, what would your reasons be?
>
> Hazel: Why shouldn't we be able to have freedom of movement you know, I know immigration is an issue and I am not saying anybody can come because there is a finite amount of people...The immigration issue that just got my back up straight

away, I think. I think I would vote against Brexit just simply because people were shouting 'oh we have got too many immigrants coming here'.

What is particularly striking about Hazel's extract is that remain voting is understood as more an act of spite against the working-classes than any articulated defence of the European project. In part, Hazel's racialised and classed stigmatisation feels like a way to reclaim value in light of downward social mobility, being unemployed with disabled status, placing her in an often-maligned social group. Hazel's exaltation of the presence of migrants contrasts sharply with the perceptions of localised immigration explored in the previous subsection from Jean, Sarah and Yasmin. The way people arrive at particular interpretations of similar neighbourhood dynamics is, at least in part, derived from practical classed experiences as they are sedimented in habitus. For Hazel this is determined through the socialisation of middle-class legitimacy and cosmopolitan values in her childhood, which were maintained in her efforts to disassociate from 'others' whilst living on council estates.

6.6 Discussion and Analysis

6.6.1 Hysteresis as an Effect of Capitalist Restructuring in the Neoliberal Era

This subsection has developed linkages between habitus formed by and from social and economic structures of the past; the values of the past as a way to understand the present; and how the EU represents a target for assorted discontents. A second and related key finding is that enduring economic and social insecurity, precariousness and loss engender a desire and longing for the certainties, experiences and opportunities of the past. Participants exalt a series of values which are seen as more dominant in the past, and more marginalised in the present, because of the associations between these values and times of greater physical, ontological and economic security. In some cases, participant' narratives link together concerns over the loss of British industry and foreign competition, which was seen as representative of better conditions for the working-class. Also, how British governments preside over social and economic policies which are seen to distribute resources and opportunities disproportionately in favour of people from migrant and ethnic minority

backgrounds. They tend to do this by articulating their justifications for voting to leave the EU using common-sense ideas around specific folk-devils and undeserving populations (migrants, young people).

Eddy, Howard, and Mabel experience hysteresis effects because of structural and social changes engendered by the UK's shift to a neoliberal political economy. The main arguments forwarded in this section offer some theoretical synergies to the 'left behind' thesis (Ford and Goodwin, 2017) in terms of the idea that the attitudes and values of older, working-class Britons are different to, and often critical of and criticised by, a younger more liberal electorate. The latter are not necessarily a majority of the electorate, but there is a perception amongst participants that this group have similar values and interests as political elites and this marginalises the interests of the older, white working-class.

Hysteresis effects take two interrelated forms: one is no longer having the labour market competencies appropriate to changed economic opportunities, the other a disjuncture in social attitudes. In terms of the former, hysteresis involved the loss of dominant and valued labour market competencies, skills and qualifications, which has occurred in the context of extensive industrial job losses, the growth of the financial and service sector, and the expansion of Higher Education. Participants' lives tend to be characterised by economic and employment insecurity, material hardships, and falling incomes. As a result, they tend to hold more negative views about their own ability to access economic opportunities and are critical of groups which are perceived to be accessing jobs and resources at their expense.

Those groups who are perceived to have access to resources at the expense of white working-class people are sometimes framed in ways which take from racialised common-sense understandings of a 'racialised social system' (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). The loss of jobs and industry as part of Britain's experience of deindustrialisation and economic restructuring seems to be felt more acutely at the ground level when these losses are perceived to coincide with gains for ethnic and racial groups who have historically been discriminated against. In some cases, participants' own sense of insecurity is articulated using racialised discourses about migrants and how they are perceived to be unfairly taking 'British' jobs.

Characterisations of young people as stupid, inept and weak – a snowflake generation – are also frequently used by participants as a way to displace their own sense of insecurity and uncertainty onto a population who are perceived to occupy more advantaged socio-economic positions despite their purported inadequacies. Why Eddy, Howard and Mabel respond to experiences of hysteresis through rearticulations of an industrial past (Rhodes, 2013) may owe to the role nostalgia and memory plays in "creating a common class identity" (Meier and Aytekin, 2019: 101) and how industrialism is perceived to represent stability and security (Strangleman et al. 2013). This common class identity has a racial and national element to it in the way that the white working-class experience and understand economic, social and political change in a way which is conditioned by racialised discourses and ideologies used to stabilise hegemonic relations over time.

In terms of hysteresis as a disjuncture of social attitudes, Eddy, Howard and Mabel do not adapt to social value changes, continuing to champion long-held dispositions and outlooks (c.f. Strand and Lizardo, 2017). It could be argued that referendum voting justifications are formed in response to, and resistance against, these forms of social marginalisation. The referendum gave people like Eddy, Howard and Mabel a vehicle to legitimately express long-held dispositions and outlooks; voting to leave the EU is tied up with a series of value changes which participants think Brexit may halt or reverse. This seems to be about making nationalism and patriotism more acceptable, returning to a less politically correct society, making younger people more respectful of authority and less ungrateful of their economic privileges, and building stronger class solidarities and forms of organisation.

These two types of hysteresis effects are interrelated and seem to occur simultaneously, connected by neoliberalism's greater focus on individuals and identity and the way neoliberal common-sense focuses on economic valuableness (Krivonos, 2018; Makinen, 2017). In terms of the latter, these changes have left generally older, working-class, less well-educated voters feeling increasingly marginalised because they lack skills and competencies and have different outlooks to those entering the labour market more recently. As they emerge together, hysteresis effects of social and economic disjuncture

compound the insecurity and precariousness of working-class groups. When individuals do not have the resources to navigate change successfully (such as through retraining or reskilling) or have the means to insulate themselves from change (by taking an early retirement, selling property or assets, or having a comfortable pension) hysteresis effects are felt more acutely. This feeds into voting proclivities in the sense that Brexit is understood as a way of reclaiming values of the past where participants' lives felt more economically and socially secure.

6.6.2 Responding to Experiences of Immigration and Stigma in Marginalised Neighbourhoods

The second subsection draws upon the accounts of Jean, Sarah, and Yasmin who each share concerns over local immigration and the symbolic effects it has had upon their neighbourhood over time. This subsection further develops a biographical form of analysis which explores how life experiences of changing neighbourhood dynamics are sedimented as attitudes in habitus and how these dispositions and subjectivities then inform voting decisions. It also responds to Pattison's (2022) assertion, following Slater (2017, cited in Pattison, 2022), that more work is needed to uncover how territorial stigma can be co-produced by those 'below' as well as those 'above', and how stigma can invoke complex and multi-layered responses. Stigma is not only imposed by those in more powerful social positions, but something lived through everyday experiences, remade and resisted against.

Resistance can involve displacing abjection onto others (Jeffery et al. 2020) as a way to reinstate value, and this seems to be the main way in which participants struggled against dominant classifications. This is most clearly evidenced by Jean and Sarah, who make extensive efforts to disassociate from the stigmatising reputations of their neighbourhood by denigrating the behaviours of migrants and restating the symbolic importance of their own class respectability (Watt, 2006). References to a well-kept home, their own social values and dispositions, and their status as full-time workers are drawn upon as evidence of a misrecognised value. These feelings and associations provide a context to their referendum

voting proclivities in the sense that interviewees voted to leave the EU as they thought this would reduce Eastern European immigration in their area and mean their partially idealised and nostalgic visions of the neighbourhood could be recreated.

This subsection has shown how attention needs to be paid to the temporality of territorial stigmas and how neighbourhoods can undergo fast-paced changes which become the basis of new and negative reputations. Dislocation can emerge when reputations of place do not match the way residents think about their own classed identities and the values and characteristics on which they had elected to live in a neighbourhood. In a broad sense, what started out as 'elective' belonging (Savage et al. 2005) can become more 'prescribed' (Jeffery, 2018) through various social changes. Jean, Sarah and Yasmin all expressed how the perceptions they initially had of the neighbourhood – strong community relations, a clean environment, and low levels of anti-social behaviour – were undermined through the effects of immigration.

Roma and Eastern European migrants were spoken about in ways which tended to racialize and denigrate their economic contribution in the local area (see Makinen, 2017); as entering the country to claim benefits rather than to work and thought of as being dirty, rude and aggressive. A range of different social problems in the area were recast as problems of migrant culture. Participants experienced these local problems as a corollary of the racialisation of Roma migrants as a 'waste population' (Tyler, 2013) which legitimises the withdrawal of state provisions from them, forces them to live in overcrowded and often unsanitary conditions and entrenches their marginalisation as valueless (Powell and Lever, 2017). As an abject population, Roma are classified in terms of disgust and disease: as a group that "deplete the value of others through social contagion" (Skeggs, 2011: 503). By living in the same neighbourhood, participants' perceptions of their own worth as more economically and culturally valuable citizens is threatened by the physical and social proximity of migrant and particularly Roma residents.

In some instances, participants would articulate a form of nostalgia which looked back towards how the neighbourhood used to be, as a way to reassert the legitimacy of their social dispositions, demarcate status distinctions between

themselves and 'undesirable' others and connect them to a time when they felt greater security. This chimes with the findings of Nayak (2019), who shows how territorial stigma can be responded to by reinscribing the value of place, often through articulations of local history and past community successes. The significance of nostalgia in this respect is the extent to which value is inscribed in the past place images that participants conjure and how they use these counter-classifications as a way to legitimate their reasons for moving here in the first place (Jean and Sarah). Interviewees sought to reaffirm values of the past through their vote to leave; they (initially) understood Brexit as a way to reduce local immigration and, resultantly, make their neighbourhoods of greater economic and symbolic value or simply nicer and more respectable places to live.

6.6.3 Struggles For Classification through Class and Cosmopolitanism

This subsection draws on the account of Hazel to highlight a less well researched facet of the referendum result. Justifications for voting to remain are, in cases such as this, constructed within a symbolic economy which has a long history of attributing value to middle-class tastes and attitudes, whilst delegitimising the working-class as "holding back the vanguard of modernity" (Skeggs, 2016: 2). For example, Andreouli (2019) conducted nine focus groups with 38 participants from diverse socio-economic and class backgrounds and with diverse voting intentions in the month prior to the referendum, to explore constructions of Europe and Europeanness. She finds that economically advantaged, younger, remain supporters tended to think of Europe and the EU as culturally superior to Britain and this, the author argues, reflects the cosmopolitan tastes of middle-class people (Andreouli, 2019). The argument presented here is different in the sense that Hazel is older, and her political subjectivities can be more explicitly thought of as demonstrating the *relationality* of class-based symbolic distinction.

In a series of articles, Lawler (2005; 2008; 2012) illuminates how the middle-class are able to claim progressiveness as antithetical to the hyper-white working-class who are not only racist but lack the intellectual ability to think in terms of social reform. Accordingly, I argue that a pro-EU political position becomes associated with the supposed progressivism of a middle-class respectability and

diametrically opposed to the retrogressive, hyper-whiteness of leave voters who are misrecognised as being inherently working-class and racist. Within academic commentary leave voters, thought to be working-class and white, are foregrounded as lacking education (Zhang, 2017), as being xenophobic and racist (Patel and Connelly, 2019; Swami et al. 2018) and as being reactionary rather than rational (Zavala et al. 2017: 12). Despite important empirical work challenging the connection between xenophobia and working-classness (Flemmen and Savage, 2017), common-sense linkages between the two continue to exist within everyday political discourses.

Earlier in this chapter, and in later chapters (Chapter 7), my analysis challenges the supposed cultural link between working-classness and xenophobia by showing how experiences of the deleterious effects of capitalist restructuring processes played a role in the way working-class participants thought of and spoke about different social groups and different social changes. A small minority of working-class people are openly racist and xenophobic. However, a much more common finding across the sample is that classed experiences of economic marginalisation and decline makes working-class people more susceptible to common-sense discourses and forms of othering which see immigration and immigrants as having negative economic effects on their lives. This is further compounded by an absence of alternative political discourses and knowledge which are found through union organisation and less of a focus on class politics by mainstream parties in the last twenty-five years (Evans and Tilley, 2017).

When faced with downward class trajectory, those originating from more economically secure class backgrounds may also be increasingly susceptible to common-sense narratives which seek to denigrate those in less symbolically valuable social groups. This does not preclude the possibility of those in secure, rising class trajectories also being susceptible to common-sense, but rather emphasises how common-sense has tended to be used by political elites to explain inequalities, poverty and national and personal decline. Hazel, a former teacher but now unemployed, occupies a position in social space which is situated as a subcategory of the culturally dominant (Atkinson, 2017). Positioning in social space maps onto political space in a way that we can expect Hazel to support immigration, income redistribution, environmental sustainability and EU

unification (Atkinson, 2017) – this remains true. What is interesting about Hazel's account is the way she articulates pro-EU and pro-immigration attitudes as a way to stigmatise working-class people, and simultaneously mark distance between herself and what she sees as low status others. Having lived on a council estate for an extended period of time Hazel has seemingly grown more aware of how her own social and political values do not match those frequently heard and seen in the everyday interactions of her neighbourhood.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has used a narrative-style analysis to begin to think about how different groups have experienced processes of class re/de-composition *over time*. It takes a more wide-angle and biographical approach to explore the effects of capitalist restructuring in the neoliberal era, how these effects are lived on the ground and the way past experiences are sedimented as dispositions which inform the formation of political subjectivities. In the first two subsections, participants draw upon narratives about the transformation or destruction of real or partially idealised landscapes (Meier and Aytekin, 2019) and memories of the industrial past (Clark and Gibbs, 2020; Rhodes, 2013) as reference points to understand formations of class, race and nation in the present. Engagement with the industrial past is not simply "smokestack nostalgia" (Rhodes, 2013: 59) but part of the fabric of place-based and class-based identities which continues to hold cultural value for many social groups (*ibid*).

In subsection 6.3 articulations of the past are not excessively sentimental expressions or fantasy but claims to a time where there were more jobs, better working-class political representation and stronger workplace communities. In the absence of strong unions and mainstream political parties with the interests of the working-class at their centre, understanding new institutional, political and social values is made more difficult. Historical change experienced by the white working-class is made specific by virtue of the intersection of class and race. Decline and political marginalisation seems to be felt more acutely because white working-class participants have historically been better represented by unions, accessed better jobs and had greater political representation from political parties

than those from ethnic minority backgrounds. When faced with a series of changes which conflict with their experiences and values of the past (hysteresis) they feel tension and conflict. The way they then express this conflict is through political subjectivities which are at least partially conditioned by racialised discourses of Britishness and deservingness.

To bring both forms of hysteresis together in a sentence, the EU and its supporters epitomised values (social liberalism, globalisation and political correctness) antithetical to interviewees' own standpoints and it seems that the UK's EU accession is conflated with processes of restructuring playing out in the neoliberal era (loss of industries, labour market restructuring), voting to leave was interpreted to be a way to return to a period of time before this decline.

Hysteresis effects were more prevalent in the accounts of interviewees living in Selby than in Sheffield and tended to be expressed by those that were white, older, who had either left the labour market through ill-health retirement (Howard), had recently been made redundant and had taken up part-time insecure work (Eddy), or had consistently worked in low-paid roles (Mabel). Both personal position within the local labour market and the buoyancy of this labour market seem important here. All of those who expressed hysteresis effects in Selby tended to have worked or continue to work in the town itself, where there are less jobs per working-age resident (0.73) than in Sheffield (0.82) and less sectoral variation (Nomis, 2021).

In subsection 6.4 participants resist stigma by displacing abjection onto others (Jeffery et al. 2020) and also by rescripting place (Nayak, 2019) – reasserting the value of place through references to 'what it used to be like'. For Jean, Sarah and Yasmin, it is argued that immigration has lessened the symbolic value they attach to their neighbourhood, weakened place-based attachments and disrupted claims to class distinction articulated through space (Bourdieu, 1985). The three aforementioned interviewees are not as poor as Eddy, Howard and Mabel and this may explain why they are less focussed on economic decline and more on the symbolic value of their neighbourhood. They voted for Brexit because they thought this would lessen immigration in their neighbourhood and less immigration was thought of as creating a more symbolically and physically

valuable place to live. This seems to be at least partially specific to those living in Sheffield.

Other interviewees – with some from Selby – have suggested that higher levels of localised immigration lessens the respectability of place and neighbourhood (see subsection 8.3). However, one key difference between the two case study sites was the perceived effects of immigration on house prices. The Sheffield case study site is more ethnically diverse than Selby and has higher levels of immigration. Not only this, whilst both areas have witnessed some Eastern European migration, Burngreave is different in terms of Roma-Slovak migration and the concentration of these groups in relatively small areas of particular neighbourhoods, which seems to add to interviewees' perceptions of migrants 'taking over'. How this is related to house prices by interviewees in their justifications for voting to leave is an effect of three parallel and somewhat interrelated processes: there being greater migrant numbers arriving in Burngreave since the A10 accession, the concentration of these migrants in particular areas and more (unwanted) opportunities for interaction with them, and the decline and poor recovery of house prices in the area since the GFC.

The final subsection (6.5) is novel in the way it takes a critical approach to remain voting justifications and how it illuminates more clearly how pro-immigration/EU attitudes can be used to stigmatise hyper-white working-class leavers. This is significant given that Hazel perpetuates symbolic/cultural distinctions as a way to acquire value in the context of her own declining economic and social circumstances.

One final conclusion which deserves to be highlighted is how class remains "a popular discursive vehicle" (Atkinson, 2010: 161) used to speak about identity, inequality and politics across participants' accounts. This is particularly important in light of the long-term expulsion of class from political rhetoric and underscores the continued significance of class as a key dividing line in contemporary British society (Atkinson, 2010; Evans and Tilley, 2017). Specific examples include Howard's conceptualisation of class as an identity conferred by manual work (p.4) and Mabel's references to class as struggle (p.6) (see also Jeffery et al. 2020). As this chapter has demonstrated, classed experiences are internalised as dispositions that guide the formation of particular political attitudes. Brexit has to

be understood in this context: voting choices are guided by political subjectivities which have been shaped by the wider and changing UK political-economy since 1979.

Three thematic analysis chapters follow. They differ to the narrative analysis conducted here in the way that I focus more narrowly on a series of emerging themes (see Chapter 2) and how these themes emerge across a wider range of participants' accounts. Chapter 7 explores how participants have experienced classed struggle from above and suggests that the roll out of processes of class/economic restructuring (deindustrialisation, neoliberalisation) occurred in parallel to the UK's EU accession. Conflation between the two means people sometimes vote to leave the EU because of concerns over structural problems originating in domestic politics. Chapter 8 focuses on the way anti-welfare and anti-immigration common-sense discourses are drawn upon by participants to frame their political subjectivities and how these discourses repress structural understandings of class-based problems. I argue that the devaluation of (some) migrants and benefit claimants through conceptions of cultural value as economic value (Makinen, 2017) informs the way interviewees voted to leave the EU as a way to lessen immigration and curtail undeserving groups' access to benefits and jobs. Chapter 9 focuses on long-term experiences of political marginalisation (which interrelates with and compounds economic marginalisation) and argues that in the absence of solutions proposed by Britain's mainstream political parties to the country's problems, national populist common-sense discourses gain support. Interviewees saw Brexit as an opportunity for real social and economic change and as a form of pushback against groups with values and beliefs they understood as marginalising and silencing their own interests (political elites, social liberals, 'woke' groups and 'snowflakes').

7.0 The Winners and Losers of Capitalist Restructuring in the Neoliberal Era

7.1 Introduction

This chapter concerns the harmful and violent effects that capitalist restructuring processes have had upon working-class people and how their experiences and understandings of, for example, deindustrialisation, neoliberalism and austerity, are important to the way they form their political subjectivities. The shift to neoliberal capitalism can be understood as “a project to restore class dominance to sectors that saw their fortunes threatened by the ascent of social democratic endeavours in the aftermath of the Second World War” (Harvey, 2007: 22). This entails the restructuring of institutions which underpin class domination: dismantling trade unions, deregulating the labour market and reforming the welfare state from a system providing a safety net to one which breeds insecurity and stigma (Gallas, 2015; Tyler, 2013). The core argument of this chapter is that the shift to financial capitalism and its deleterious effects in the UK occur in parallel to accession to the EU which seems to encourage or intensify a conflation or elision of the two. The coincidental timing of this is crucial: the decline of manufacturing and assaults on organised labour could not be blamed on the EU had membership been significantly earlier or later than the 1970s.

Fetzer (2019) and Jessop (2017; 2018) have made important attempts to explain the EU referendum result as an effect of a series of economic processes playing out over time. Fetzer (2019) argues that political-economic processes “activated already existing grievances and resentment” (Fetzer, 2019: 3883) and that increased support for UKIP, and later Brexit, was determined by austerity policies, resulting in an anti-establishment backlash. This argument is plausible, but Fetzer (2019) does not do enough to explain the significance of ‘already existing grievances’ and how people’s political attitudes have developed and crystallised over a much longer period of time than post-2010. Jessop takes a similar stance in explicating the roots of Brexit as a form of “nationalist and populist blowback” (Jessop, 2018: 1730), but he goes further than Fetzer (2019) to provide a more historicised exposition of neoliberal restructuring (from Thatcher to Brexit) and its uneven geographical effects. Jessop (2017; 2018) argues that Brexit represents

a form of national-populist blowback against the uneven developments of neoliberal political and economic restructuring processes (see subsection 2.2.2). The author's contributions are particularly compelling, but his work is entirely theoretical rather than informed by empirical insights.

The purpose of this chapter is partly a response to these shortcomings. It takes a more spatial and temporal approach to understand how participants either directly experience or understand the playing out of class struggles from above over the last forty years and how these experiences shape their political subjectivities and how they voted in the EU referendum. Subsection 7.2 explores leave voting justifications which highlight foreign competition and its impact upon British manufacturing. Implicit within participants' extracts is a feeling of long-term insecurity and a sense that Britain's industrial heyday represented a time of greater security and better opportunities for working-class people. Subsection 7.3 concerns how participants understand the EU as part of a neoliberal political-economic system which further entrenches inequality and operates in the interests of the capitalist class. In nearly all cases, participants do not explicitly name 'neoliberalism' but the processes they identify can be seen to be representative of neoliberal political economy and its classed and violent effects.

The final subsection (7.4) explores a series of extracts from leave and remain voters who each experience forms of political state-crafting and inequalities but arrive at different referendum voting decisions. This distinction seems to be at least partially determined by the extent to which participants identify with the symbolic and cultural value of European national identity and how cosmopolitanism is sometimes used by remain voters as a way to mark class distances. The discussion section firstly makes broad links across the chapter as a whole, before moving onto a more specific thematic analysis of each empirical subsection in turn.

7.2 The Loss of British Manufacturing and its Classed Effects

This subsection suggests that votes to leave the EU are related to the loss of British manufacturing and extractive industries, with the mining, steel and automotive sectors being frequently highlighted as an example of decline across

interviewees' accounts. This is not just about deindustrialisation and the 'body count' (Cowie and Heathcott, 2003) of job losses, but the loss of ownership and increasing foreign control of formerly British assets and what this means in a symbolic sense. In subsections 6.3 and 9.3, analysis demonstrates how the leave vote was shaped by economic and political marginalisation: in the absence of solutions to the UK's problems from mainstream political parties, participants drew upon partially idealised recollections of the past to construct more common-sense and communitarian/conservative re-imaginings of change in the present. The analyses developed here are related but distinguishable in the way that they focus more specifically upon deindustrialisation and its symbolic function in reflecting the declining fortunes of the UK economy, and how this is related to the personal experiences of marginalisation and insecurity articulated by participants as dominant characteristics of their lives today.

When asked about their voting justifications, Paul and Tony, who are both leave voters and live in Selby, told me:

> Paul: Because we seem to have, everything we have sold, our coal mines everything you know but we are, I don't even know if we have any steelworks left and I think that is up for debate (laughs). Everything seems to be owned by foreign companies do you know, it would be nice to have something that is British again, or Scottish, Welsh or whatever. (Male, 39, White British, Income £0-5k p.a).

> Tony: Well even the car industry, that, how many different cars were made in this country? I mean in the Midlands there was British Leyland, there was Jaguar, there was Rolls Royce at Crewe and Bentley, and Aston Martin in Birmingham. They have all gone; every one of them has gone. (Male, 74, White British, Income unknown).

Paul and Tony have never worked in an industrial occupation, nor have they any direct experience of job loss because of deindustrialisation. However, this does not mean deindustrialisation is not important to them or that it does not affect them. The wider regional story of deindustrialisation where Paul and Tony live now and previously, has shaped the way they make sense of the world around them; industry holds a symbolic function as a source of working-class national pride.

Tony has lived in Selby for around ten years: prior to this he had lived and grown up in the Midlands, an area known for iron and steel making and the production of motor vehicles. Paul moved to the area six years ago from York, a city known

for its production of locomotives and carriages and confectionary at the Terry's and Rowntree's sites. In his interview, Tony, a former haulage driver now retired, links a decline in employment opportunities with the loss of manufacturing jobs and an overreliance on importing foreign goods and materials (such as coal). Paul and Tony seem to emphasise the loss or changes in ownership of industry as symbolic of the broader decline of economic opportunities for working-class people and with it, less security and certainty.

Other participants have had more direct experiences of job loss. David (Leave, Sheffield, Income £40-50k p.a) is a 44-year-old White British man who has worked in a steelworks since leaving secondary school and he currently holds the title of 'roller' (a position he tells me is similar to a supervisory role, with less of the bureaucracy involved). He has worked in the same steel mill for the last seventeen years. David has been made redundant three times throughout his career and tends to think of his job as insecure despite his length of service. When asked about the size of the firm he works for, he tells me:

> David: Well, it is about err there is a plant...I will just briefly explain this there is a plant […] err which is the melting shop, I work in the rod mill […] which is just down here. There is about 120 people who work in the rod mill. All in all, there is a rod mill, melting shop, bar finishing plant and a warehouse err there is probably about 600 in total now. But when I started there was about 2,900 worked there.

Like Paul and Tony, throughout David's interview there is a sense that opportunities in industry have declined since its heyday when, as other parts of his interview attest, class relations were more favourable and working-class people had access to better jobs and more union representation. But what comes out more strongly in the way he constructs his decision to vote to leave is a sense of anger and frustration at the subjugation of working-class people over the last forty years:

> David: This [Brexit] has been coming to this day, that something like this would happen. Since Thatcher's day when people are being marginalised this, that and the other and Cameron and other old Etonian educated beyond his intelligence bastards, with an arrogance to match, he thought it was nailed on that they were going to win. And when it come back, well there you go, they should have seen the writing on the wall.

David's comment and palpable anger is both about the economic impacts of deindustrialisation and neoliberal restructuring *and* the forms of political

marginalisation these processes have produced (the latter is explored more fully in Chapter 9).

Kay (Selby, Female, 54, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Mabel (Selby, Female, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) are both leave voters and understand the EU referendum as divided along geographical lines: the south voting to remain and the north to leave. This wasn't the case (Dorling, 2016) but their argument seems to be informed by their experiences of insecurity. These experiences are linked to wider perceptions of the benefits and beneficiaries of economic policy as being unevenly concentrated in more prosperous communities in the south of England. Their justifications for voting to leave the European Union are articulated through identity-making practices which centre on claims of an industrial, northern working-class who laboured to provide the resources that underpinned southern affluence, yet shouldered the burden of deindustrialisation:

> Joe: Do you think the EU referendum has caused tensions between different groups in society?
>
> Kay: They have always been there. The North-South divide.
>
> Joe: Do you think the south voted remain mainly?
>
> Mabel: Yeah, because they are benefitting more aren't they. They benefit more than us up north. It really is a big divide, and it is going to get bigger, I think.
>
> Joe: What do you think it is about the north, what don't we get?
>
> Mabel: It is because we are mainly hard workers, we have always been workers. We provided them with the coal and the wool and everything and they just sat down there in their little posh houses. Working as businessmen and business owners and stuff like that. I am not a liker of southerners.

The way Kay and Mabel spatialise class relations could be argued to be a form of common-sense which diverts attention away from broader class solidarities and towards particular geographies and identities, excluding large sections of the working-class.

In a different part of his interview, Tony tells me how he thinks there were more secure and better paying jobs in Britain before joining the EU:

> Tony: I voted to leave because at my age, and most of my generation, I should say 90 per cent...knew what it was like before the European Union. Err, we had dealings all over the world…and there was lots of manufacturing in this country

> and when it was stamped 'Made in England' or 'Made in Great Britain' it used to be the envy of the world. No manufacturing at all now. I don't think we will ever get back to how we were...they say we've, err...how can I put this, there is less people out of work than there has ever been, but we never had foodbanks in my day, there was never people that went to work and had their money made up by the government because they was on lower income.

There is a level of sympathy and class solidarity with poor people at work here: Tony challenges the idea that working-class people are better off because they are in employment. He uses nostalgia as a way to rearticulate “shared memories of past spaces” and to express resistance to the “changing appearance of the landscape” (Meier and Aytekin, 2019: 109). This is not about the *physical* landscape as Meier and Aytekin’s (2019) study is, but more to do with abstracted feelings of pride which were invested in a manufacturing nation and the symbolic and material value of jobs which were better paying and less insecure. Tony makes direct links between the European Union and deindustrialisation in the UK and his vote to leave is used as a way to reassert a partially idealised recollection of a more affluent past.

Like Tony, Eddy (Selby, Male, 60, White British, Income £5-10k p.a) expresses his vote to leave through references to industry as part of a shared memory of working-class life. Eddy emphasises the symbolic value and pride associated with British-owned industries and hopes leaving the EU will create better opportunities for trade and manufacturing:

> Eddy: I think Britain, I am a proud Yorkshireman, but am not proud of being British. Erm, because I think that, erm, what have we got left in this country, you know, even that car place in Hartlepool or somewhere. They said to the government ‘oh were not going to move, were staying here’. They’re going, another 3,500 jobs, alright it doesn’t happen until 2021 but it is just showing you that this country...But I just feel if we stand alone…I think we will have more trading power.

Eddy appears to be mixing up the Nissan factory in Hartlepool with the closure of the Honda site in Swindon, which saw the loss of 3,500 jobs in 2021. Given that the closure of Honda is at least partly related to Brexit, Eddy’s account is contradictory; part of the way the common-sense story of industrial job loss has been communicated and understood in this country seems to be to blame the EU in the face of competing evidence.

Not everyone in this subsection invests nostalgia and pride in British industry. For some, the cultural and political benefits of EU membership outweighed the potential to protect what is left of British industry by leaving. Hazel (Selby, Female, 55, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) is currently unemployed and receives Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for reasons of ill health. In subsection 6.5, it was shown how Hazel articulated her pro-EU political position as a form of distinction associated with middle-class, progressive values and opposed to the retrogressive white working-class. Going further, Hazel's political dispositions also orient her to a passionate defence of the strength of a shared European culture and identity, and a more cynical and dispassionate view about the loss of industry to foreign competition:

> Joe: What about the EU referendum then, do you want to tell me about you attitudes towards that?
>
> Hazel: I think nationalism breeds Empire and breeds war because you are not us. I think as long as we are part of Europe…I love the French and the Germans, and you know haven't we had enough fallings out. I don't know I just think we are better together. I don't know if that is a valid enough point. I think we are well enough off. It is not like we have some massive manufacturing base to protect anymore, all we are trying to do is stop Toyota shutting things down because it is going to be cheaper for them to work out of Europe instead of out of the EU here. You know that is what I can see. Yeah, I cannot see what they are hoping to achieve.

The reason why Hazel tends to articulate her view of the loss of manufacturing sites in terms of apathy rather than anger or frustration, seems to stem from her own classed experiences. Hazel is a former secondary school teacher and tends to think of herself as being middle-class, having 'liberal' political attitudes and as someone who is 'European' rather than British or English. Her upbringing and occupation could be seen as insulating her from some of the more direct effects of the decline of British industry, but she may also be argued to have had a more rational perspective on the question of Honda jobs.

7.3 Working-Class Interests and the EU

This subsection explores a series of participants' justifications for voting to leave which focus on the EU as part of a neoliberal political-economic system – albeit not always defined directly as such by participants – that works against the

interests of the working-class. Interviewees tend to express a sense of class solidarity with those that are (sometimes like themselves) overworked, underpaid and have endured poverty and hardship; the EU is counterposed to this as an institution complicit in their marginalisation. This subsection is original and unique in the sense that it does not overlap neatly with themes in other chapters. It is about interviewees' criticisms of political-economic restructuring in the neoliberal era and how they relate this to the EU and Brexit. The core argument here is that voting to leave is a good-sense, counter-hegemonic pushback against common-sense explanations of structural inequalities. Political subjectivities of this kind seem to stem from occupational experiences in well organised industries such as coal, steel and the public sector.

Howard (Selby, Income £20-30k) is a 60-year-old White British man who took early retirement from a career as a miner because of work-related ill health. One reason he voted to leave the EU was the decimation of the car and mining industries:

> Howard: You have to go back to the seventies right when we joined, not long after we joined, we started losing jobs you know, car industries, factories. Factories all over the country we started losing and not an eyelid was batted.
>
> Joe: Did Thatcher's policies influence that?
>
> Howard: Not just Thatcher's policies it was European policy […]. It is all wrong. I mean we don't hear anything about Spanish or Italian or frigging French car factories…well actually they are shutting all the pits in Europe now, Spain, Belgium, Holland, France they have shut all the coal pits because they [the EU] are blaming fossil fuels for the climate.

Since the UK's accession to the EU in 1973, a series of 'crises' occurring in parallel – such as the Oil Shocks (1973/74), and the 1976 International Monetary Fund bailout – signalled the beginning of neoliberalism in Britain. These are not effects of the EU, but their timing may have conflated perceptions of EU membership with economic processes which are shaped and intensified by national political decisions and policies (a more detailed overview is provided in Chapter 2), which is at least partially the case for Howard.

In a discussion about his own class identity, Howard characterises the destruction of UK industry as a political and class offensive mediated by the EU. He does not explicitly name neoliberalism, but his extract is evocative of transnational

neoliberal restructuring processes and the way different governments work together to pursue particular class interests:

> Howard: When you think of the bigger picture, I think back and they [the EU] have actually planned all this, that's what I think… Because at the end of the day we are ruled from the European Union…But to me this is actually a third world war, but we are being attacked from within. There is no bullets and bombs this time, its political this time, its world war three but its political it's not physical…If you can go into my mind back to the 70s and start thinking wait a minute, the bastards have done this...planned all this.

As a form of classificatory struggle this seems to be "a political claim to radical equality" (Jeffery et al. 2020: 128); Howard articulates a sense of struggle waged against the EU and its cheerleaders on the basis that it represents a direct assault on working class interests and livelihoods, with the metaphor of war capturing the strength of his feeling. Howard's affinity to a working-class occupational identity provides an important backdrop to his voting justifications, but it is important to remember that it was Thatcher that took on the miners, rather than the EU. This is one example of the way participants project a range of concerns onto the EU for which it may not necessarily be responsible. Elements of good-sense – in this case counter-narratives to neoliberal hegemony – spill over into common-sense discourses which have a singular focus on the EU as the cause of all problems.

David and Ralph offered more Marxist interpretations of class struggle and its implications for voting to leave the European Union. Having been born in the mid-1970s, the majority of David's childhood was one in which Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister. He speaks of his upbringing as characterised by poverty and hardship, something he holds Thatcher accountable for:

> David: I mean I remember right when we were growing up so nineteen eighty-four, eighty-five, I was ten-year-old right, and we had no money at all. […] things were very, very, hard. At that time, all the shops, there was stuff like KwikSave and Pound Saver and that's the only shops that were down there [where he grew up].

Throughout his interview David speaks of Thatcher as orchestrating a series of assaults upon working-class people, their jobs and their institutions as part of a larger project of class recomposition. This was seen as designed to break down the relative strength of the working-class in labour relations at the time. David's

justification for voting to leave is directly related to his experiences of the loss of industrial jobs:

> David: …You could possibly argue, possibly correctly, that I have voted against my economic interests from a jobs point of view, but what I will say to you is that we have been losing our jobs since the late 70s and nobody has given a fuck about it.

The economic and labour market predictions perpetuated by the remain campaign seem to have less purchase when you believe that you have already experienced similar or worse. Given that David has held the same job for the last 17-years, is a union branch secretary, and currently earns between £40,000 and £50,000 per annum, it could be said that his voting proclivities are more representative of a class consciousness and solidarity with working-class people than his own experiences of struggle. However, throughout his interview David speaks of a series of tensions: he emphasises his worries about the prospect of being made redundant again and his own money troubles which use up a large part of his income. These personal fears of economic insecurity come into conflict with his politics.

> David: I thought to myself until the last minute "which way should I vote?", even though my heart and my head were both saying I am a leaver, I have always been a leaver. I was worried from an economic point of view…

This sense of hesitancy and contradiction are absent from most representations of leave voters, who tend to be stigmatised in a way that suggests irrationality and impulsiveness in their voting decisions.

In a similar way, Ralph, a former librarian, makes explicit links between his own politics and a 'Lexit' (left-wing support for Brexit). The referendum provided an outlet for expressing a rejection of neoliberal capitalism, a system that is seen to be legitimated through, and maintained by, principles baked into EU policy. He tells me about his reasons for voting to leave:

> Ralph: The EU first of all is not democratic, these MEPs are a waste of fucking space you know, what do they do, it is run by the commission. And secondly it is a neoliberal organisation especially since Maastricht and Lisbon [treaties], so I don't think there is any reforming it.
>
> Joe: Do you think your class, ethnicity or national identity has had any effect on how you voted in the referendum?

> Ralph: Yeah, sure class does. I voted Lexit because I am against capitalism, it is a way of expressing that.
>
> (Leave, Sheffield, Male, 69, White British, Income (retired) £15-20k p.a).

Librarians are part of a heavily unionised public sector and Ralph tells me that he "was always interested in union work". This appears to have a bearing on the way he expresses his political subjectivities. Ralph seems to reject capitalism because he thinks of himself in Marxist terms as part of the working-class and having class solidarities premised upon anti-capitalist struggle.

However, these sympathies and good-sense analyses of the EU are combined with work to disassociate himself from stereotypes of leavers as racist and insular. When asked about what it is like to live in his neighbourhood, Ralph told me:

> Ralph: […] most of the people on my estate are white and they don't like immigrants, they are quite racist […].
>
> Joe: You mentioned your estate and how people on it tend to be a little bit racist, they objected to the mosque…
>
> Ralph: Yeah. They are Big Brexiteers.

In a different part of his interview, Ralph is more explicit in his concerns:

> Ralph: Momentum, another left-wing organisation, said don't get involved with Lexit as you are just playing along with racists, and I mean it is a fair point you know…

In a similar way to the main argument of subsection 6.5, which showed how voting to remain can be used as a way to mark class distances from 'racist' leavers, more 'acceptable', structural reasons for voting to leave can be a form of class distinction which stigmatises other voters. Good-sense and common-sense exist in a tension and the extent to which each is used by interviewees are shaped by practical experiences, such as Ralph's encounters with prejudiced leave voters on the estate.

So far, participants' accounts have been more about their indirect understandings of what could be construed as structural violence – the way social structures and institutions have harmful effects upon particular groups. In what follows are some examples of participants' direct experiences of such violence. These types of 'harm' are enacted by state institutions and through political statecraft, including the violent effects of neoliberal economic policy more generally. What ties these

extracts together and relates them to the core themes of this subsection are how different forms of violence are projected back onto the EU or conflated with EU policies.

Margaret is a 62-year-old, White British woman who currently claims Universal Credit for her ill-health, she lives in the Selby case study site. The income she receives is not enough to meet her basic needs and she often worries about how she will pay her bills:

> Margaret: They [government] keep telling you that inflation isn't going up, but things are getting more expensive, and my money has been static for a good five years erm, electricity, gas, everything is going up. So, you end up not being able to put the heating on because you can't afford to pay the bills.

Margaret has had a series of negative experiences claiming benefits. She tells me about her interactions with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and how she feels stigmatised:

> Margaret: When you have any contact with the DWP their default setting is that you're a liar. That's how they make you feel, until you can prove you are not, you're a liar. Erm and I hate that, I hate that.

Her decision to vote to leave the EU (which is discussed more fully in section 9.4) was based on a perception that the UK was “a more caring society, a more equal society” before EU membership and that leaving would lead to a better quality of life for herself. Margaret’s account needs to be understood in the context of her being unable to work for the last twenty-five years and being subject to a series of punitive welfare reforms. Like Howard, Margaret seems to project her experiences of economic marginalisation, which are primarily influenced by national political and economic processes, onto the EU.

Unlike some of the previous interviewees, Alice (Sheffield, 64, Female, White British, Income £15-20k p.a) voted to remain in the EU referendum. She too feels let down by the promises of neoliberalism and thinks that inequalities have crystallized and widened over the last forty years:

> Joe: What was it like growing up?
>
> Alice: Because I was a born after the war and post-war austerity, things were really hopeful, and everything was looking good in a way even though nobody had any money. It was a time when a lot of people got rehoused because of living in what you would refer to as a slum, you know, you didn't have a bathroom and that sort

of thing you only like had one room downstairs. The National Health Service was new as well and welfare and pensions and everybody thought it was great and you got free Higher Education. A lot of that has either gone or disappeared now. We had a lot to look forward to and they told us how everything was going to be fantastic, and you know, men were landing on the moon and all this sort of stuff when I was at junior school. We thought there was a great future ahead.

Joe: Do you not think it has turned out like that?

Alice: I mean I think a lot of people don't understand what has happened. So, it's like they pick somebody to blame. So, it is like blamed on the EU which really hasn't, it really hasn't got that much to do with the EU at all.

Alice thinks the EU may have been blamed for a series of problems which it may not have directly caused (see also subsection 9.3). Alice uses a good-sense explanation to reflect on common-sense positions of leave voters. Poulantzas argues that class positions are not just about the organisation of labour but are also influenced by a relatively autonomous political domain (Poulantzas, 1973). Having grown up in Dewsbury (an area known for the production of textiles) Alice has similar experiences of deindustrialisation as leave-voting participants but voted a different way. This could be about ideology (a la Poulantzas, 1973) and having different volumes and compositions of cultural capital (Atkinson, 2017). Having a master’s level education and being made redundant as a media studies teacher in 2011 which coincides with austerity induced public sector cutbacks and the hollowing out of the arts, seems to produce specific ideological and political inclinations.

7.4 Repatriating EU Contributions to Support the Losers of Neoliberal Capitalism

For some participants, the European Union is understood as a bloated institution which costs the UK and UK taxpayers too much, funds the large and unnecessary salaries of EU bureaucrats and wastes money that would be better spent on overused and underfunded public services in the UK, rather than being sent abroad. The referendum seems to have been interpreted as a way, therefore, of repatriating funds to the UK to ameliorate the harshest effects of public sector cuts and welfare reforms induced by austerity. This is related to the EU in the sense that poorer EU countries are framed as undeserving benefactors of

Britain's EU financial contributions at the expense of less fortunate people in the UK.

Howard (Selby, Male, 60, White British, Income £20-30k p.a) offers one of the clearest examples of this:

> Howard: I mean I am shocked at some of the things I am hearing, how much money people get for not working if they are on the dole and what they have got to do to get that dole money…This is what brings it back, why are we sending the European Union 39 billion pounds when we have got people in this country struggling. I mean, we have actually got a soup kitchen in Selby or a foodbank whatever you want to call it. I have never heard of anything like that before. But again, I am fifty-fifty on homeless people and people that can't afford to live. You have to look at one side of it, well...this lot has got their priorities wrong. They are sat drinking with cans of beer and smoking fags and they've got the latest iPhone whereas this 50% over here haven't got a thing, haven't got a bean.

At the beginning of subsection 7.3, an extract from Howard's account demonstrated how the UK's accession to the EU and its perceived effects may have been conflated with the parallel and interrelated process of the UK's shift to financial capitalism. There is a close connection in the way the themes in this subsection and that of the former are articulated by some participants, including Howard. Widening class and economic inequalities are largely an effect of domestic policy decisions to implement successive waves of austerity measures in the UK, but the structural causes of poverty are obscured and elided by blaming the EU and the costs of membership. Howard's account is interesting in that he shares some solidarity and empathy with people living in poverty and articulates both good-sense and common-sense explanations for poverty simultaneously, which in the case of the former see half of cases as undeserved rather than cultural or individualistic.

Fawzia (Sheffield, Female, 22, Black African, Income £10-15k p.a) is a second-generation Somalian migrant whose parents moved to the UK before she was born. Recouping the economic costs of EU membership to address rising inequality and poverty in Britain, which she perceives as being consumed by the debt crisis in Southern Europe, was important to the way she voted in the referendum:

> Fawzia: I voted to leave just because I was really worried about the economic situation. Because what I was reading back then were like if the UK stays in the

EU, it will constantly have to support the recessions of different countries, like the EU supporting Greece and Spain.

In her interview Fawzia later explains the source of her eventual regret for voting to leave:

Joe: Have you told anyone that you voted to leave?

Fawzia: I haven't told anyone (laughs). I haven't. I would never tell people. I do regret it now but at the time I was not in the right mind, and I just thought this is not good for the system and economic Britain. Like we need to remain as strong as we can. Here we are trying to fund the NHS and we are struggling, here we are trying to fund the police and we are struggling, all the taxes and we can't remove those taxes and it is just really a mess. No, I haven't told anyone no.

Fawzia strives to explain her decisions to vote Leave as based upon economic factors rather than, as she sees it, the less attractive images and ideas of Nigel Farage's UKIP and the symbolic relationship they share with the leave vote. This seems to be connected to her ethnicity and her family's history of migration:

Joe: How did your friends vote?

Fawzia: A lot of my friends voted remain. Erm, shockingly enough my brother, who is my twin, chose to leave for all the wrong reasons. He voted to leave just because he was like, because of the immigrants, and I was thinking that is not OK, what do you think you are?

She is unique in the way that other interviewees from minority ethnic backgrounds who voted to leave tended to be critical of migrant groups (Marlon, Nasir), and some openly admitted that their views could be seen as racist (Yasmin) – see Chapter 8. By contrast, Hassan (Sheffield, Male, 36, British Asian, Income n/a) and Genevie (Sheffield, Female, 30-50[8], African-Caribbean, Income £20-30k p.a) shared similar views to Fawzia but voted to remain.

Some remain voters also had concerns about the poor state of services or widening inequalities in the UK but articulated different arguments which tended not to displace these concerns onto the EU. Participants such as Alice (Sheffield, 64, Female, White British, Income £15-20k p.a), linked together austerity, inequality and the EU (like others do) but she felt leaving would make matters worse:

Joe: So, could you just tell me a bit about your political views and concerns?

[8] Genevie was unwilling to tell me her age and preferred to use a numerical range instead.

> Alice: Well yeah, I have only been a member [of the Labour Party] for the last few years, because I thought I need to do something about the state of things…
>
> Joe: Okay. What do you mean by the state of things?
>
> Alice: Well, politically, the massive decline in employment. It's not just money really, it's other things as well. So, morally and like everybody is pissed off.
>
> Joe: What moral things would you like to change?
>
> Alice: Well, you know you're walking around Sheffield, and you see loads of people like laying out on the street asleep you know and...begging. When I came here in 1979 you didn't see any of that…People were proud to live in Sheffield and of its like industrial heritage and there was a lot of really good jobs…but all that has gone.
>
> Joe: Did any of that influence your decision to vote the way you did in the referendum?
>
> Alice: …I suppose it did influence me because I thought we would be worse off if we left.

It seems Alice joined the Labour Party as part of the 'Corbyn surge.' Labour Party membership increased precipitously between May 2015 and July 2016, and this has been attributed to 'educated left behinds': those with high-level education who thought they would get better jobs and economic opportunities than they had done (Seyd, 2020; Whiteley et al. 2019). This suggests that trajectory and ideology are important to the way people form their political dispositions – people were attracted to the Labour Party by radical left-wing policies that offered solutions to unequal distributions of wealth and resources (Whiteley et al. 2019).

This seems to inform the way Alice articulates her political positioning. She tells me how she "probably didn't want to vote leave because it's like right-wing" and that those who did vote to leave were "putting two fingers up to the establishment". Alice sees the EU as better for the UK's economic health and security and because she feels as though she has got something to lose, voting to remain seems to be a way to protect what she currently has.

By contrast, those who feel like they have already lost out (insecure employment opportunities, rising costs of living and lower wages), may vote to leave because they believe the potential benefits to the UK of money saved from contributions outweighs any chance of more economic and political harm. Interviewees like Kay (Selby, Female, 54, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Mabel (Selby, Female, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) express their leave vote as a way

to challenge the resources commandeered by EU bureaucrats. As part of their extract, they challenge the symbolic value of ‘Europeanness’: the economic disadvantages of EU membership are compounded by the perceived negative associations of being seen as European.

> Joe: Do you not see yourselves as European then?
>
> Kay: Definitely not.
>
> Mabel: Definitely not. I might have lived there for twelve years but no.
>
> Kay: Not if you paid me. Not even if they gave me a bonus to keep remaining, ‘we will pay you to tick remain,’ no you are alright.
>
> Joe: Do you think the other European member states see themselves as more European than the UK does?
>
> Mabel: Yes.
>
> Kay: I think if we ever do get out of this shithole of the EU, I think the rest of them will follow and that is why they won't let us go.
>
> Mabel: That is why they are trying to make it hard you see.
>
> Kay: They want to see what happens with us first.
>
> Mabel: So, the EU is panicking, and they are trying to make it as hard as they can for us because they know for a fact the EU will fall like that. And when you see the bureaucrats that are on what, something like one and a half million each year, they are panicking. That is the only reason they don't want it, because they are seeing their own lifestyle change. They couldn't give a damn about us English, but they are seeing their own lifestyle would have to change.

Despite her own financial insecurities, Kay would not have voted to remain even if this had been (hypothetically) financially rewarded. This is testament to the perceived injustice of high salaries which can be witnessed in the justifications of leave voters and how leaving the EU often trumps other economic consideration*s* including personal financial wellbeing.

Like Fawzia, Helena (Sheffield, Female, 48, White European, Income £5-10k p.a), thinks the inclusion of weaker economic member states within the European Union has financial costs for wealthier nations:

> Joe: In order of priority, what were your reasons for voting to remain?
>
> Helena: […] I see myself as European and I think that Europe does a lot of really good things. [...]. I think there are quite a lot of countries that probably shouldn't have come in when they did, and I think they fiddled their figures or whatever. They

> were helped [to] fiddle their figures. That has created animosity where they see those countries as not really having the resources to put into Europe like we have.

However, the cultural and symbolic benefits of being part of the EU outweigh the economic disadvantages, even if poorer member states are a drain on richer ones. Like Fawzia, Helena also thinks that voting to leave because of immigration is wrong, but the way she expresses this seems to be about class distinction. She thinks leave voters were duped and this seems to be about having less education and political literacy:

> Helena: I think people just went "it was immigration and if you do this, this is what is going to happen." It was all playing a game; it was all playing a game. Because most people will not take on board one hundred facts and then go hang on let me just sit here and write a dissertation on this, therefore I will understand it better. […] They were fed if you don't like immigration and you think we should have more money in the NHS this is the way you should vote.

This may be shaped by Helena's downward class trajectory and the fact that she has an economic and social position she is trying to defend rather than having nothing to lose. This is partly about understanding herself as middle-class and wanting to retain that status even in light of economic circumstances which could be more feasibly understood as working-class. Helena is able to articulate and reject common-sense leave voting positions, but it can be argued that she oversimplifies explanations of this kind as a way to mark distances between herself and leave voters. This is similar to the way Hazel articulates her class identity and politics in subsection 6.5.1. Helena may defend her class position by stigmatising working-class leavers as a way to find cultural and symbolic value in the absence of economic capital.

7.5 Discussion

The findings above suggest that the EU referendum may have presented itself as a legitimate way for people who have been subject to the effects of economic restructuring processes to challenge their sense of loss and marginality. What the extracts presented within this chapter illuminate is that the Brexit vote can be read, at least to some extent, as a reaction to the "[un]hidden injuries of neoliberal class de/recomposition" (Tyler, 2015: 501-2). The timing of the UK's accession to the EU in 1973 is unlucky in the sense that it coincides with a series of 'crisis'

processes which demarcate the beginning of the neoliberal conjuncture (Hall, 2011) in the UK.

This chapter is about economic marginalisation as a violent effect of the transition to financial capitalism in Britain. Related to this, Chapter 8 focuses on how consent for widening economic and social inequalities has been legitimated through ideological work which has sought to denigrate sections of the working-class – particularly migrants and benefit claimants – as being of low economic, cultural and moral value (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Makinen, 2017). Nuance is required here. Some of the accounts above show a level of (qualified) sympathy for, or solidarity with, claimants and migrants, in the way that some participants argue for EU funds to be repatriated to support Britain's welfare services. However, this has a nationalist hue which argues that Britain's poor are more deserving than those elsewhere. Many of the voting justifications presented in this chapter invoke the reinstatement of 'national sovereignty'. These are in many cases, I would suggest, refracted arguments predicated upon longstanding feelings of political marginalisation, the classed realities of widening inequalities and the rolling back of welfare services, and a sense that things could and should be better for working-class people.

The responses presented in this chapter cut across economic and social left-right axes of political values (Evans and Tilley, 2017) and in some cases knit together contradictory alliances of ideas and political dispositions. Whilst some participants offer more structurally located and (although not exclusively) left-leaning arguments, others can be distinguished as more nationalistic and rightward expressions. But this is not a clear-cut dichotomy, and voting proclivities can and do, even in the confines of one extract, zigzag across different themes and between common-sense and good-sense articulations. This is both about justifications for Brexit and wider and changing working-class political subjectivities. What can be said here is that existing models and analyses of class politics (Atkinson, 2017; Evans and Tilley, 2017) cannot fully capture the reasons why these shifts have occurred. This is because the authors follow models of class which gloss over neoliberal political-economic restructuring as a process intended to rebalance class relations in favour of capital and how these processes

then play into ground level experiences of economic, social and political marginalisation.

7.5.1 British Manufacturing and Class

This subsection presented an argument in which the European Union is understood as constraining the manufacturing power of a country once at the forefront of international trade. This is not just about the economics of global trading relationships but also the symbolic value once conferred upon a nation with a globally hegemonic status. As part of participants' concerns over the loss of national industries, voting to leave is often expressed as a desire to return to a "partially idealised past" (Telford and Wistow, 2019: 6) in which firms were British owned. Cutting across many participant accounts is a sense that the uneven developments generated by neoliberalism have come to bear disproportionately upon, for example, Britain's own manufacturing bases (Paul and Tony); those living in the North (Kay, Mabel); and those of older generational groups (Eddy and Tony).

In her seminal work on the cultures of deindustrialisation, Mah (2012) speaks about industrial ruination (rather than ruin) as a way to emphasise how deindustrialisation is not just about the physical landscapes of industry and how they undergo change, but also the meanings and legacies which are attached to them and which exist in the minds of people. The extracts drawn upon in this subsection are broadly about the remaking of the working-class over the last forty years and how the "cultural significance of industrial change over time" (Strangleman et al. 2013: 7) – the meanings, identities, ways of thinking and living associated with industry and industrial jobs – is one of the most dominant narratives through which working-class people are able to explain their marginalisation and politics in the present. Localised and regional stories of deindustrialisation in Selby and Sheffield are part of the fabric from which participants' childhoods, occupational experiences, and sense of opportunities continue to be shaped.

The extracts considered in this chapter are partly about the "social experience of industrial change" (Strangleman, 2017: 467); however, these experiences exist

in a wider political context where class has been expunged from political discourse (Evans and Tilley, 2017). Not only this, but deindustrialisation has also been recast as a process of modernisation and glossed over as something equally experienced by different social classes and geographies. Deindustrialization has been a geographically and socially specific process which has produced deep and lasting physical and symbolic losses and worsened different forms of marginalisation. These experiences shape the way working-class people understand the world around them and the way they thought about Brexit; however, the analyses conducted in this thesis go beyond Brexit. Voting to leave is one point of rupture in a much longer timeline of class struggles: in the moment of the referendum, voting to leave is thought of as a way of undoing decades of harm and violence that feels, and is experienced, as personal and intentional.

For many participants in this study industry represents a sense of pride and identity (Rhodes, 2013); its disappearance is suggestive of a series of other social, cultural and economic changes in which working-class people have lost out (Strangleman et al. 2013). ‘Loss’ is both about the selling off of industries and having to rely on foreign imports, and the meanings attached to industrial jobs, workplaces, communities and identities that have now disappeared. In this context, Brexit became a frame through which to reconceive the trajectory of the UK’s post-industrial economy: participants draw upon forms of nostalgia for an idealised past to reimagine what the future could be like for working-class people if Britain were to prioritise industrial economic activity. There are gendered dimensions to this. It is mostly men who express their voting proclivities in relation to arguments about Britain’s industrial heyday and that tend to romanticise the industrial past. These masculine narratives of decline do not necessarily reflect the broader nature of changing labour market participation for men and women over time (McDowell, 2001). Whilst men have tended to be disproportionately affected by the loss of industrial jobs and have experienced a crisis of masculinity partly because of shifting patriarchal gender norms and more ‘feminized’ labour roles (Jefferson, 2021), this has occurred alongside more women entering employment in a service-based economy and working in professional occupations and leadership positions (McDowell, 2001).

7.5.2 Brexit and the Neoliberal Class Offensive

In this subsection, a series of participants' extracts were explored which focus on the EU as part of a neoliberal political-economic system that works against working-class interests. There are two interrelated parts to this. In the first instance, the subsection explores the accounts of those who make *explicit* political claims against the EU as an institutional ensemble of policies designed to dispossess and disaggregate the working-class (David, Howard and Ralph). A second group of participants (Eddy, Margaret and to some extent, Alice) articulate their political attitudes in a way which is less informed by class politics and more informed by their own experiences, but also entails implied critiques of the EU as – without directly naming it as so – part of a neoliberal hegemony.

They reflect upon their own experiences of the harsh effects of neoliberal workplaces and welfare policy as contexts in which, I argue, they then come to think about Brexit as a vehicle for better economic opportunities. Alice is part of both groups on the basis that her views are informed by class politics (see subsection 7.4), and she has some broad but direct experiences of structural violence. All of the extracts in this subsection, in different ways, concern transnational flows of wealth, goods and people and rest upon the idea of the working-class as locked out of the rewards that neoliberal capitalism was purported to secure for all corners of society.

The social and economic worlds people inhabit are important to how and why different class groups are more or less susceptible to different political attitudes, discourses and ways of thinking. For David, Howard and Ralph, their good-sense – which, in my own words, is a structural and critical account of EU hegemony – seems to be formed from practical experiences of heavily unionised work (David, Howard and Ralph). This seems to be about opportunities for political education within unionised sectors; the decline of unions as a source of good-sense awareness has implications for the development of political subjectivities. The EU is seen to be underpinned by a class politics waged for the benefit of economic elites and in this respect, participants can be said to express a broadly 'Lexit' position towards the EU. Aside from David, who speaks at length of his own fears

of redundancy because of past experiences of such, participants in this group tend to own their own home, have relatively large and secure incomes and do not feel as though they are struggling to cope financially. It can be inferred that long term employment within unionised industries leads to better economic and class trajectories for workers.

Participants may not experience economic insecurity themselves, but the institutions that they are part of lends itself to forms of knowledge which are sympathetic to those in more marginalised positions, and this means they share and exhibit forms of class solidarity with them. David and Howard were primarily socialised in heavy industries – the former being involved in the steelworks since school and the latter having worked up through the ranks of coalmining. Here, ideology plays an important role in the way people take political positions: this is about choosing to understand oneself as a member of the working-class because of a broader sense of shared struggles against the capitalist class and their interests.

This first group of participants were primarily concerned about structural violence wrought through the shift to neoliberal/financial capitalism and how this was seen as a class project which cemented divisions between class groups and transmitted wealth from the poor to the rich. The second group of participants were those who more directly experienced this structural violence as economic marginalisation, insecurity and political statecraft which has undercut the welfare state (Broom et al. 2022). Eddy and Margaret used their experiences of work and claiming benefits to illuminate how they thought of the winners and losers of economic and welfare policy in Britain. This connected to the way they voted to leave in the sense that they thought Brexit would mean more money would be available to distribute to marginalised British groups and support services they rely on. Brexit was thought of as a way of reconstituting the fortunes of the working-class and reversing years of immiseration.

Working-class leave voters deploy different explanations such as good-sense (David), common-sense and sometimes both (Howard, Ralph) simultaneously – to arrive at the same voting position and this complexity can be lost in one dimensional accounts. This is complicated by the fact that not all working-class interviewees voted to leave (Alice). Alice voted to remain because she felt leaving

the EU was associated with right-wing politics and that Brexit would exacerbate inequalities and economic insecurities in Britain. This shares theoretical affinities with earlier analysis (see subsection 6.5): people can feel similar to other working-class people in economic terms but use forms of cultural distinction to set themselves apart politically. Alice feels as though she has something to defend – cultural distance in terms of more progressive social attitudes – rather than nothing to lose, and this leads to different voting propensities.

7.5.3 Brexit and the Costs of the EU

This subsection was about both leave and remain voters and shows how participants who experience the same forms of political state-crafting and economic inequalities arrive at different political subjectivities. In terms of leave voters, this subsection demonstrates how some participants think Brexit will allow EU contributions to be spent on underfunded welfare services and used to address widening economic inequalities and poverty. This is sometimes undercut by a common-sense which questions the deservingness of benefit claimants and conflates domestic welfare and austerity policies with EU membership, which seems to take from national-populist political discourses. For remain voters, there is a similar sense of concern about austerity in Britain, but this tends not to be blamed on the EU. Some participants use a perception of leave voters as wrongly blaming the EU for domestic economic issues as a way of marking out political distances.

The international backdrop leading up to the EU referendum, and subsequent Brexit vote, was punctured by a financial crisis within the Eurozone states which "reinforced the view that British sovereignty was being sacrificed to European political institutions" (Jessop, 2017: 136). Over the course of a number of years, the right-wing media and mainstream political parties have repeated a series of inflammatory stories which suggested that the UK would have to fund the EU membership of poorer nations, notably Turkey as potential new entrant, and how joining the EU would provide an immigration corridor from the Middle East to the UK (e.g., Groves, 2010; Hawkes, 2016). As Saull (2015) has argued, the re-emergence of the far-right in Europe is a result of the economic instabilities of

neoliberal transnational capitalism and how this form of political economy has entrenched social and economic divisions between different classed and racialised groups. In the UK, this has been exacerbated by the failures of the 'left' to offer alternative political discourses to anti-globalisation narratives (Gough, 2017). National-populist parties have recruited support from those who feel as though they lose from domestic and international economic policy and have branded their politics as a form of classed common-sense which straddles labour market restructuring, austerity, immigration, and the EU.

Henderson et al (2016) use data from the Future of England Survey to show how Eurosceptic attitudes are related to English national identities and how 'Englishness' was a driver of the leave vote. The authors argue that English national identity is a cluster point for other attitudes such as a hostility to European integration, a sense of political marginalisation, concerns over the material impacts of immigration and support for national-populist parties (*ibid*), themes which the leave campaign knitted together. This subsection goes further to show how concerns over the economic benefits of the EU are tied up with the cultural and symbolic value of a European and English national identity. Some remain voting participants thought the symbolic value of Europeanness trumped what they recognised as the financial instabilities of the EU; leave voting participants tended to reject European identities and relate this to the unearned salaries of EU bureaucrats which seemed to be a proxy for class and economic inequalities in the UK. For remain voters such as Alice and Helena, the EU is perceived to be a source of wealth and economic opportunity and Europeanness has symbolic value as a form of distinction from the politics of leave voters. This works inversely for people like Kay and Mabel.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter challenges and adds nuance to more structural and materialist explanations for Brexit. Fetzer (2019) focuses on austerity, and those places most impacted by austerity induced welfare reforms, to show how a rise in support for UKIP in the hardest hit places was an important correlate for leave support in the referendum. Jessop (2017; 2018) takes a more historicised, theoretical approach

and makes a more compelling case that the referendum result should be understood as part of a longer series of processes associated with the uneven development of neoliberalism. The former lacks historicization and neglects the wider and protracted economic and political context in which austerity and welfare reform need to be thought about; whilst the work of Jessop (2017; 2018) has much to recommend it but suffers from a lack of supporting empirical evidence.

This chapter has presented qualitative data that allows us to explore how working-class interviewees' political subjectivities, and their justifications for voting to leave and remain in the EU referendum, developed from their understandings and practical experiences of economic marginalisation. Voting justifications are articulated in relation to the economic and symbolic effects of deindustrialisation (subsection 7.2), more explicitly structural and good-sense criticisms of EU market liberalism (subsection 7.3) and the cost of financial contributions for Britain's deserving poor (subsection 7.4). The views and attitudes expressed in this chapter are broadly similar among those living in Selby as they are for those living in Sheffield. This is a key finding in itself and may reflect some of the similarities between the two case study sites in terms of both being deindustrialising areas within the Yorkshire and Humber region that could be thought of as 'left behind' (see Chapter 5). Deindustrialisation has played out through different timescales in Selby and Sheffield, but it's effects on working-class participants are significant in each site and the way interviewees articulate their experiences of economic marginalisation and the causes of it, share synergies.

There are also series of findings which are particularly unique and deserve reemphasising here. In subsection 7.2, it was shown how a sense of loss associated with deindustrialisation exists in the minds of some participants as a partially idealised image of greater economic security, despite having not directly experienced industrial work or deindustrialisation themselves. It is argued that deindustrialisation is not just about job losses but a part of the spatial and cultural story of different places, sown into the social fabric of life within them and having deep and enduring effects on people, their families, their outlooks and understandings of opportunities and others around them (Mah, 2012). This shares analytical linkages to the work of Rodriguez-Pose (2018) who takes a

wider-angle approach to show how populist support derives from people living in *regions* with declining *trajectories*. Some interviewees framed their vote to leave in terms of seeking to recreate the conditions and circumstances of an industrial past where the working-class were perceived to have access to better jobs and better wages. Subjectivities of this kind seem to be shaped by life in post-industrial neighbourhoods, towns and cities – which Selby and Sheffield are – and how political parties continue to ignore and dispel economic and ontological insecurities experienced by poorer people.

In subsection 7.3 it was shown how David, Howard and Ralph express extensive good-sense understandings of the EU as a neoliberal institution. The presence of good-sense, counter-hegemonic arguments in their own right challenge lazy academic explanations for Brexit which tend to flatten working-class people's justifications into reductive and stigmatising arguments (Poutvaara and Steinhardt, 2018; Zavala et al. 2018; Zhang, 2017). All three interviewees have occupational experiences in industries which are heavily unionised (steel, coal and the public sector) and this is important to understandings of how opportunities for political education are connected to the formation of political subjectivities. Nonetheless, those leave voters who do not express good-sense justifications like those aforementioned continue to articulate voting decisions which are more complex and nuanced than one dimensional accounts of Brexit can comprehend, and these justifications are linked to deep biographical experiences which tend to be ignored. The next chapter focuses on the way voting proclivities are articulated through symbolic discourses of others and explores how common-sense has become a dominant narrative through which different structural problems (of which many were important to the referendum, such as immigration, inequality and welfare) are understood.

8.0 Neoliberal Common-Sense and Brexit: Misrecognising the Causes of Inequalities

8.1 Introduction

Over the last forty years, the state and media have attempted to explain the causes of a series of inequalities exacerbated by neoliberalism as cultural problems by blaming already marginalised and stigmatised social groups to deflect attention from elites. These different discourses constitute a form of Gramscian 'common-sense' – an accepted way of thinking about the world (Crehan, 2016) – which are neoliberal in the sense that they pertain to conceptions of citizenship which conflate economic value and cultural value (Krivonos, 2018; Makinen, 2017). The Leave campaign harnessed these different narratives and used them as one way to frame 'Brexit', particularly in relation to the crossover between immigration and welfare: immigrants come to the UK for benefits, and this now means welfare services are oversubscribed.

These discourses and narratives can shape the way working-class people think and speak about their own circumstances and those of other social groups. A lack of competing political discourses that are able to offer alternative understandings of the structural causes of inequality has meant that neoliberal common-sense has developed somewhat unchecked within the political space. This has been shaped by deunionisation, assaults on working-class institutions, and the expunging of class from mainstream political discourses and policy. Despite this, there are a range of micro-level examples of how good-sense analysis can and does challenge common-sense narratives and tropes and participants' accounts attest to this.

This chapter is comprised of three empirical subsections. Subsection 8.2 explores the perceived economic value of migrants and how they must work to be considered legitimate citizens (Makinen, 2017). Brought into sharper focus in subsection 8.3 is how physical or imagined spaces or communities are understood by participants to have been devalued through the presence of abject 'others' (Tyler, 2013). Perceptions of this kind mean class and economic issues,

such as changing house prices, are often articulated through the lens of immigration. This links to the analysis developed in subsection 6.4, which took a more biographical approach to explore how the presence of ‘others’ can disrupt the symbolic profits procured from living in a respectable neighbourhood (Bourdieu, 1985) and how this type of class distinction relates to participants’ life experiences and the formation of dispositions over time. This subsection is different in the way it focuses on a broader range of accounts and how it thinks through interviewees’ leave voting justifications as articulations of neoliberal common-sense.

The final empirical subsection (8.4) concerns how interviewees think of different migrant occupational groups as being of greater economic and cultural value to the UK labour market and what this means in terms of the idea that migrants take British jobs. Crucially, it is shown how participants’ own economic and social circumstances shape the way they then make (value) judgements of others. The displacement of stigma onto undeserving populations is shown to be a process used by participants to protect their own symbolic and economic positions. A discussion section (8.5) follows from this, which first establishes broader links between the foci of each subsection, before analysing themes within subsections in more detail.

8.2 Immigration, Deservingness and the Welfare State

The purpose of this subsection is to explore how participants talk about the undeservingness of migrants and how this relates to the way they voted in the EU referendum. It shows how economic insecurity and marginalisation, coupled with ideological propaganda, leads to the formation of particular dispositions and ways of understanding particular social groups, such as immigrants who are perceived to claim benefits. The accounts considered in this subsection tend to come from participants who are white, have lower incomes, have lower levels of education and are either employed in insecure work (Ben, Eddy), low paid work (Kay, Mabel) or are unemployed (Andrew, Mary, Paul). Several interviewees were critical of migrants receiving benefits and housing when they also had similar economic circumstances (Alan, Kay, Mabel, Paul and Steph).

Alan, a former roofer, is a 65-year-old, White British resident of the Sheffield research site who has been unemployed for over twenty years because of a significant back injury he sustained at work, which he claims was his own fault. Alan claims a form of incapacity benefit but may have been expected to work in a fully employed economy. This provides an income between £5,000 and £10,000 per annum. Alan frames his justification for voting to leave the EU as a concern about migrants claiming benefits without first 'paying in':

> Joe: Did your experiences of immigration locally effect your decision?
>
> Alan: No, it is just immigration in general. Because I don't think they should give them any money if they haven't paid anything into the system, that's my way of thinking. I have got forty odd years national insurance contributions on mine, and you know what I mean I can't get a job. But erm that's just my way of thinking if you haven't paid anything in you don't get nothing out which is fair enough, I think. Because if I went abroad now anywhere, I wouldn't get no money off anybody, off their government, I wouldn't get any money so why should we?

Throughout his interview, Alan speaks of his experiences of persistent and extreme economic insecurity, having to sell possessions to pay bills and the feeling of shame in navigating the mandatory job search process – a form of punitive welfare conditionality. Having been unemployed since he was 44, Alan seems to be confusing national insurance with some form of income tax (which is also paid on certain benefits such as jobseekers and incapacity benefit) which he has likely paid since he entered work. He espouses forms of common-sense that vilifies migrants as a parasitic population (Tyler, 2013) because the propagation of racist discourses fixate on migrants (rather than other poor/working-class groups) as direct competition for economic resources.

Other examples are provided by Ben and Mabel:

> Ben: They [immigrants] just get everything given to them and they think that that's right…If they are not here to work and behave themselves then send them back. (Selby, 26, Male, White British, Income £15-20k p.a).
>
> Mabel: …[Migrants can] come over here as many as you like, as long as you work, you don't expect free housing, you don't expect free National Health and you don't expect any benefits. (Selby, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a).

There is a sense that the deservingness of migrants and their entitlement to benefits is something to be earned rather than denied altogether, however, this is rarely specified in terms of how long it should take to qualify or how much

should be paid. Rather, entitlement seems to be a racialised process imposed upon 'others' which depends upon cultural stereotypes that move and develop over time in relation to media coverage. One exception is Paul (Selby, 39, White British, Income £0-5k p.a), who claims that "they [migrants] should be made to work for ten or fifteen years before they are allowed our benefits and a free house". This is not just a view that conditional entitlement to benefits should be applied solely to migrants, as Paul continues "we [British people] should still have to work; it's not just you turn 18 and get on the benefit system".

Jean (Sheffield, 67, White British, Income £15-20k* p.a) speaks about benefits being conditional on paying National Insurance and that this should apply to migrants as well as UK nationals:

> Joe: Do you want to tell me about the way you voted and what you told me on the phone about changing your mind?
>
> Jean: …I would like to think that when people come to England, they bring something with them, unless they are refugees, I strongly believe that refugees should have sanctuary everywhere. But anybody coming here because they think it's a free ride, I don't like the idea of. That is because I have worked all my life, from being fifteen…at one point I had three jobs as a teenager, and I think you should have to give something to get something back. Unless you are sick, disabled, you have got mental health problems, or you are caring for somebody then you should be no different to anybody else.

This is about ensuring access to welfare services is the same for everyone, based upon a mistaken perception that migrants are entitled to welfare and NHS treatment from the point they enter the UK.

As part of a broader discussion around why she (and her husband Paul) voted to leave the European Union, Steph (Selby, 39, White British, Income £10-15k) recalls a conversation with a council officer about eligibility for social housing:

> Steph: So, I said basically you are saying to me [council officer] "I need to be pregnant; I need to be single, and I need to be a different colour basically" and she said "yeah, to get priority". I think that is wrong.
>
> Joe: How did that make you feel?
>
> Steph: Well, I think it is wrong…I am sure that you can earn something before you get something. There are people that have been on the waiting list what, ten or fifteen years, and they [migrants recently entering the country] are jumping the queue before those [White British people] that have been waiting even longer get a house.

Social housing allocation schemes are determined by need and it is not uncommon for migrants and migrant families to be deemed priority groups. This is not because they are a 'different colour' but rather that they are vulnerable and often without alternative support. Steph's argument contradicts her own experiences of social housing: she was allocated a house less than six months after joining the waiting list and this was at a time when she was neither pregnant nor single. Her argument against 'ethnic others' is not based on factual evidence but seemingly a form of dominant common-sense which is backed up by interactions with a council officer. The jumping of social housing queues are important metaphors through which those in precarious economic circumstances tend to narrate their own experiences and understand their own social positions (Garner, 2015).

Paul is a 39-year-old White British man who lives in the Selby research site. He has been unemployed for the last five years and receives an annual income of less than £5,000 through unemployment benefit. Throughout his interview, Paul spoke clearly of the negative effects this has had upon his mental and physical health. Paul explains how his decision to vote Leave is implicitly informed by the television media:

> Paul: When you see these programmes where the Europeans are coming over and they can, say in two years' time from signing on, two years' time they can go home and afford to buy a brand-new house do you know on a plot of land. They're the type of people we don't want over here do you know. If they come over here and they are hardworking then fair dos. But we seem to be getting a lot of people who just seem to want to bum off our benefit system…

His extract shows how the media can generate resentment and stigma towards abject populations. In a later part of his interview, Paul tells me the programme he was referring to was "something like Benefits Britain", which Tyler (2015) cites as "establishing a consensus that Britain, in the words of one viewer, is 'crawling with workshy malingerers'" (Tyler, 2015: 495).

A common finding across interviewees' accounts were oppositions which brought immigration to the UK and universal access to the NHS into dialogue with British emigration to other (often European) countries, where healthcare and benefit provision are deemed inaccessible:

> Eddy: Politics again, I disagree with them [migrants] coming over here and err, getting NHS treatment. If we went to America, we have to take insurance. (Selby, 60, Male, White British, Income £5-10k p.a).

> Kyle: With immigration like I say we are only a small country, and we are not; we can't deal with what is going on now. More and more people that influx into the country just for a better life…it is only going to have more strain and more effect. If I went and lived in Spain, I would have to pay for my healthcare. (Selby, Male, 25, White British, Income £20-30k p.a).

Kyle's experiences of accessing the NHS are predominantly spoken about in relation to his family members: his mother being left waiting for surgery, and his grandmother being unable to access treatment through the NHS and sharing beds like "pigs in a pen". This is displaced anger at declining services similar to the situation with housing mentioned by Steph above. Kyle's quote aptly captures the very essence of the function of common-sense: the hollowing out of the NHS through privatisation and austerity, which has structural and political causes, is fundamentally reconceived as a problem of migration and citizenship.

Perceptions like this often blend personal experience with common-sense discourses, creating disparate and contradictory arguments. America is not part of the European Union and basic state health provisions in Spain are free if you are a resident, in work and paying social contributions; are a pensioner; or have a European Healthcare Insurance Card. However, dispositions and attitudes do not always rely on factual evidence.

In some interviews, participants were asked about the availability of a doctor's appointment, which was a proxy for understanding their perceptions of local services. In Andrew's interview, this also generated articulations of nation and 'race':

> Joe: What about your GP, have you found getting an appointment there has changed?
>
> Andrew: …every time I go there the place seems to be packed. Here I go again, but you can do nothing but tell the truth; the amount of times I have been in a queue and the receptionist has tried to tell them [migrants] their appointment has gone 'no, no, no, I come today' (foreign accent). The thing that really flummoxed me about that situation was that they really bent over backwards to fit them in, and I am thinking well tell them to come back another day. Why should everyone else be pushed out of joint…

Andrew's (Sheffield, 43, Male, White British, Income £20-30k p.a) resentment derives from his own personal experiences of struggling to access appointments in a healthcare system which is perceived to be oversubscribed. He voted to leave because of EU immigration and how Britain's welfare system – what he calls "best benefits system in Europe" – is attractive to migrants and is then "easily exploited". The idea that Britain's benefit system is particularly generous may owe more to political rhetoric designed to legitimise further retrenchment than any empirical evidence (Gaffney, 2016). The UK's welfare system is actually one of the least generous compared with other countries in northern Europe and high-income economies outside of the EU (*ibid*).

Concerns over unfair access to resources also predominated within Mary's (Selby, 60, White British, Income £0-5k p.a) interview. She was increasingly frustrated about being unable to open a bank account:

> Mary: But how do they [migrants] get these houses? This is what gets me, they come over…they have somebody like a trafficker, he gets a house private rented…he puts all these twenty bloody immigrants in one house, and he charges them £500 a month. How do they do it? It's like how they get all these cars and how do they get bank loans? How do they get a bank account? I know this because I have a Turkish friend and he's got a driving license; he's got every credit card going you can think of. But I couldn't get a bank account.

Mary is sympathetic to the plight of exploited migrants, and she does, in one sense, project her resentment onto 'traffickers' rather than victims. However, this is eroded by her own personal experiences of negotiating the banking system: this prompts her to displace her frustrations onto her Turkish friend who is reported to have secured finances much easier than herself.

Even where migrants do enter the UK to work and contribute to the country through formal employment, this sometimes remains insufficient to warrant deservingness and entitlement. In an extended discussion about why she thinks local people voted to leave the EU, Carol (Selby, 57, White British, Income £15-20k p.a), a remain voter, tells me:

> Carol: It is just uncertainty I think, and it is the feeling that some people [migrants] have got a little bit more than they have. Because that was the thing when the miners came too, they had big wages, and they could flash a bit of money about whereas we didn't have as much. There was a bit of envy in that. A lot of the

> families that have come across they have bought houses…whereas other people haven't been able to.

Carol's extract illuminates more clearly how local processes can bear down upon the way people formulate their dispositions and viewpoints and how they voted in the EU referendum. It highlights how there are a series of older tensions and hierarchies in working-class communities which can centre upon a form of resentment which is racialised and considers the capitals possessed by some groups as undeserved because of their ethnic background or migrant status.

Ben (Selby, 26, Male, White British, Income £15-20k p.a) voted to remain in the EU referendum because he thought voting to leave would have little effect on immigration in the UK and his neighbourhood. He works as a roofer for a daily cash-in-hand wage; he has a series of personal debts and frequently spends his wage on the day he receives it. Ben speaks with frustration about the transfer of wages and capital out of Britain by migrants to their home country. This seems to be aggravated by virtue of his own precarious economic and social circumstances:

> Joe: What is it about it that annoys you so much?
>
> Ben: Just the fact that they will send our money over to them, change it into their money and they have got three four times as much. They can afford to buy big mansions and brand-new flash cars and what not; we are over here, and we have got nothing.

It is not so much the presence of 'others' that is seen as problematic here but rather a process in which migrants are supposed to be able to live lifestyles associated with those of more advantaged class backgrounds 'back home'. This is spatial in that it shows how place can be seen as a unique "constellation of social relations" (Massey, 1991: 27) in which localised experiences are connected to globalised chains of labour and capital.

8.3 Immigration and the Devaluation of Space and Place

This subsection considers a series of accounts which illuminate how understandings of place and neighbourhood, and processes of stigmatisation and othering, are related to participants' own personal circumstances. It shows how localised experiences of spatial change shape participants' subjectivities and how

they then arrive at particular dispositions and political subjectivities. Participants who live in Sheffield have witnessed higher numbers of non-UK nationals living locally and are more critical of how migrants are perceived to impact their neighbourhood. Those living in Selby also express unease at the way immigration is perceived to have made the town feel and look ‘rougher’, but less so than the Sheffield sample. Perceptions of space are complex and – in some cases – participants see more symbolic value in immigration than others; this subsection, in part, explains why.

Sarah (Sheffield, Female, 45, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and her partner Marlon (Sheffield, 49, Black British, Income £10-15k p.a) offer an account of neighbourhood decline and stigma:

> Sarah: All of my friends know about where we live, and they know it is not me. It was a bit embarrassing to start with wasn't it because people would be like “well where do you live” and I would be like “oh god.”
>
> Marlon: To be honest, I get embarrassed a bit when people ask me, so I just say somewhere else. It is silly, we shouldn't have to say things like this, but I don't tell them we live in [neighbourhood]. Years ago, I would have said [neighbourhood] but now I just say [adjoining neighbourhood, which is less stigmatised]. This is what it has come to, it might sound silly, but it is just the way it is.
>
> Joe: What sort of reactions would you get if you did tell people where you live?
>
> Marlon: Well, there is always a lot of things going on with Sheffield Online and Facebook about this area.
>
> Sarah: One person starts with something, like something that has happened in the area, I don't know like speeding or something, then you get all the people putting their comments on. Before you know it, it is nothing about the speeding, it's all about foreign people in their country and they are all doing it and *it's like all twisted up*. I think people read it and just believe it all don't they. I don't even look at it anymore…(my emphasis).

Sarah and Marlon accept and internalise territorial stigmas (Watt, 2020) as evidenced by efforts to withhold their address through embarrassment and attempts to reassert their own social value by marking moral distances between themselves and migrant ‘others’. They problematise the way different actors blame a range of social ills on ‘foreigners’ but across their account more broadly they also perpetuate stereotypical views of immigrants. Their account illuminates

how highly particular local encounters and processes become “twisted up” into arguments about culture.

In a later part of their interview, an extract from Marlon and Sarah shows how hyper-localised experiences are important to the way people formed their referendum voting proclivities:

> Joe: So, I know you voted to leave, but do you have any general political concerns before we get to that?
>
> Marlon: Basically, as I have said to you haven't I Sarah, if we lived in Lodge Moor or somewhere else in Sheffield, we might have voted in. The reason that we voted out is obviously because of our situation being here.

This extract illuminates how living in particular spaces and places and having specific localised encounters and interactions can create and maintain a specific set of subjectivities, dispositions and proclivities. In this instance, the perceived decline of urban space, because of the presence and proximity of undesirable ‘others’, is a key part of understanding how political position takings are negotiated. Living elsewhere, in suburban and affluent Lodge Moor, spaces where migrants are perceived to be excluded from, might have led to a different choice.

Kay (Selby, 54, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Mabel (Selby, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) voted to leave on the basis of local and national changes perceived to be caused by immigration:

> Joe: Was your (Kay) decision [to vote leave] a mixture of things, was it locally informed mostly or...?
>
> Kay: I think it was mainly how I have seen Selby change, you know.
>
> Mabel: I have seen the whole of England change, dreadful.
>
> Kay: Well, England yeah. It is dreadful.
>
> Joe: What was it in particular about the changes you saw in Selby that made you want to vote leave?
>
> Mabel: Immigration (whispering).
>
> Kay: Yeah, just immigration, you know people coming and they don't mix; well mind you I am a bit two-faced really because we didn't mix with the miners. They didn't mix with us, and we didn't mix with them. But we were here first; this is our Selby you know. How dare you come with your foreign shops.

This extract is not just about resources and opportunities but suggests that incoming populations who don't mix (migrants and miners) are stigmatised as outsiders (c.f. Elias and Scotson, 1994). Whispering when talking about immigration demonstrates how participants recognise that they may be negatively judged for holding anti-immigration attitudes, and in the eyes of people like Hazel (see subsection 6.5) they would.

Nasir (Sheffield, 46, British Asian, Income £10-15k p.a), is a second-generation, British Pakistani migrant who voted to leave. In his interview he speaks about the difficulties of his parents' migration to the UK, the economic costs of moving countries and finding work, and a sense of unease about newer EU migrants entering the country with far greater freedom of movement. He thinks this creates a perception that "they [EU migrants] are the locals and we are the guests." This is a clear displacement of abjection (Jeffery et al. 2020) but could also be seen as a criticism of the way whiteness can provide symbolic benefits even to migrants. He speaks of recent Eastern European migration to Sheffield as being problematic:

> Joe: So, if you had to put into a list of priority starting with the main reason, what would have been your main reasons and your secondary reasons?
>
> Nasir: Well, my main reason is just the Eastern Europeans, just too much too soon like you know. Just you know the generally anti-social behaviour and that and you know community, you know just getting ruined, that is the area unfortunately…

The ruin of community – that it is not 'ours' anymore or that anti-social behaviour has lessened its symbolic value – is explicitly linked to the presence of 'others'. Individualising urban decline as caused by, and being characteristic of, the visibility of specific social behaviours (of migrants) removes from discussion the way systematic disinvestment, service closure, labour market restructuring and regional inequalities have affected working-class neighbourhoods (Crisp, 2013).

When asked why he thinks his neighbourhood has got 'rougher', Ben (Selby, 26, Male, White British, Income £15-20k p.a) tells me:

> Ben: Just with new people turning up and what not and then...all the Pol... can I say all the Polish and all that?

Like Mabel, Ben's hesitancy to express anti-immigrant feeling suggests an awareness of the way attitudes of this kind can be stigmatised; being unable to

speak about immigrants and immigration may itself be a cause of resentment and Brexit may be an opportunity to say the unsayable.

This contrasts sharply with the views of Hassan (Sheffield, Male, 36, British Asian, Income n/a), also a second generation British-Pakistani migrant, who voted to remain. Hassan owns two small businesses in the area. He sees European migrants as a valued part of the community he lives in, and this has specific economic reasons:

> Joe: Do you think things have got harder economically since you have been here?
>
> Hassan: I think before [Brexit] it was very good but afterwards too many people have moved out [of the area]. In 2014/15, in the evening time, my shop was full of European people. But now I think they have got scared, most of them I think they have moved from here and this has had an effect, definitely. You can imagine if I have 400 people, 500 people and it is cut down to 300 people, everything is going to cost me more.

This is an important and fairly unique counterpoint to the bulk of narratives that devalue the presence of Eastern Europeans.

More positive views of Eastern European migration were also expressed by Carol (Selby, 57, White British, Income £15-20k p.a) and Danielle (Selby, 31, White British, Income £15-20k p.a), who think the settlement of migrants has raised the social status of their neighbourhood:

> Danielle: I suppose it has diversified over the last few years…
>
> Carol: They [Polish migrants] have brought more shops and wherever they live they tend to…their houses always seem to be nice and tidy.
>
> Danielle: Oh yeah that is a good point, it has really tidied up.
>
> Carol: It has raised the bar, hasn't it?

What is at work here seems to concern less the ethnic or migratory status of residents but divisions which are predicated upon typically gendered notions of home maintenance (Watt, 2006) and class respectability (Skeggs, 1997). Carol and Danielle both have degree level educations and have secure and permanent jobs, the former now working as a teaching assistant and previously a children’s nurse, the latter a part-time graphic designer. The reasons for their divergent views are borne from their direct experiences of change in their local environment and the way they think of themselves in terms of political identity. As Danielle tells

me: “I suppose I am quite liberal, left wing really”, which means she sees immigration as having greater symbolic and economic value.

A number of participants spoke about house prices in relation to migration to the local area (see also subsection 6.4). Andrew (Sheffield, 43, Male, White British, Income £20-30k p.a*) thinks declining prices are caused by the presence of ‘undesirable’ populations:

> Joe: Can you tell me what it has been like to live here for nineteen years?
>
> Andrew: We had a valuation on our house, I think it was about 2005 and, erm, they gave us quite a good sum on it, it was a very good sum. Then sometime later we had another valuation [in 2015] after our new neighbours had moved in and there was about a thirty percent drop from the previous value we had been given. We could not afford to move…We actually questioned it, we said well how it can be such a big drop and he [estate agent] said 'you have to now consider the area that you live in', those were his words. People do not want to buy property here anymore.

In a later part of his interview, he tells me:

> Andrew: My wife and I we were just amazed, realising that we had put a lot of time and money into this house in the hope of selling it on and now we are trapped. Quite literally trapped, economically trapped from moving up.
>
> Joe: What do you think the problems are with this sort of change in population that has caused such a downturn in house prices?
>
> Andrew: How do you put this gently, you probably can't put this gently. They [Eastern European migrants] bring a lot of bad habits with them, a lot of bad habits. They are getting away with it because they belong to a minority group, say it straight, they do, they play on the fact that they belong to a minority group. If anybody says anything against them you are being an 'ist', you know insert word here, racist or whatever.

Sarah (Sheffield, 45, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Marlon (Sheffield, 49, Black British, Income £10-15k p.a) were also asked if they had considered moving out of the area. Their response portrays a similar story:

> Marlon: We would but...
>
> Sarah: Our house is not worth what we paid for it.

Sarah and Marlon bought their property in 2007 for around £70,000, just prior to the Global Financial Crisis (2008) when house prices tended to be relatively high.

For other interviewees living in and around the area, similar concerns were prevalent – albeit they were less inclined to want to move:

> Nasir: We might have bought the house for X amount, but I am sure it is not worth that now. I am sure it has gone a lot less you know than what we paid for it, unfortunately. You would like it to double its value or increase more but that's reality, reality is it is not worth what we paid for it in 2011.

Over the last decade, house price sales in the area average at £72,000 but in the last five years were less at £63,000 (Zoopla, 2022). In the period of post-crash recovery, house prices in Sheffield tended to stagnate between 2010 and 2015 but have increased since then by over 50 percent (from ~ £150,000 to £225,000) (Home, 2022b). The UK average shows a similar picture: averaging around £170,000 between 2010 and 2015, but increasing to £272,000 by 2022 (ONS, 2022e). The main conclusion from this is that house prices in Burngreave have not recovered to pre-crash levels like Sheffield and the UK more generally and participants suggest this is to do with localised immigration. Participants are the victims of a volatile and inflated housing market. An overdependence upon house prices as a source of economic and emotional wellbeing is a problem of class relations and the dysfunctionality of a housing market which tends to only benefit lenders.

8.4 Immigrants Are (Not) Taking Our Jobs

This subsection explores how participants construct their perceptions of the labour market and how these perceptions are informed by their own localised experiences of immigration and work. It shows how dominant common-sense discourses of immigration and immigrants within politics and the media may be used by participants to understand what is going on in their neighbourhoods and the country more generally. This is important to the way they then think about their own experiences of work and what this means for the way they arrive at political positions. The devaluation and stigmatisation of different types of migrant labour seemed to be informed by the class and occupational backgrounds of participants. Those in relatively stable and higher skilled employment tended to be the least critical of unskilled migrant labour (Kyle, Kay and Mabel), whereas those in some of the most precarious economic circumstances – Alan (long term

unemployed), Eddy (<16 hours a week) and Mary (unemployed) – thought migrants were taking 'British' jobs. This tends to map on to the extent to which migration is likely to impact on the wages and labour market opportunities of the two groups (see subsection 2.3.2).

Throughout this project, the idea that immigrants take British jobs was only articulated explicitly by five participants (Ben, Eddy, Mary, Paul and Steph). For Mary (Selby, 60, White British, Income £0-5k p.a) and Eddy (Selby, 60, White British, Income £5-10k p.a), immigration is framed as the driving force behind job scarcity for the working-class:

> Joe: Did you both vote?
>
> Eddy: Both voted to leave.
>
> Joe: And what were your reasons for doing that?
>
> Eddy: Erm one of them was immigration. You know, erm, you just felt that...I won't...specify a group but you just felt that there was certain people coming into here are taking all the jobs.

Like Ben and Mabel previously, Eddy's reluctance to name a particular migrant group is part of the way participants feel it is culturally unacceptable to single out specific communities, but that speaking pejoratively about migrants more generally is valid. This does not alter the essence of his argument: immigration undermines the indigenous workforce and threatens perceived cultural homogeneity.

Ben (Selby, 26, Male, White British, Income £15-20k p.a) is employed in precarious, cash-in-hand manual work, and whilst earning more than others, has, I would argue, the most insecure personal circumstances in the sample. He has large amounts of personal debt, substance misuse issues, is involved in crime and has a series of health problems. His interview is significant for the way it illuminates how political subjectivities are formed through a contradictory series of arguments. Ben's interview was dominated by stigmatising and critical views of immigration and immigrant groups. Because they are the largest migrant group living in Selby, Ben talked me through a series of local 'folk stories' to characterise Polish people as violent, drunk and feckless. As our discussion continued, this was elided by a more good-sense understanding grounded in direct experience. Ben revealed that he has several Polish friends from his time at college and that

“90% of them are all alright [Polish migrants], they all work, they have got their own houses, they are not on the dole, it’s just a few that think they should be given everything”. It seems Ben is caught between his own direct experiences and the weight of common-sense discourses circulating in the wider neighbourhood and his interactions at work.

Ben voted to remain in the EU referendum because he thought that immigration would continue whether Britain was a part of the EU or not, and that leaving could have economic impacts on the cost of goods (tobacco and cars). Nevertheless, he still observed that migrant labour undercut the pay of the indigenous workforce:

> Ben: All the foreigners coming over, they are taking the jobs because they can pay them less money. Which, yeah, if they want to work for less money, then fair enough. But it's not right…they should have as much chance as the next person to get the job.

Ben displays an acute awareness of the exploitation of migrant workers. However, he does not share a sense of class solidarity with their struggles and tends to displace his own frustrations of not finding secure and well-paid work back onto migrant groups rather than those who exploit them.

Paul (Selby, 39, White British, Income £0-5k p.a), who has been unemployed for the past five years and his partner Steph (Selby, 39, White British, Income £10-15k), who is in part-time call-centre work, took one of the most critical stances towards what they saw as ‘economic migrants’ and immigration. Throughout their account, they tell me about their own struggles navigating the benefits system and how unemployment and the process of claiming universal credit has worsened Paul’s mental health. They both voted to leave the EU and echo Ben’s arguments:

> Paul: I don't know if it is true, but you hear people blaming Polish people, but not necessarily Polish but all people from Europe are pinching our jobs apparently.
>
> Steph: There is not many jobs been advertised because of more people that are coming from different places, [they] are getting the jobs.
>
> Joe: Like a migrant worker?
>
> Steph: Yeah…Why would they want to pay us the standard rate when they can pay them minimum wage when they can get more stuff out of them?

> Joe: What effect do you think that has upon British workers?
>
> Steph: Can't get jobs. More people on Jobseekers [Allowance].
>
> Joe: Do you think people have any specific feelings towards that?
>
> Steph: I think most people would probably feel angry because they are trying their best to get a job and can't get one. Obviously, the government penalise you for not getting a job or not looking; they start doing stuff with your benefits…it impacts the people that are actually trying to find a job at the end of the day. How can you get the jobs if they have already been taken?

Paul's hesitation ('I don't know if it is true') seems to suggest that anti-migrant common-sense does not need to be factually accurate to influence (his) opinion but this also shows the strength of these discourses in shaping opinion. Interestingly, Steph does offer more of a good-sense analysis of how migrant workers are exploited and how unemployment tends to be punished through punitive job search practices, but the way she and Paul target their resentment at migrants rather than employers and politicians reinforces common-sense narratives and tropes. Discussion of immigration and its effects upon the availability of work are implicitly set against their own experiences of existing on unemployment benefits: financial penalisation and stigma.

A more prevalent argument across interviewee accounts was that migrants occupy jobs that British workers would not do or jobs in sectors (generally healthcare) that British workers alone could not fill. There was an important distinction made between 'good' and 'bad' migrants which was based upon their economic and cultural value (Makinen, 2017). Contradictory attitudes are common across different participants' accounts. Elsewhere in her interview, Mabel (Selby, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) suggested that some migrants entered the UK for free healthcare and easy access to benefits. Here, however, she offers a more structural understanding of migrants filling labour market shortages, whilst stigmatising the work ethic of some British workers: "it is not them pinching our jobs, it is us not wanting the jobs. That's the truth." As her and Kay understand it:

> Kay: There is plenty of factory jobs.
>
> Mabel: But a lot of your English don't bother going for them.
>
> Kay: Not particularly good money but if you are willing to graft; me and Mabel we are limited to what jobs we can do. I wouldn't last ten minutes in a factory.

Kyle adds further nuance to this argument:

> Kyle: Well, you have got Rigid haven't you, Greencore, they are your two big ones. And a lot of them are foreigners anyway that work at Clipper, Rigid and Greencore.

Residents living in Selby tended to express a form of localised common-sense that the three aforementioned employers (Clipper – logistics; Rigid – paper manufacturing; and Greencore – food production) tend to only attract a migrant workforce because of poor working-conditions and poor pay.

Eddy (Selby, 60, White British, Income £5-10k p.a) and Mary (Selby, 60, White British, Income £0-5k p.a) grounded their views in an understanding of some migrants coming to the UK to claim unemployment benefits:

> Eddy: I don't disagree with people who are qualified doctors, nurses, coming in, if they are coming in with qualifications one thing or another then fair enough…
>
> Mary: They are not just coming in to doss about like they do.

Kay (Selby, 54, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Mabel (Selby, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) propose a points-based immigration system:

> Kay: Well, the main reason I voted was to stop more immigrants coming. I think it should be on a points system if you have got a, like in Australia, if you have got a profession of any type, I don't mean just doctors and that.
>
> Mabel: If you can work and sustain yourself then you should be allowed in.

As does Kyle (Selby, 25, White British, Income £20-30k p.a):

> Kyle: I don't have an issue with people migrating here if you have got a skillset to offer like Australia…if you have got a skill and we are after your skill by all means come in, you are helping the country out. But if you are just going to come over here and not contribute anything then why bother coming over at all.

Interviewees tend to denigrate and stigmatise those in closer proximity to them in social space – migrant workers – because of how those in similar class and occupational groups present a greater threat to jobs and resources. Participants were less critical of migrants when they were in occupations at a greater distance from migrants in social space (in professions they didn't think were threatened by migrants) and/or when they thought migrants filled skilled jobs which benefitted them (doctors, nurses).

The way participants advocate for a points-based immigration system is

characteristic of a model of citizenship which presents it not as an automatic right, but something achieved through fulfilment of a series of responsibilities (Morrison, 2018). The responsibilities of 'good' citizens are premised upon an "obligation to participate in both labour and consumer markets" (Morrison, 2018: 171), but this must be the 'right' types of markets, such as those for skilled professions or menial jobs British people don't want to do.

8.5 Discussion

This chapter has presented data which focus upon immigration and the deservingness of migrants in terms of access to welfare support; how immigration is perceived to have negative effects upon the symbolic and material value of space and house prices; and different understandings of migrant occupational groups and their economic and cultural value. Participants' attitudes towards immigrants and immigration tend to cover up and misrecognise the causes of more structurally embedded inequalities by directing attention to individuals and groups who are often spoken about pejoratively in politics, the media and everyday life. Participants' accounts must be read against the backdrop of a prolonged organic crisis of neoliberal capitalism (Jessop, 2017) which has been, and continues to be, consolidated through the maintenance of, *inter alia*, classed and racialised inequalities. Harnessing the 'politics of disgust' (Tyler, 2013; 2020) as an ideological weapon, and articulating them as forms of 'neoliberal common-sense' (Hall and O'Shea, 2013), the discursive organisation of contemporary neoliberalism works to "reinforce boundaries between 'the self' (the citizen) and the 'contaminated other' (the alien) (Ngai, 2005)" (Patel and Connelly, 2019: 972, reference cited in text).

Interviewees repeatedly draw upon anti-welfare and anti-immigrant common-sense discourses (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2013) to frame their experiences and views. The reasons for this, I would argue, are related to a deeper contextual history in which working-class people have been subject to persistent and intensifying economic and physical insecurity, labour market precarity, and political marginalisation for over forty years. These compounding structural circumstances drive a sense of malaise, frustration, unease and

resentment that is pushed onto 'other' populations, such as migrants and other marginalised groups (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Krivonos, 2018; Makinen, 2017 Tyler, 2013). Those in proximate positions in social space (Atkinson, 2017), with similarly lower levels of skills and occupational experiences are more threatening than higher-skilled professions who exist in spaces that are perceived to be out of reach. Several participants continued to identify asylum seekers or refugees as a deserving group, and distinct from regular labour migrants, despite recent years having witnessed politicians within the UK and across Europe reconstruct asylum seeking as an economic rather than humanitarian issue (Mayblin, 2019). This is significant because it shows a level of empathy and solidarity with some of the most marginalised and stigmatised groups that is often missing from over simplified accounts of leave voters.

Different political discourses are either accepted or rejected by individuals as being able to help explain and understand the particular configuration of social relations in which they find themselves. This is what Bourdieu would call a 'position within social space': a relational space, where position is dependent upon possession of different capitals, and which creates a particular set of experiences (Atkinson, 2010). Those with less economic and cultural capital may find themselves in low-skilled, poorly paid, insecure and precarious jobs, living in neighbourhoods where deprivation is higher and house or rental prices are lower, which could mean they have greater interactions with migrants as a result. Past experiences *and* the way they are explained by ideology and propaganda (as in Poulantzas' suggestion that politics is not entirely determined by economic position but also ideology), of which common-sense neoliberalism is the most pervasive and 'accessible', inform the way people form political subjectivities. Class solidarity on the basis of good-sense would be capable of ensuring immigration could take place without impacting wages for those in the lowest occupational groups. However, without strong and competing political discourses, those living in marginalised and insecure personal circumstances may be more susceptible to common-sense discourses which blame poor wages, less economic opportunities and greater exploitation *entirely* on migrants.

8.5.1 Constructing Immigrants as Benefit Tourists

The extracts explored in subsection 8.2 are, for the most part, arguments for leaving the EU based upon an understanding of immigrants as attracted to Britain's welfare state – for benefits, housing and healthcare – but who have little intention to contribute to the country first. This has been articulated by participants in reference to a mistaken view that migrants are entitled to welfare and NHS treatment from 'Day 1'. The way participants spoke about 'contribution' was intimately connected to the neoliberalisation of citizenship (Makinen, 2017). The boundaries of the good and deserving migrant/citizen are increasingly constructed around conceptions of employment, contribution, hard work and responsibility (Krivonos, 2018). The tendency for interviewees to characterise migrants as dependent upon benefits is part of the way they mark out their own respectability as hardworking and deserving in a context where opportunities to acquire economic value or capital are limited.

Persistent economic insecurity drives a sense of resentment that is displaced onto migrant groups and other abject populations (Tyler, 2013) because of their social proximity, and the idea that these groups are competition for scarce resources. Some of the participants in this project framed their attitudes towards immigration and immigrants using this distinction despite claiming unemployment benefits and living in social housing themselves (Alan and Paul). This suggests that anti-immigrant attitudes are bound up with racialised and nationalistic claims to belonging and entitlement and that common-sense sometimes distorts and trumps lived experiences.

Over the last forty years, the most dominant narratives surrounding immigration, immigrants and the welfare state have tended to be premised upon containment, illegitimacy, dehumanisation and retrenchment. Immigrants – as part of a broader 'undeserving' residuum – have been consistently denigrated in a variety of symbolically violent ways (Jensen, 2014; Nunn and Biressi, 2009; Shilliam, 2018). Interviewees recognised that working-class people such as themselves are living in precarious and insecure circumstances and a sense of resentment was directed to racialised 'others' that were perceived to be living in better circumstances or having easier access to services or entitlements.

There are some spatial dimensions to this which counterpose the spatially specific experiences of immigration spoken about by residents in Sheffield, particularly in relation to the way migrants have lowered the symbolic and economic value of the neighbourhood (see subsection 6.3, 8.3). For these interviewees living in Sheffield, there is a stronger sentiment that migrants *do not* occupy better economic and social conditions than themselves and are variously referred to by participants as being disrespectful, dirty, noisy and rude. This is a form of common-sense in itself but tends to challenge a more dominant discourse of migrants receiving more (benefits, housing, healthcare) than the British working-class which is more prevalent in the accounts of interviewees from Selby, as demonstrated in this subsection. This may be because people living in the Selby case study site have less experiences of immigration or because Roma-Slovak migrants living in Burngreave, who are blamed for falling house prices, are more exploited and stigmatised than Polish and Romanian migrants living in Selby (see Chapter 5).

As part of the way the crisis of neoliberalism is managed, questions of class inequality and struggle have been refracted and articulated through the lens of immigration and race (Makinen, 2017). These are the ideological frames through which the winners of neoliberal economic policy, the capitalists and their intermediaries in politics and the media, aim to encourage British people to understand widening economic inequalities (Lawrence, 1982; Tyler, 2013). Common-sense narratives associated with immigration, as they exist in the articulations of political parties that espouse national populism, are explicit appeals to certain social groups which displace class-based ideologies and attempt to engineer new social norms which make appeals to nation and culture.

The majority of participants cited in this subsection considered Britain's welfare system to be too generous or too easily exploitable. Some implied that state actors and the government were complicit in this process and that the rights and needs of immigrant groups took precedence over White British people. As Patel and Connelly summarise "the argument goes that racially minoritized people have benefitted so greatly through equality policies in 'post-racial' times, that it is the 'indigenous' white population that is now being discriminated against (Bonilla-Silva, 2018)" (Patel and Connelly, 2019: 978, citation in text). However, this was

only one part of how participants constructed their justifications for voting to leave the European Union.

8.5.2 Responding to the Taint of Urban Space through Common-sense

This subsection has shown how experiences at the neighbourhood level are often extrapolated by participants as representative of what is happening in the country more generally. Interviewees felt as though immigration had ruined their neighbourhood and this led them to carry out a range of symbolic practices to mark out distances from ‘others’. One of the key conclusions here is that when participants are unable to change their situation by moving house (because of declining house prices, low income, and economic insecurity), they stigmatise and denigrate migrants – taking from common-sense discourses and stereotypes – as a way to reclaim a sense of symbolic value. Interviewees’ justifications for voting to leave were generally premised upon the idea that Brexit would lessen immigration in their local area.

In subsection 6.4 and 6.7 it was shown how concerns over migrants lowering house prices were a key finding specific to the Sheffield case study site. This subsection developed that argument further by exploring these narratives of spatial and symbolic decline across a wider range of participants’ accounts. In comparison to Selby, the Sheffield case study site is more ethnically heterogenous and has greater numbers of migrants living there. Specifically, Burngreave is home to older groups of first, second and third generation Asian/Asian-British and Black/Black-British migrant and ethnic groups and, inter alia, newer groups of Eastern European and particularly Roma-Slovak migrants. This context prefigures another key finding relating to immigration in the accounts of Sheffield interviewees. Different waves of migration in Burngreave seem to have produced migrant hierarchies between Asian/Asian-British and Black/Black-British groups (such as Marlon and Nasir), and Roma-Slovak migrants which are articulated using common-sense discourses that claim symbolic distance from newer, undesirable populations.

Writing about the relationship between social and physical space, Bourdieu tells us that “nothing is further removed, and more intolerable, than people socially

distant who happen to come close in physical space" (Bourdieu, 2018: 111). This in itself could partially explain why interviewees are critical of migrant settlement in their neighbourhoods. However, for this conclusion to be true, it must be presupposed that working-class participants and different migrant groups occupy socially *distant* positions. This is more true of the *perceptions* of (most) participants than their personal economic and social characteristics and experiences suggest. I would argue that the way participants think of themselves as occupying class positions different to migrants is informed by discourses which divide class groups by ethnicity and race and characterise 'others' as a residual population. Disguising questions of class exploitation through discourses of immigration, serves to disaggregate the working-class, reduce the likelihood of class solidarities forming and maintains the unequal distribution of wealth and resources in favour of the capitalist class.

There also seems to be some gendered dimensions at work here which connect to those illuminated in subsection 7.5.1, where it was shown how men tended to draw upon masculine discourses of industrial decline to articulate their decision for voting to leave. In this chapter, male participants tended to see immigration as a physical threat and related to violent crime (Ben, Kyle, Nasir). This is interesting in itself but also seems to be part of a broader story in which crises of traditional masculinity meet up with crises of race relations and immigration (Jefferson, 2021). What is significant about this group of interviewees is that they are younger (Ben, 26, and Kyle, 25) and from minority ethnic backgrounds (Nasir, Asian/Asian-British); popular explanations for Brexit, particularly in relation to immigration, tend to focus on the views of older, white, working-class voters. What sets interviewees' articulations apart from accounts of the former, is that their concerns are not expressions of 'inarticulate anger' or commitments to masculinist ideas of protection which can be found in some anti-immigrant discourses (Jefferson, 2021). Rather they represent a sense of threat to physical security and safety more commonly associated with women and feminised discourses surrounding immigrants (Valentova and Alieva, 2012).

As the relationship between habitus and physical space suggests, negative symbolic evaluations of neighbourhood (both from participants and those living outside the neighbourhood) bring into question interviewees' own sense of value

and their subjectivities. Some spoke directly about the spatial specificities of their referendum vote, claiming had they lived elsewhere (particularly somewhere more affluent) their decision may have been different (Sarah and Marlon); others articulated a sense of being trapped (Andrew; Jean; Nasir; Yasmin). In the absence of being able to change their situation, it seems that participants redirect their anger, frustration and resentment onto those they perceive to be ruining their neighbourhood. Bourdieu (2018) argues that class ties people to physical spaces and when these physical spaces do not feel like home, symbolic denigration and stigmatisation of others may be a way of expressing this.

Declining house prices were considered to be an effect of the ‘cultures’ and moralities of migrants and wider perceptions of the area in which ‘others’ were concentrated, chiming with the longstanding representations of immigrants and people of colour as pathological, dangerous (Lawrence, 1982) and dirty (Tyler, 2013). What needs to be reemphasised is that participants are the victims of a dysfunctional and fluctuating housing market. Their overreliance on house value as a mediator of economic, personal and emotional security is a product of the economic insecurity in the labour market. Interviewees have low incomes and they bought houses because they thought this would be a source of wealth (to sell their houses on in the future), but this has driven up prices faster than wages because of a failure to build enough houses to meet demand (Hanley, 2012). This situation is compounded by participants’ own house prices failing to recover to pre-financial crash levels, which they attribute as being caused by immigration.

Existing research has suggested that territorial stigmatisation generally leads to a tendency to mark symbolic distances from where you live (see Wacquant, 2009 as cited by Watt, 2020), which many interviewees did. However, some participants continued to express place-based attachments despite the pervasiveness of stigma (Jean) and others were more inclined to see the symbolic value of immigration (Carol and Danielle), but these articulations need to be understood in their social and spatial contexts. Jean has invested heavily in her dwelling and lives in a more expensive part of the neighbourhood; Carol and Danielle mark out their identities with a particular political discourse (cosmopolitanism) that competes with common sense narratives of immigration,

as well as having more secure economic and employment circumstances and degree level educations.

8.5.3 Immigration and 'British' Jobs

This subsection explored how participants articulate the relationship between 'good' and 'bad' workers or good and bad migrants. How interviewees come to understand different occupational groups as valuable and necessary to the needs of the nation is dependent upon their own position within social space and the economic opportunities, they have access to. The key point here is that interviewees in less advantaged social positions who work in 'low status' jobs, such as factory workers, or who claim benefits, are in closer proximity to migrants and feel most threatened. This means they tend to be more susceptible to common-sense stereotypes of migrants and use forms of symbolic denigration to mark out distances and differences from 'others'. Exceptions are made, however, for migrants in more advantaged and 'high status' professions, such as doctors and professionals, who constitute less of an economic and symbolic threat to them.

In Bourdieu's social space, "each position derives its meaning from its relations to others" (Atkinson, 2010: 47) and the way people in different positions arrive at their dispositions and subjectivities is "attuned to the practicalities and relevances of everyday experiences" (Atkinson, 2017: 66). Participants seem to be less critical of migrant workers entering the UK in high-skill and professional occupations because these jobs are recognised as socially useful and are part of a range of services which participants benefit from. Interviewees may not have directly experienced competition for jobs from migrant workers, however, sentiments of this kind tended to stem from understandings of the precariousness of their own economic and labour market circumstances and the way these circumstances are explained in the media and politics. This is not only a matter of immigration: resentment was often pushed onto other undeserving populations, such as unemployment benefit claimants and the poor more generally (see Jeffery et al. 2020; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Mayblin et al. 2020).

As inequalities and precarity increase while their sources are actively mystified, the form of class relations imposed by neoliberalism is more likely to be accepted as common-sense and reframed as displaced concerns over racialised outsiders (Makinen, 2017). Changing working-class subjectivities need to be understood in this context: dispositions and political proclivities are often formed from localised experiences which are thought about and understood using a range of different discourses dominant in the media and politics. Dividing and atomising the working-class by 'race' and ethnicity reduces the capacity for collective resistance against the exploitative tendencies of capitalist labour relations (Hall, 1980) and generates fear and hatred of an 'other' which provides consent for increasingly punitive social policies (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2013). Not only this, but it also diverts attention away from the capitalist class, and some of their intermediaries such as the mainstream political parties and the media, as a class generally opposed to working-class interests.

It tended to be interviewees from Selby who expressed concerns over migrants coming to the UK to work. There was a perception that migrants did generally come to work, but that the UK needed 'high status' professions rather than unskilled/factory workers; some thought that migrants were taking 'British' people's jobs; and others suggested that migrants did jobs that British people wouldn't do. It can be surmised that the reason why these sentiments were more prevalent in the accounts of those living in Selby rather than Sheffield is to do with there being a higher concentration of low skilled jobs in Selby (Census, 2021 – see Chapter, 5), which migrant groups tend to enter and these sectors are where migrants have the greatest effects on wages and labour market competition (see subsection 2.3.2).

8.6 Conclusion

Anti-immigrant sentiment can be read as a form of classificatory struggle to reassert value in a period of ongoing crisis where a range of processes have, over time, devalued working-class identities, widened inequalities and further immiserated Britain's marginal actors (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Makinen, 2017; Tyler, 2013). Interviewees tend to perpetuate a common-sense discourse of

migrants and benefit claimants as part of an underclass which are both socially and culturally different to themselves. This is part of a broader project to atomise working-class groups along racial and nationalistic lines to secure hegemony for punitive social and economic policies which tend to be misrecognised as only affecting 'other' populations, rather than (correctly) the working-class as a whole.

Subsection 8.2 brought together data which saw participants broadly speak about migrants as 'benefit tourists' – that they entered the UK not to work but to access what they perceived to be generous welfare stipends. It is argued that interviewees stigmatised and denigrated migrants as parasitic and underclass as a way to mark out distances between their own similarly insecure economic and social positions and those they deemed as racially 'other'. In subsection 8.3, the way interviewees articulate their attachment to neighbourhood is shown to be related to both their position in social space and their *perception* of this position in relation to migrant groups. Interviewees' unease and frustration regarding the presence of what they perceived to be undesirable others was accentuated because of the absence of resources needed to move house.

The final subsection (8.4) explored how interviewees spoke about different migrant workers and occupational groups in relation to the needs of the labour market. This subsection presented data which challenge stigmatising discourses that over-simplify the working-class' perceptions of migrants as just 'taking our jobs': while this view was expressed by some, it was also the case that this view was sometimes rejected or often articulated with more nuance, particularly where related to personal experiences and subjectivities. Migrants in occupational groups which were in closer proximity to interviewees' own positions in social space (for most, this was unskilled and routine occupations) were often seen as a greater threat than those in higher skilled groups.

In general, those in the most disadvantaged positions were most critical of migrant groups and this tended to reflect the way interviewees felt as though migrants were 'competition' for jobs and resources. It is not so much that greater wealth ensures good-sense. Existing in the most insecure circumstances without competing political discourses means that common-sense neoliberalism tends to be one of the only narratives that can explain – even while it obscures the true causes of – experiences of social, economic and spatial inequality. This fed into

referendum voting decisions: many voted to leave because they thought Brexit would change the way immigration plays out in their neighbourhood. In Chapter 9 which follows, working-class interviewees' experiences of political marginalisation are explored, and it is shown how in the absence of solutions to the UK's problems proposed by politicians, Brexit came to be understood as an opportunity for real social and economic change.

9.0 Responding to Histories of Political Marginalisation

9.1 Introduction

Political marginalisation is a significant factor contributing to the Brexit vote but has received less empirical attention, and is less well understood, than other explanations which have focussed on economic insecurity (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b; Rodrik, 2018), nationalism and racism (Bhambra, 2017; Patel and Connelly, 2019; Virdee and McGeever, 2018) and cultural change or backlash (Norris and Inglehart, 2019). This chapter explores working-class interviewees' longstanding experiences of political marginalisation and explores why this seems to be more pronounced amongst those who are white and working-class. It illuminates how their experiences intersect with economic inequality and perceptions of social and cultural change and argues that common-sense neoliberalism is used by participants to articulate their political subjectivities in the absence of dominant discourses of class politics and/or political parties which are responsive to their needs and demands.

Since the 1990s, class-based political voting patterns have collapsed (see Chapter 2): not because people are no longer subject to class inequalities, insecurity and exploitation, but because the political options open to them have largely converged (Evans and Tilley, 2017), other than in cases and interludes such as Corbyn, Brexit and Truss. What can be witnessed now is a return to a more 'normal' centrist political mode with Sunak and Starmer, albeit with some extremely right-wing elements around immigration. Existing analyses of class politics (*ibid*) tend to follow from a model of class (the neo-Weberian Goldthorpe schema) which overestimates the size and growth of the middle-class, underestimates the size of the working-class and glosses over a view of the class structure as mediated by a series of relations based upon particular political and economic interests, as more Marxist approaches do (see Vidal, 2018; Wright, 1997). Evans and Tilley (2017) tend to understand the series of political and economic changes shaping class-voting patterns and political choices offered to the electorate as epiphenomenal to a changing class structure (*ibid*).

Other authors, such as Atkinson (2017), rely too heavily on a Bourdieusian theoretical approach which can be charged with some of the same shortcomings

as Evans and Tilley (2017). Atkinson's (2017) approach lacks focus on the economic dimensions of class relations and, as Crossley (2022) has argued in relation to Bourdieu's work more generally, proximity in social space (having similar volumes and compositions of capitals) does not necessarily mean people are part of a class group with similar subjectivities and dispositions. This chapter builds upon a Bourdieusian and Marxist political-economic synthesis in relation to class and class politics, which has been developed over the course of this thesis. It seeks to understand how different life experiences shaped by the playing out of political-economic restructuring processes in the neoliberal era form the basis of working-class political subjectivities and dispositions. This is both about class in the sense of work and income and the cultural distinctions between class groups, *as well as* the wider ensemble of economic and political relations which underpin the way these different chances, opportunities and experiences play out.

When working-class people think of mainstream political parties as no longer representing their interests or as no longer being able to offer viable solutions to the UK's problems, this is where more populist political discourses (common-sense) are most likely to gain traction. Those experiencing downward mobility may "grope for a means of making sense of and battling against their fall and find parties offering explanations that *seem* to accord with practical experience" (Atkinson, 2015: 177). Common-sense distorts the truths of practical experiences as a hegemonic manoeuvre which frustrates the possibilities for counter-hegemonic organisation and politics. This seems to be a more acute experience for the white working-class conditioned by a lack of political party and union representation, the perception of policies favouring 'others' in terms of housing and jobs, an increase in migrant numbers despite government's tough stance on immigration and a wider perception of the white working-class as being the vanguard of racism from those in more advantageous social and economic positions.

In subsection 9.2, votes to leave the EU are conceived as a form of pushback against political elites and middle-class liberals, who are perceived to favour the interests of 'less deserving' groups because of political correctness. Participants are neglected and stigmatised from above and displace this stigma onto groups

below (migrants, benefit claimants and other ‘enemies’ not constituted on the basis of class).

In subsection 9.3, interviewees draw upon recollections of the past to understand their political and economic marginalisation in the present; their leave voting proclivities conflate EU membership with the effects of the parallel and related process of neoliberal restructuring in the UK (see also Chapter 7).

The third subsection (9.4) is slightly different to the preceding two, in the way it focuses on the meanings and expectations attached to the referendum, rather than how leave voting is directly related to political marginalisation. It shows how working-class people saw the referendum as a form of direct democracy when opposed with past experiences of political disenfranchisement under representative parliamentary democracy and how Brexit was thought of as an opportunity for real economic and social change. It is striking that so many participants thought the vote would be overturned but less surprising when this is understood as the culmination of years of political neglect. The discussion and analysis section firstly establishes links across each of the three subsections before moving onto some more specific thematic analysis.

9.2 Politics for Whom? Economic Marginalisation and the Interests of Political Elites

This subsection is about the leave vote as a form of pushback against political correctness, left-wing politics and ‘cancel culture’ in which political elites and middle-class liberals are perceived to be unsympathetic to, and denigrate, ‘truths’ about the causes of the UK’s problems and instead favour less deserving groups. Participants are economically marginalised, and they accept and perpetuate neoliberal common-sense discourses which other abject groups as the causes of their problems (c.f. Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Makinen, 2017; Tyler, 2013). This has a classificatory dimension in the way interviewees respond to their perceived neglect from above (political elites/liberals) by stigmatising and marking distances from groups they see as creating competition for jobs and resources and undermining their values ‘below’ (migrants, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and young people). There is also a spatial, lived and affective

dimension to this in relation to participants' localised, personal experiences and understandings of change as white working-class people – through a combination of immigration, physical insecurity and economic decline – which political elites and middle-class liberals are perceived to deny.

Andrew (Sheffield, Leave, 43, Male, White British, Income £0-5k p.a) is currently unemployed and a stay-at-home parent, caring for his children. He has low levels of economic and cultural capital: in the past, he has worked in retail, warehousing and labouring roles and his highest level of education is an NVQ qualification. Andrew tells me that he left school with poor GCSEs and his father had pushed him to find a job rather than sitting around the house. He and his family are supported by his wife's wage (something he describes as being 'very good'). They currently live in the Sheffield research site, in a mid-terrace house which Andrew tells me has depreciated in value.

Andrew describes his own political attitudes as being 'on the right' and that he has voted for the Conservative Party in the past. Throughout his interview, he tells me he is against 'left-wing' politics: "…It just seems a very old weird concept that everybody gets an equal distribution of people's labour when some people don't want to contribute to the labour". Andrew thinks the main political parties in the UK are "cowed by political correctness". The following extracts illuminate his sense of marginalisation more clearly and how he responds to it:

> Joe: Do you think the people who tend to comment on your lived experiences are people who haven't had experiences like it?
>
> Andrew: Absolutely. Middle-class, upper-class rich kids living in a bubble, mummy and daddy's money. At uni, sorry, they are probably looking at a really high salaried job in the future, they are not having to live in lower working-class areas. They have no concept of reality, absolutely none. Or you get your people who do live in them areas, but they are such die hard socialists that they will forgive anything, absolutely anything, because you can't criticise these people.

Four members of this study (David, Howard, Marcia and Ralph) could be considered working-class 'left wingers.' What they have that Andrew does not is a greater individual income and crucially, a long history of occupational experiences in heavily unionised industries (David: steel; Howard: coal, Marcia: public sector; Ralph: public sector) where their politics have developed around a more materialist (my interpretation) understanding of social issues which focus

on *class relations.* Other working-class interviewees with similar levels of income (Kyle), but in jobs which are unorganised (self-employed groundworker), tend to express similar politics to Andrew. This is not characteristic of all people who are white and working-class (as David, Howard and Ralph's accounts testify), but rather the specific experience of a group of people who have more limited social and geographical mobility, who live in some of the most socially and economically deprived areas in the country, where levels of immigration are higher and local spatial stigmatisation more prevalent. For members of the white working-class who live in these spaces, social and physical proximity to ethnic and racial 'others' - who are deemed to objectify a cultural and moral threat in a racialised social system (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) - informs political subjectivities.

Andrew is critical of class as a (socialist) concept but continues to use class markers to explain social differences (as above) and his own 'ordinariness' (Atkinson, 2010):

> Joe: Do you think of yourself as belonging to a particular class?
>
> Andrew: I mean if we did sort of talk class, I don't think we do that anymore do we, I suppose we do in a way, working-class. Miner's son. Always lived in low socio-economic areas, never lived in posh areas or anything like that. Just a normal bloke you know, struggling by and trying to get on with it.

Andrew's quote evokes the idea of 'ordinariness' in class positioning (see Savage et al. 2001). His struggles to get by seem to be important to the way he thinks of mainstream political parties as failing to make things better. Andrew's localised and personal experiences of immigration further compound his understanding of politicians as being out of touch.

> Andrew: I mean unless you live amongst it, you don't know how it impacts people. It is okay for politicians to do soundbites about immigration but, you know, they don't see it. They don't, they really don't, and they say well we visit these areas and then visit a community centre...they see a facade that's what they see, they don't see day to day life.

There are similarities between the way Andrew thinks about politicians and 'die hard socialists', and how Kay (Selby, Female, 54, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Mabel (Selby, Female, 59, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) interpret

younger people. Both groups seem to constitute classed ‘others’. For Kay and Mabel, young people are characterised as embracing ‘silly’ ideological values:

> Joe: What sort of things do you think are said about those who voted to leave?
>
> Kay: Well, they think we are crackpots; they all think we are doolally plonkers don't they.
>
> Mabel: Yeah, they do, especially the young, the young are saying you have destroyed our future. It is like what? You have not the faintest idea, you don't have any idea, you can't even wash up. And you certainly can't even boil an egg so don't even try telling us that we have destroyed your future. Silly little weasels.
>
> Kay: They all think we are crackers but that is because people are telling us we are crackers.
>
> Mabel: It is only because there is a whole generation that were sixteen and they are now eighteen. The 18-year-olds, a few million are now saying we want to remain, if we leave you are destroying our future. So that's the only reason why it has slightly altered. If they did it again in another years' time there would be even more Remainers because there would be another few million-school leaver's, 18-year-olds...
>
> Kay: They are all brainwashed, left-wing looneys.
>
> Mabel: They are!
>
> Kay: Taking over the country.

Kay and Mabel push back against the weakening dominance of their own social and cultural values by stigmatising younger people who are becoming more socially and politically dominant but are perceived to lack the practical mastery of everyday life which qualifies them to understand and speak about the world.

Sarah (Sheffield, Female, 45, White British, Income £10-15k p.a) and Marlon (Sheffield, Male, 49, Black British, Income £10-15k p.a) have GCSE level educations and entered work straight after leaving school. They have secure but low-paid jobs in food retail and are both leave voters. Throughout their account they talk about politics through the lens of immigration, a phenomenon which seems to dominate their everyday local experiences. Marlon and his parents moved to the UK from the Caribbean when he was a child, and his perceptions of local migrant groups are shaped by his earlier life experiences. He tells me his “dad brought five kids up on his own…1970s my mum died, so a Black man

bringing up five kids. I sometimes, I wonder how he did it to be honest, brought us all up all on his own and he still worked".

Sarah and Marlon consider lower-income areas more likely to witness immigration, as their extract attests:

> Joe: So firstly, did you expect the country to vote to leave?
>
> Sarah: No. I didn't no. Because I have always just got this thing in my head that there is all these posh people living in these fantastic places, who probably slightly know it goes on [immigration] but don't have to deal with it.
>
> Marlon: People like Tony Blair…oh they want us to remain, but he doesn't have to see all this does he?

This contrasts to what they see and hear in their own neighbourhood:

> Marlon: We have witnessed, me and my wife have witnessed some sights that people don't believe around here haven't we. Fighting in the street, kids running up and down this street, urinating, and the noise they [immigrants] make, the mess they make.

Their extracts highlight a disconnect between political elites and more marginalised groups living in working-class neighbourhoods: for 'posh people', immigration is a peripheral problem that can be engaged with at a distance rather than by necessity. Marlon denigrates Eastern European migrants as a way to express resentment over localised change and he articulates this in relation to his family's own migration story – characterised by a strong work ethic – which further compounds his resentment of 'others' as feckless and workless.

Mary (Leave, Female, 60, White British, Income £0-5k p.a), who lives in the Selby research site, is one of the most economically insecure members of the sample. She is a lifelong Labour voter, following her parents. She receives an individual income of £0-5000 per annum, whilst her husband (Eddy) works in a part-time and insecure driving job. Mary left school without any qualifications and has held a variety of low-skilled and routine jobs in the past. She is currently unemployed and receives disability benefits as her main income. An extract from her interview is useful to tease out some of the complexities embedded within the political context preceding the referendum:

> Joe: Do you think the concerns of people like you are met by the current government, or do you think your political concerns are listened to?

> Mary: No. They don't listen to us, don't politicians. They are too interested in themselves. Look at the money they're on, look at the money we are on, you know what I mean, look after themselves do the politicians, they don't look after the people…Really when I think, what do politicians really do for us. They don't really do anything; well, I mean they don't give me thousands of pounds a week do they? Do you know what I mean, all these people what are on the dole and the social they have not worked in their life, they have not paid no national insurance or anything, but they are getting money.

As someone who claims disability benefits herself, Mary responds to her own political and economic marginalisation using neoliberal common-sense discourses which denigrate recipients of unemployment benefit as less deserving. The reason why neoliberal ideologies such as anti-welfare common sense (Jensen and Tyler, 2015) are so popular among those they serve to further marginalise is because of the "forms of 'sense making'" that it enables and how "this sensibility is anchored in belief-systems and practices" (*ibid*: 474). This is not necessarily about practical experiences, given Mary receives benefits as her own income, but a perception that she is receiving *less* than 'undeserving' groups. Mary and Eddy also seem to respond to a wider and more general sense of social malaise by focussing on female Muslims as "internal others" (Virdee and McGeever, 2018: 1803). They suggest that politicians favour the rights of minority groups at the expense of the 'majority culture'.

> Mary: Well, it was like them lads that went to a match with union jack t-shirts on.
>
> Eddy: Oh well this is it…
>
> Mary: They wouldn't let them in they told them to take them off. Why? We don't stop these people wearing masks [burka, I assume] do we?
>
> Eddy: This is what is happening in this country.
>
> Mary: So, they were saying we don't understand why we should have to take them off we are going to a football match where it's England you know. Oh, you can't do that, you can't fly the English flag.
>
> Eddy: It's all about politics. Oh yeah if I put a Union Jack flag up whether be St. Georges day or what have you, the police have every right, and they have done it, to tell me to take it down. But yet it's my country. You know, erm, so there is all that sorts of political goings on.

There is no law against flying the St. George's cross or the Union Jack in the UK. This is despite right-wing media hysteria which aims to further marginalise ethnic minority groups by insinuating they are to blame for a supposed criminalisation

of patriotism (see O'Brien, 2018; Parker, 2018; Rogers, 2018; Southworth, 2018). This taps into ideas about citizenship and rights (Krivonos, 2018); Mary and Eddy racialize 'others' and reassert their Englishness as an attempt to police the boundaries of ethnic/racial difference in the absence of other ways of acquiring value (Davidson and Saull, 2017). This is about political marginalisation in the sense that Eddy and Mary think political parties and other state agencies, such as the police, act in the interests of ethnic 'others' and against the interests of White Britons. These experiences and assumptions seem to be used by Mary and Eddy as evidence of the legitimacy of wider stigmas associated with ethnic minority groups and the negative cultural behaviours which are associated with them.

9.3 Reinscribing the Past as Resistance to Political Marginalisation

In Chapter 6, a more fine-grained analysis of interviewees' life experiences demonstrated how three older participants who are economically and socially marginalised (Eddy, Howard and Mabel) articulated desires to reclaim the certainties and securities of the past by displacing their own abjection onto groups they feel they have lost out to. This argument is developed further here by exploring the same issue amongst a wider sample. Not only this, analysis takes a slightly different focus and explores how experiences of 'hysteresis' are used to construct political proclivities, particularly how loss and economic decline are mapped onto EU membership, conflating it with the parallel and distinct (but related) process of economic and political restructuring across the UK in the shift to neoliberalism. Mainstream political parties are perceived to be unable to offer beneficial solutions to the UK's problems and participants articulate partially idealised recollections of the past which lead to conservative and communitarian reimagining's of how life could be better in the present. These reimaging's sometimes become tied up with national-populist discourses espoused by parties such as UKIP because they *appear* more responsive to inequalities and change.

Alan is a 65-year-old White British man who has been unemployed for the past thirty years due to an accident at work. Before this he worked in a variety of different semi-skilled roles earning around four or five hundred pounds a week,

working long hours to do so but having far greater labour market opportunities. Having been deemed 'fit to work' a decade ago, Alan is impoverished by punitive welfare reforms: he struggles to live on the weekly income provided by unemployment benefit and had to sell his possessions to pay Council Tax bills (see Chapter 8). At the time of interview, Alan, who had become disillusioned with the Labour Party and politics more generally over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s, had recently started voting again. This ties in with Evans and Tilley's (2017) chronology of the decline of the working-class labour vote (explored more fully in section 9.4 below and in Chapter 2) and how former Labour voters have switched to UKIP (Evans and Mellon, 2019):

> Joe: Was it the EU referendum when you started voting again?
>
> Alan: No, I voted for the Labour Party before...
>
> Joe: I know, I mean after your spell of not voting.
>
> Alan: Oh yeah, erm, UKIP and the Brexit party yeah. I only voted for UKIP because who is it was leader. That's only why I am voting for the Brexit Party because I think he is the man; he is the way forward for our country.
>
> Joe: Nigel Farage?
>
> Alan: Yeah, I think so.
>
> Joe: What is it about Farage that you like?
>
> Alan: Just that he speaks for the ordinary working man I think, for this country.
>
> (Leave, Sheffield, 65, Male, White British, Income £5-10k p.a).

When a class is no longer represented politically, Gramsci says the political field is "open for violent solutions" (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999: 450), in which insurgent political parties and their "charismatic" leaders (*ibid*) can reframe "morbid symptoms" (Hoare and Nowell-Smith: 1999: 556) in ways that *appear* more sympathetic to a class's interests. This seems to explain why Alan thinks Farage – a multi-millionaire who developed a brand of politics which blamed a range of structural problems on migration – speaks for the 'ordinary working man'. In a later part of his interview, Alan talks me through his perception of a pre-EU Britain:

> Joe: So, you voted to leave. You said you wanted it to be like it was before, what was it like before we joined?

> Alan: It was good, better. Our pound was a lot stronger against other currencies. I know times have changed and things, but I think we were better off; our government controlled our country and our laws, there was none of this human rights crap that there is now. [Stares at the recorder]. You know what I mean it has gone too much. Our farmers could grow what they wanted…

Without diverging too far from the focus of this subsection, in a different part of his interview Alan explains his concern over human rights to me:

> Alan: There is too many people thinking oh well it's infringing my human rights, well there is too many people saying that, not English [people], foreigners are saying that. They are illegal and not supposed to be here, [but they say] oh it is infringing my human rights, that's all you get nowadays.

Alan is aware that his views on 'human rights' are, like immigration, part of a taboo subject that has become increasingly difficult to talk about in recent years, at least using the terms he wants to. Alan's disenfranchisement from mainstream politics makes neoliberal common-sense discourses more appealing and he believes that 'foreigners' have disproportionately gained from more liberal equality policies (see Garner, 2015). There is a temporal element to Alan's leave vote as a result and this is articulated through racialised common-sense explanations of change (largely taken from UKIP): leaving the EU is associated with a period in the past where there were less 'rights' for migrants and greater economic and ontological security.

Margaret's (Leave, Selby, Female, 62, White British, Income £0-5k p.a) economic circumstances are exceptionally insecure and throughout her interview she speaks of a series of struggles to meet her basic needs. Her income (which she tells me is less than £5,000 per year) is derived from Employment Support Allowance with a disability top-up; she has a degree level education but has been unemployed for over 20 years because of her health. A short vignette from her account illuminates her circumstances and dispositions more clearly:

> Joe: What sort of things can you and can't you do with that level of income?
>
> Margaret: Err, I would like to not worry that bills are going to be too high. I would like to be able to buy my clothes from normal shops instead of charity shops erm, I would like when I need something to be able to get it. I don't need money for, you know, I don't want foreign holidays, I don't want the big expensive television…I just want to be able to feed myself, clothe myself and pay my bills without worrying.

Margaret doesn't trust the Conservative government and thinks they are a party

who “line their own pockets” and cut public services, who also blame “people who are on benefits [for] bleeding the country dry” (Margaret) – a more critical, good-sense, counter-narrative to common-sense (Crehan, 2016). Her justification for voting to leave is explained as follows:

> Joe: Was there any other reasons you voted to leave?
>
> Margaret: (sighs). I think the country was generally a better place beforehand. That is not necessarily down to the European Union because lots of things have changed [in] this country in that period of time. I don't...believe in all these doom and gloom scenarios you know, what’s going to happen. We did sort of manage before 1975 without the Europeans and we have only been in there what 40 odd years so I think we will be OK. I don't know maybe I am looking back with rose tinted spectacles, but it just seemed to be a more caring society, a more equal society and I don't think we are now.

Margaret’s admission that social and economic change in the UK is not necessarily down to the EU is striking. The UK’s duration of EU membership has coincided with a neoliberal model of financial accumulation and ideological common-sense which has widened inequalities (Joyce and Xu, 2019), deepened exploitation (Gallas, 2015; Jessop, 2015a), and institutionalised a conception of value based upon market contribution (Makinen, 2017). The EU has contributed to this (Taylor, 2016b), but it seems neoliberal economic reforms in the UK and EU policy and membership are sometimes conflated. Margaret acknowledges a myriad of changes but is still more inclined to blame the EU for less equality and compassion towards deserving groups of claimants such as herself. These political dispositions are informed by her own personal experiences of the economic and symbolic struggles of living on benefits under successive Conservative governments and this seems to relate to how she thinks of the past as being more inclusive and secure.

Tony (Selby, Male, 74, White British, Income n/a) is currently retired having worked as a lorry driver for over twenty years. In his interview, Tony frequently repeats a point about people in his generation having voted to leave the EU for similar reasons:

> Tony: I voted to leave for exactly the same reasons, because they [older people] knew what it was like before the European Union you see.

On the back of a discussion in which he suggests that employment and economic insecurity have been made worse by the EU and how foodbanks and more benefit claimants are a sign of how the UK is worse off (see subsection 7.2), Tony tells me more about what his life was like in the past:

> Tony: None of us had any money in those days. I mean you have probably heard people say 'oo we used to leave our backdoors open' we did, the insurance man used to come and collect his money and then the milk man after that during the day. And nobody took anything because you got nothing to steal. And then we used to grow all our own vegetables...anyone who had got a quite big garden or allotment, most of us were self-supported.

Some measures of poverty – such as the percentage of the population in relative low-income – show that a greater proportion of people are worse off now than in the 1960s and 1970s (Francis-Devine, 2022). However, Tony's argument seems to be not so much about being poor or having little money, but how people responded to their poverty in different epochs and what this suggests about social values. The past is perceived to be a time where people were perceived to be safer from crime, more trusting of each other and tended to be more self-sufficient. Tony's perception of the present chimes with accounts of the loss of social capital in Putnam's (2001) sense, rather than Bourdieu's. However, where Putnam may argue that economic and political integration are the *result* of accumulations of social capital the reverse also seems true: more economically secure circumstances (in the past) lead to more trust in others and less symbolic and class division.

9.4 The EU Referendum: Direct Democracy and Expectations of Change

This empirical subsection differs slightly from the preceding two in the way it focuses upon the meanings participants invested in the referendum result and their expectations of change, rather than how they voted and how their dispositions were informed by political marginalisation. There are two interrelated themes which stand out. The referendum was interpreted as a form of direct democracy which was seen to address the shortcomings of representative democracy, and this meant that politicians had to listen and respond to people that felt systematically excluded from politics. Secondly, there was an expectation amongst interviewees that this could lead to meaningful and lasting economic

and social change, even if their hopes were qualified by a more sceptical view of the result being implemented. Since fieldwork was undertaken in 2019, the referendum result has been implemented and Brexit has continued to be acutely important to debate about, and explanations of, economic and labour market issues. Voting to leave was not just a form of 'backlash,' but a vehicle through which the needs and demands of a marginalised electorate could be legitimately expressed. What this shows about changes to working-class political subjectivities more generally has relevance far beyond Brexit and has worrying implications for future engagement with politics.

In Chapter 2, research showed that the class composition of Labour support has converged over the last 70 years (Evans and Mellon, 2019; Evans and Tilley, 2017). Before the Second World War, the gap in Labour support between the working-class (who provided the most) and the new/old middle-class (notwithstanding the problematic nature of these classifications, as discussed in Chapter 2) was 30 percentage points, by 1997 this was 10 (*ibid*). This was largely a consequence of both the working-class becoming less likely to vote and the Labour Party courting middle-class interests (*ibid*). Between 1993 and 2000 there was a sharp increase in non-voting rates among the working-class and this trend intensified up until 2015 (*ibid*). Small numbers of working-class non-voters did return to politics in the general elections of 2010 and 2015 (like Alan), and voted for UKIP, as did a greater number of those who had continued to support one of the mainstream parties between 1997-2010 (Evans and Mellon, 2019). Despite this, working-class votes in the general elections were below peak levels (Evans and Tilley, 2017) and the depth and intensity of working-class political disenfranchisement is significant to understanding how and why the referendum felt like a different form of politics.

Steph (Leave, Selby, Female, 39, White British, Income £10-15k) and Paul (Leave, Selby, Male, 39, White British, Income £0-5k p.a) were concerned about the possibility of the referendum result being overturned. They both voted to leave the EU because of immigration (see Chapter 8) and hoped Brexit would mean their concerns were listened to:

> Joe: What do you think is going to happen considering it has been such a long time since the vote?

> Steph: I just think they should listen to the people that have said they want to leave and try and do, try and get us out and do a Brexit…But I think you are going to have an uproar if they turn around and say well, we're not going to do it now. Because you have given the people the choice to do that so…Stick with the vote because you are going to have many people saying, I am not going with you next year because you didn't keep up with the promises that you have delivered.
>
> Paul: They very rarely deliver on…
>
> Steph: But I think I would be upset if they have given the whole country the choice to leave [the EU] and then they don't do it. Why give us the choice to do it in the first place? Why don't they just take that choice away?

Prior to the EU referendum, both Steph and Paul had not voted since the General Election of 1997 and the inauguration of Tony Blair's Labour, a party they both supported. The key point here is that direct democracy felt like a different way of exercising political choice precisely because political choices and expectations in past parliamentary elections have been consistently dashed. There is a level of scepticism here, which is built up from long-term experiences of political disenfranchisement and dispositions which lead to a perception of politics as not for people like 'us' (c.f. Atkinson, 2010: 73).

Some participants, such as Howard (Leave, Selby, Male, 60, White British, Income £20-30k p.a), saw the EU referendum as the culmination of a series of political setbacks. In other parts of his interview, Howard spoke of mainstream political party's as not worth voting for because of the large salaries of MPs and their bogus expenses claims, and how they have managed the UK's economic interests and rights as an EU member. He sees Brexit as an important test of trust:

> Howard: …if Brexit doesn't happen now on the 29th of March I will never vote again because they have lost my confidence.

Similar themes can be witnessed in the accounts of Kyle (Leave, Selby, Male, 25, White British, Income £20-30k p.a) and Tony (Leave, Selby, Male, 74, White British, Income n/a). Both interviewees express a level of concern about the prospect of the referendum result being overturned amidst growing pressures from pro-EU activist groups at the time (Revoke Article 50 petition – March 2019).

> Tony: But I mean they want to have another referendum, what is it best out of three? We used to say that when we was kids, you know, flip a coin, oh you've won; well, we will have best out of three. So, your vote means nothing to you, if

they say this is...[unclear] your democratic right has gone, what is the bloody point of voting. I mean you know, there's an election and you say, 'I am not going to vote, no point in voting coz if you vote it doesn't matter'. I mean we are complacent enough anyway.

Kyle: I think they [politicians] look after themselves don't they. It is like I say, they can't decide on Brexit, on a deal for Brexit, it is them four hundred people deciding that. Why should it be them 400 people that dictate what the other 65 million want? I know it is a democracy like, but they are not answering what the people want are they.

Jean, a regretful leave voter, and Hazel who voted to remain, bring into question the integrity of the British political system and the 'elite' political actors who embody it. Similar themes were also explored in subsection 9.2. Here, analysis is different in the way interviewees challenge common-sense leave arguments and shows how political cynicism cuts across leave/remain, left/right and less and more educated distinctions and can lead to different dispositions.

Jean (Leave, City, Female, 67, White British, Income £15-20k* p.a), a regretful leave voter, thinks Britain's withdrawal will have little to no effect upon migrant settlement within the local area and her regret is rooted in the perceived negative economic impacts of Brexit upon trade and foreign travel (for 'Britons' rather than immigrants; see subsection 6.4.1). She finds politics confusing and tells me that the language used by politicians is often overly complex – a common theme highlighted within wider empirical literature (such as Holmes and Manning, 2013) which shows how different class habitus' can be more or less attuned to the way politics is performed (Atkinson, 2010).

When asked what she would like to happen following the referendum result, Jean told me the following:

Joe: You said you regret it, but in an ideal scenario what would you like to happen?

Jean: I would like another vote on Brexit. I watch two political programmes and they talked about the Tories having a go at people that want another one. And people that want another one say they were misinformed and that they weren't given enough information. How can we accept the results of that vote because it was unfair? The people who were saying we shouldn't have another vote were people saying look we have voted, and it is the law that we accept that. I say no it is not because we were given the wrong information, and we weren't given enough information. I would like another referendum, but with it I would like people…there is a lot of people that aren't political, and they need to be given in simple language what it means.

The complexity of political messages and lexicon is part of the way political actors legitimise and institutionalise processes of class distinction. Jean thinks the more technical remain arguments failed to cut through more accessible common-sense leave arguments and her desire for a second referendum is premised upon a feeling that the leave campaign had 'duped' a series of voters (including herself) into voting for something that it was unable to change (immigration).

Hazel has one of the highest levels of educational attainment in the sample (holding a postgraduate qualification) and tends to think of herself as strictly 'middle-class' on the basis of her upbringing and previous occupation as a secondary school teacher. Hazel is now unemployed because of ill-health. When asked if she thinks political parties represent her interests, she expresses a critical take on the accuracy of leave campaign messages and leave voters:

> Hazel: Not as much as they should be. Err you know the fact that whether it had that big enough impact to have swung the Brexit election, but to have clearly put that crap on the side of that bus, £350 million for the NHS, how many people did that persuade? Yet there seems to be no integrity within parliament anymore or whether there has been I don't know. […]. I just don't think there is enough monitoring of what is allowed to be believed, like the thing about Brexit and the NHS. Certainly, on something like the referendum there should have been a minimum turnout before the vote was accepted.
>
> (Remain, Selby, Female, 55, White British, Income £10-15k p.a).

Hazel expresses a sense of political marginalisation in a way which stigmatises working-class people as 'dupes' and this creates distance between herself and 'others' who are perceived to lack political competency. The key point here is that political marginalisation cuts across all social groups, but some are distrustful of representative democracy and have a preference for direct democracy (generally those who feel they have lost out from representative democracy). Others are distrustful of direct democracy (Hazel) because of a suggestion that it can be more easily manipulated with no accountability, and these tend to be people who feel as though they benefit from representative democracy. The EU referendum witnessed the highest voter turnout (72.2%) in UK political elections and referendums since 1992; Hazel's frustration is about those that 'won' rather than any sense of validity.

9.5 Discussion

Since 1979, Britain's main political parties have been committed to a market-led economy that produces and legitimises greater inequality. The most dominant story of the last four decades has been the consolidation of welfare retrenchment (Tyler, 2013); increasingly punitive immigration and asylum policy (Mayblin, 2019); underfunding, outsourcing and privatisation of public services; and labour market restructuring and deregulation (Jessop, 2018; Umney, 2018) – all to the detriment of Britain's most marginal actors. This is political in the sense of these processes being presided over by political parties who are either aware of or untroubled by their immiserating effects (or both). Since the disappearance of 'class' from policy and political and media rhetoric (Evans and Tilley, 2017), more emphasis has been placed upon proxies of class, including exclusion and cohesion (*ibid*; Levitas, 1998), identities and culture (Fraser, 2019) and other social movements. This has occurred alongside changes in the social and cultural values guiding British society. A series of data from the British Social Attitudes Survey (1983-2013) shows how attitudes towards welfare and the role of government in supporting the unemployed had hardened up to 2013, how people were losing faith in key political institutions and were increasingly distrustful of politicians, alongside growing Euroscepticism and more people wanting to reduce the power of the EU over Britain (Park et al. 2013).

These processes provide an important contextual backdrop to the way participants have formed their political subjectivities over the last forty years. For many participants, historical experiences of politics are characterised by a prevailing sense that mainstream political parties do not listen to them and that they do not represent their interests or needs. Longstanding perceptions of mainstream political parties as being unable to offer solutions to the UK's problems may explain why neoliberal common-sense discourses have become more appealing. Some of the most excluded and economically marginalised participants framed their lives using these themes because common-sense is, at least partially, constructed in a way that tends to fit with a range of practical and everyday experiences that poorer and more disadvantaged people have (Atkinson, 2010; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). However, part of the way common-sense maintains hegemony, particularly the legitimated common-sense

reproduced by the state and cultural institutions, is by evincing some elements of everyday experience (for example, workless migrants, benefit cheats and disruptive strike action) and obscuring others. Discourses and ways of thinking that could lead to greater political consciousness, more organisation and/or counter-hegemonic movements (such as focussing on exploitation through work, inter-ethnic class solidarities or landlordism as parasitism) are exactly what neoliberal common-sense is intended to cover up.

One of the key dividing lines in this chapter is between those who felt like they still had something to lose and those who felt like they had already lost out. Those who expressed the least political cynicism and marginalisation were those who tended to be in more economically secure circumstances, had greater levels of education and were women. Hazel and Jean have degrees, have relatively secure jobs or are retired with substantial pensions. They either voted to remain or regretted voting to leave. They expressed their voting proclivities in ways that were not based upon longstanding experiences of precarity or loss, but possible scenarios that could worsen the opportunities and devalue the capitals they currently have access to. Those who are white, with lower levels of economic capital, who are either unemployed (Alan, Mary, and Paul), occupy more insecure (Eddy) or unprotected/exploitative (Ben) forms of work, and tend to have lower educational qualifications, broadly speaking, share a more acute sense of political marginalisation. This seems to be conditioned by the way class and race intersect to create specific group experiences. Some sections of the white working-class feel more politically marginalised because not only are politicians loathe to protect their interests, but they are seen to be actively favouring groups who are spoken about in wider stigmatising discourses and tropes as having a series of negative symbolic and cultural attributes which legitimates their undeservingness of access to public resources. Participant's seemed to experience a tension between a belief in common-sense racialised discourses of 'internal others' which structural inequalities are blamed upon and the perception of policies and ground level experiences of the distribution of housing and benefits which evidence unfair gains for undeserving groups.

9.5.1 Politics for Whom?

This subsection explored how the leave vote could be seen as pushback against political elites and middle-class liberals who deny a series of 'truths' about the causes of the UK's and participants' problems and tend to favour more 'politically correct' and 'left wing' explanations. There is an affective and spatial element to this: participants feel as though politicians and more dominant social groups do not live through the same every day, personal experiences as working-class people (such as physical and economic insecurity, precarity and neighbourhood change) (c.f. Atkinson, 2010; 2015) and denigrate those who question them as racist and insular. One form of common-sense espouses the narrative that migrants and people from ethnic minority backgrounds have disproportionately gained from equality and anti-discrimination policies (Garner, 2015) and national-populist parties such as UKIP have attached this to an anti-establishment discourse (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). This classificatory element to participants' voting proclivities was characterised by a tendency to accept and perpetuate discourses of this kind as a way to generate value and mark symbolic boundaries. There was a simultaneous struggle to achieve distance from undeserving social groups whilst challenging the perceived unearned privileges and lack of understanding and empathy from those above. Participants repeatedly claimed that they did not understand politics or tended to ignore it, but their accounts continued to demonstrate how a series of political (common-sense) discourses were powerfully embedded in the ways they spoke about themselves and others. This is evocative of how political marginalisation and a lack of representation have powerful effects of "disorganising and fragmenting working-classes responses" (Hall, 1979 [2017]: 176) to the hegemony of neoliberalism. Part of this common-sense is a division between the white working-class and 'undeserving others' as an underclass: policy was often perceived to materially benefit migrant groups and welfare recipients – large subgroups within the working-class but spoken of as though existing independently of it. These divisions are part of the way the class social system is intersected by a racialised social system to generate specific assumptions about racialised groups as having particular class, moral and cultural characteristics. Specific physical and cultural differences – being a migrant worker or from an ethnic minority background living in a more

deprived area – are associated with a series of deeply embedded historical assumptions. These are conditioned by stigma of these groups on the basis of supposed fecklessness and a 'scrounger' mentality as perpetuated by the media and in political discourses.

There was a contradiction in the way participants tended to characterise divisions within the political space. There also seemed to be a discourse that recognised the 'left' as no longer the political home of 'class' and to some extent themselves, but that of a 'politics of identities' (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Fraser, 2019). Participants also spoke about political correctness as something associated with 'socialism' and 'left-wing politics'; an ideological device that is perceived to serve ethnic minority groups and immigrants (Garner, 2015). Links made between political correctness, progressivism and 'the left' are taken directly from the political discourses perpetuated by national-populist parties such as UKIP (Fenton and Mann, 2017). As the argument goes, political correctness means that British people can no longer express their patriotism without being labelled as racist or xenophobic, and the cultural traditions which they once valued are now under threat because of the way they are perceived to discriminate against other marginalised groups (Fenton and Mann, 2017; Garner, 2015).

Political correctness may be perceived as part of a political framework which delegitimises the (white) working-class and privileges identity politics over issues of economic distribution and inequality. Some of the ways participants articulate their political marginalisation against 'those below' may be thought of as a classificatory struggle which displaces abjection (Jeffery et al. 2020) onto groups who are perceived to have greater political recognition than themselves. The political void created by the replacement of class politics by an identity politics inflected by neoliberal conceptions of value (Krivononos, 2018) has been exploited by national populist parties such as UKIP and the BNP who claim to speak for the interests of the (white) working-class (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018).

There is a consistent trend over time that shows how older people tend to think that younger people do not have respect for others and the social traditions they were brought up to value and appreciate (Evans and Tilley, 2017). This seems to be at least partially borne out in the accounts of Alan, Kay and Mabel, but there is a greater level of nuance required to explain how this is connected to the

formation of political subjectivities and the way some participants voted in the EU referendum. This was not just about social policy benefitting 'other' groups in the way Andrew (who focuses on migrants) or Mary (who focuses on benefit recipients) framed their political marginalisation. Increasing social insecurity, labour market precarity and economic marginalisation have negatively affected people of all age groups. Because this generation of people are perceived to have socially liberal attitudes which mirror those of (some) political elites, both groups are thought of as denigrating and silencing older working-class voices and experiences (c.f. Ford and Goodwin, 2017).

9.5.2 Articulations of the Past as Pushback against Marginalisation

The second empirical subsection developed links between participants' long-term experiences of economic marginalisation and downward class trajectory, and the political dispositions they develop from these experiences. The core argument has a temporal dimension to it: mainstream parties are perceived to be unresponsive to, and ignorant of, the needs and demands of marginalised working-class people. Partially idealised recollections of the past and nostalgia lead to conservative/communitarian articulations of how life could be improved in the present. It deepens and extends analysis of hysteresis effects explored in Chapter 6, which demonstrated how, when the habitus remains attuned to objective conditions that no longer dominate in different fields, this can create feelings of disjuncture and rejection. In this subsection, analysis broadened these themes in relation to a wider sample and explored how perceptions of change, loss and marginalisation are mapped onto EU membership, conflating it with negative parallel and interrelated processes associated with the UK's neoliberal regime shift playing out at roughly the same time. To some extent, the way participants use the EU as a repository for a series of different structural problems can be seen as a form of common-sense which functions to divert resentment away from the failures of successive British governments presiding over a model of financial accumulation and its uneven benefits. This serves to maintain neoliberal hegemony and contain counter-hegemonic conflicts.

In some studies which claim to have dealt with the post-colonial, nationalist and racialised legacies underpinning Brexit, there is a broad argument which frames white (working-class) leave voters as: harbouring imperialistic attitudes (Koegler et al. 2020); using thinly veiled economic arguments and claiming proximity to 'ethnic others' as a way to disguise their racist attitudes (Patel and Connelly, 2019); and thinking Britain's colonial past was what made it a more symbolically valuable country (Beaumont, 2017). There are elements of this in some interviewees' accounts, but arguments of this kind tend to disparage 'nostalgia' as something working-class people cling to in the absence of an ability to think in terms of the present and the future and as holding back social development and modernity (Skeggs, 2016; Tyler, 2013). Nostalgia needs to be treated as a social construction which tends to reflect an individual's current social position (Meier, 2016) and offers resistance against different types of social and political change rather than representing a psychological trait in itself (Richards et al. 2020). It is something which is used by both remain and leave voters and those occupying more and less secure social positions (Richards et al. 2020; Saunders, 2020).

This subsection has provided an alternative way of thinking about 'nostalgia' and the past. It concerns how the effects of economic and political restructuring processes as part of the shift and consolidation of neoliberalism, which are often blamed upon the EU, have worsened the lives of working-class people and how life before and, potentially, after the EU is seen as being 'better'. Conceptions of how the country was better before the EU do sometimes (Alan) draw upon historical racialised understandings of particular groups in ways which stigmatise them as having values which are not 'British'. In this case, a concern about 'human rights' seems to be a proxy for migrants and people from ethnic minority backgrounds challenging discrimination and the inequalities they face.

These findings differ from McKenzie's (2017a; 2017b) research which found that her working-class participants living in Sutton-in-Ashfield (Nottinghamshire) and London's East End, who express similar feelings of alienation and disillusionment to those discussed above, "did not vote Leave because they thought it would improve their lives" (McKenzie, 2017a: 278). A series of participant accounts drawn upon in this section (Alan, Ben, Eddy, Howard, Mabel and Margaret) paint

a different picture: they voted to leave because they thought Brexit would lead to more economically and socially secure times associated with the past.

A deepening sense of being ‘out of place’ (Calhoun, 2012 cited in Strand and Lizardo, 2017) within the world, feeling as though political parties don’t care, and having limited capital resources to compensate for this, means some people rely upon images of past security (Nayak, 2019; Strand and Lizardo, 2017) as a source of identity and value in the present. In some instances, participants’ recollections of what they perceived to be more secure times are racialised (Alan, Paul), but a more dominant theme structuring accounts was a conception of the past characterised by economic security, less class stigma and greater social trust. This is similar to what Nayak (2019) has termed the ‘rescripting of place’ – developing alternative narratives which can draw upon heritage and past success – which, I would argue, could be a type of popular resistance to forms of spatial stigma. The way participants ‘rescript’ place is not directly related to spatial stigma but is a way of interpreting and responding to a broader set of stigmas and types of marginalisation which have developed over time.

9.5.3 The EU Referendum: a ‘Once In a Lifetime’ Vote?

The third empirical subsection focused on the meanings and expectations which working-class people attached to the EU referendum. The backdrop to this is that participants were and are politically disenfranchised and are experiencing a ‘crisis of representation’ – when social groups are unrepresented by their traditional political parties (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999). In the case of the working-class, discontent with the Labour Party can be conceived as part of this crisis of representation. Research shows how working-class political abstention took off in 1997 and coincides with the Labour Party removing class from their political lexicon and courting middle-class interests more generally (Evans and Tilley, 2017). Over the last forty years the ideologies of mainstream political parties have shifted rightwards (Hall, 1979 [2017]) and these changes have had significant consequences on the class structure of voter turnout and the class breakdown of party support (Evans and Tilley, 2017) – see Chapter 2. Crucially, this has happened over a period of time where class differences in terms of income and

inequality and political preferences have widened (*ibid*; see also Joyce and Xu, 2019; Umney, 2018).

One of the key themes developed in this subsection starts by recognising how political marginalisation and cynicism cuts across leave/remain, left/right and more/less educated cleavages and how this can lead to *different* voting dispositions. Not only this, but there also seems to be a division between those who are more or less trusting of direct democracy, largely because they feel their concerns are either ignored or listened to in representative democracy; this does not always map neatly onto leave/remain distinctions. Long-term experiences of political disenfranchisement shaped the way people thought about the referendum as a different kind of politics – a form of direct democracy – where politicians were forced to listen to the demands of a marginalised working-class who felt silenced by the unresponsiveness of parliamentary democracy. This was not a form of backlash or protest vote – a "way to kick back at an establishment that they felt let down by" (McKenzie, 2017b: 7) – and it is only partly an opportunity "to obtain at least a moment of political recognition" (Telford and Wistow, 2019: 15). There was a genuine expectation that the referendum could lead to meaningful economic and social change, even if these expectations were qualified by a sense of cynicism about the implementation of the result.

A smaller number of participants who were in more economically secure circumstances and had higher levels of education, offered different views of the referendum. The way Jean and Hazel articulate their voting proclivities seems to challenge common-sense leave arguments which they thought were inaccurate and designed to persuade people, rather than inform them factually. Where Jean is sympathetic to leave voters, being a regretful leaver herself (but only because she thinks Brexit will not fulfil her expectations), Hazel, a remain voter, marks out symbolic distances in relation to working-class leavers and their perceived naivety.

For Hazel, remain voting is seen as the 'default' or 'correct' voting position to which other voting proclivities (particularly those deemed insular and racist) should be judged against. This has been explored more fully in Chapter 6, but a different and related point can be made here. Hazel feels marginalised because she thinks direct democracy can be manipulated to reinforce the prejudices of

working-class leave voters in ways which means they actually vote against their own economic interests. She is critical of the referendum result because she thinks it was susceptible to votes cast by groups who do not fully understand what they are voting for and who generally do not vote in other parliamentary elections. The suggestion that the status of working-class leaver voters is illegitimate is characteristic of a perception of politics as reserved for those who possess the capitals and dispositions needed to understand it (the middle-class, like herself) (see Atkinson, 2017). This ties into broader narratives of leave voters as lacking political literacy and intelligence and voting against their own economic interests (see subsection 2.2; Patel and Connelly, 2019; Poutvaara and Steinhardt, 2018; Zhang, 2017; and Zavala et al. 2017).

It would be disingenuous to say that Hazel offers a good-sense understanding of common-sense leave explanations when her voting proclivities are articulated as forms of class distinction which map onto stereotypes of leave and remain voters as divided by intellect and education. Many leave voting, working-class interviewees were “open to persuasion by the promise of economic revitalisation upon Britain leaving the EU” (Bromley-Davenport et al. 2019: 803), but this needs to be set in a context of long-term political and economic marginalisation, rather than irrationality and poor judgement. The reason why the referendum felt different for some voters and was imbued with real expectations of change is because in many ways it contrasted with working-class peoples’ past experiences of politics as dominated by struggles against classification (Tyler, 2013; 2015) perpetuated by the capitalist class and their intermediaries.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how political marginalisation leads to tendencies to vote leave. To summarise, political marginalisation is rooted in economic decline and hardship but the circumstances of working-class people and solutions to their problems are largely developed and waged through more common-sense narratives which culturalise and individualise structural inequalities. This is because neoliberal common-sense discourses become more appealing when mainstream political parties are unable to offer viable solutions to a series of

"morbid symptoms" (Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999: 556), and in some cases, this leads to support for national-populist parties who are perceived to be more responsive to class issues in the absence of class politics.

In this thesis, those who felt politically marginalised most acutely were white working-class participants and of these participants, the majority tended to live in Selby. Why this is the case seems to be about a particular set of experiences which are the combination of the spatial, economic and political positions of interviewees. Some interviewees articulated this in terms of an understanding of Brexit as an opportunity for economic and social change (Howard, Kyle, Paul, Steph and Tony), while others thought political parties only listened to the interests and concerns of classed and racialised 'others' (Alan, Andrew, Eddy, Kay, Mabel and Mary). Linking these political subjectivities together, members of the white working-class who felt the most politically marginalised do so because of the compounding effects of persistent job insecurity and precariousness, and their experiences of living in deprived neighbourhoods where immigration is increasing. These structural processes are intensified by perceived changes to the way a racialised social system distributes resources and opportunities, with those historically seen as undeserving being perceived to occupy better social and economic positions in recent years and how these shifts are presided over by political parties which once maintained white working-class people's interests. These types of discourses are able to flourish in a political space which has abandoned a concept of class and has hollowed out anti-racist and anti-collective solidarities more generally (Virdee and McGeever, 2018)

This might also connect to other spatial differences identified in earlier chapters: interviewees living in Selby tended to express hysteresis effects because, I argue, of a less buoyant local labour market (subsection 6.7) and were concerned about migrants entering the UK to work (subsection 8.4). There is a relationship here: participant's living in Selby have more pronounced experiences of economic marginalisation (as hysteresis) and are more concerned about immigration locally because of less jobs in the town and a weaker local labour market and this might then mean they feel political parties don't listen to them or their concerns.

For many members of the working-class, politics has become an arena in which they feel like they no longer (if they ever did) belong. Research has shown how

the political landscape has changed, and the choices offered to voters have narrowed over time (Evans and Tilley, 2017). This chapter, like other significant studies (Atkinson, 2010; 2015), argues that class has not ceased to be important to the way people think about themselves, others and how they construct their political attitudes. Not least because interviewees consistently highlight their own experiences of economic marginalisation and growing insecurity, and these are *classed* struggles which prompt them to search for alternative political solutions because they feel ignored and let down. Importantly, the way participants form their subjectivities are not solely classed and as data in this chapter attest, political dispositions are formed from constructions of race and nation as well.

I argue that the interviewees in this chapter feel politically marginalised for two reasons. First, they exist in economically insecure circumstances and (they think) politicians are loath to acknowledge their concerns and, second, they are caught between three different forms of identity politics which further displace structural understandings of material inequalities and distributions of wealth. These are a liberal identity politics which denigrates the (supposed) illiberal values of working-class people as insular (political correctness) (Ford and Goodwin, 2014; Garner, 2015), a culturalization of poverty which blames poor people for their situation while simultaneously denigrating migrants, claimants and working-class people more generally (Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Tyler, 2013), and a conservative/communitarian identity politics that valorises a nostalgic vision of the past, which *can* hold back progress (Skeggs, 2016).

The problem here is not recollecting the past as a time when there *were* nationalised industries providing better jobs, but the forms of nostalgia which see the past as better which are articulated through denigratory discourses. The significance of this in terms of Brexit is that the referendum provided a vehicle through which working-class people could legitimately express a series of views and dispositions that have become increasingly marginalised and stigmatised in the mainstream political system. However, while these values undoubtedly had appeal, they can be seen as encouraged and fomented within a context of long-term political marginalisation and expressed by those who felt unrepresented when they were looking for alternative discourses and new political homes.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

The EU referendum is one the most significant political events in recent history; its result took many politicians, academics and commentators by surprise. In relative terms, the working-class were the class group most likely to have voted to leave (c.f. Dorling, 2016). This study provides a classed, historicised and spatial account of why working-class interviewees voted in the EU referendum, remaining attentive to the political-economic context shaping their life experiences and broader political subjectivities. This study has explored the political subjectivities of an ethnically diverse range of participants; however, it is the case that the majority of respondents and data presented throughout this thesis are from the accounts of white working-class people. Brexit sent shockwaves across the different EU member states and threatened to undermine one of the world's oldest and most extensive political and economic unions. It has had profound implications for the UK's trade network, GDP growth, Northern Ireland's peace process and caused labour and food shortages (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2022; O'Brennan, 2021; Springford and Portes, 2023). In the years following Brexit, a number of different academic explanations have tried to make sense of what happened; all of these offer valuable insights but each also has a series of different shortcomings. The core contribution of this thesis is to advance these explanations by synthesising their key themes, theories and foci (for example, economic marginalisation, immigration and political disenfranchisement) in a novel way *and* bring in new themes (particularly symbolic othering as 'common sense') to enhance this synthesis further. I have deconstructed these explanations systematically (subsection 2.2) and used examples from my own work to show how they tend to oversimplify and flatten the nuances of people's voting justifications and their political subjectivities (subsection 10.2 below).

In summary, proponents of the 'left behind' concept offer a partial account of the classed facets of the referendum result; lack an attentiveness to ethnicity, race and nationalism; and oversimplify working-class voting justifications (Ford and Goodwin, 2017). Some academics do focus on class exploitation and

marginalisation, such as McKenzie (2017a; 2017b), but neglect race and ethnicity and privilege a cultural model of class analysis, which glosses over the workings of the capitalist economy. Others, whilst compelling in the way they provide a historicised account of neoliberal capitalist development, are theoretical rather than empirical (Jessop, 2017; 2018) and cannot explain how people arrive at their subjectivities (Telford and Wistow, 2019). Explanations focusing on race, immigration and nationalism tend to neglect the relationships between class and racism and oversimplify leave voting justifications (Patel and Connelly, 2019). Some offer only theoretical accounts (Bhambra, 2017), but others are more persuasive in the way they develop an explicitly Marxist and intersectional framework (Virdee and McGeever, 2018). However, none of these explanations alone provide a comprehensive, nuanced, and persuasive framework to understand the political subjectivities of working-class leave and remain voters.

The core objective of this research project was to understand '*Why did people living within low-income communities vote to leave or remain in the EU referendum (2016)?'.* It asked the following four research questions:

1. What are the economic, political, socio-cultural and symbolic factors that influenced the way working-class people voted in the referendum?

2. What does the Brexit vote tell us about wider working-class political subjectivities and class-based forms of politics?

3. What analytical and theoretical tools best support an understanding of the effects of the UK's changing political economy?

4. How useful are existing explanatory frameworks of Brexit for understanding the leave vote?

The key contributions to knowledge this study makes are presented in subsection 10.2. They can be briefly summarised here: firstly, interviewees' accounts are complex and multifaceted, and challenge more monolithic theories and explanations, which vindicates the synthesisation of multiple theories and foci; secondly, the theoretical framework developed in this project is a response to the

weaknesses of Marxist political economy and cultural class analysis – especially when used on their own – which need to be addressed to fully understand the construction of working-class political dispositions; thirdly, Brexit as a moment or event is not the start or end point of analysis and this study takes a far longer-term biographical and historicised approach to understanding changing working-class political subjectivities; fourthly, the study challenges 'white victimhood' explanations of Brexit and asserts the importance of viewing the working-class as a multi-ethnic group.

In subsection 10.3 the main conclusions of the project are reprised; 10.4 explores a series of policy proposals which could begin to address some of the structural problems raised by participants; 10.5 considers the limitations of the study and directions for future research; and some final thoughts are presented in subsection 10.6.

10.2 Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes four key contributions to knowledge. These were briefly introduced in Chapter 1 but are more fully explicated here.

i) People's voting justification are complex and multifaceted, and they defy reductive, singular theoretical frameworks. People often make voting decisions based on their life histories, the sedimentation of localised experiences, encounters and circumstances and not through a systematic analysis of the 'facts' at hand on a particular issue. In Chapter 2 it was shown how four clusters of explanations for Brexit all have individual weaknesses and only offer partial accounts of the referendum result. This is because the complementarity and need to synthesise the theoretical frameworks and thematic foci of these explanations has tended to be overlooked. Exploring a broader range of processes and developments (economic, political, socio-cultural, symbolic and spatial), as this thesis does, allows me to emphasise and value the range of different and sometimes seemingly competing experiences, themes and articulations used by participants to justify their vote. This vindicates a biographical approach to analysis in the

narrative chapter (Chapter 6) – which traced the chronology of interviewees' life experiences as informing voting proclivities – and the use of thick contextual description throughout thematic analysis chapters (Chapters 7-9).

Examples of the complexity of interviewees' accounts are mostly clearly evident in Chapter 6. Eddy's experience of hysteresis effects – having skills unsuitable to the post-industrial labour market *and* a disjuncture of social attitudes – (which is, I argue, the reason he voted to leave) is informed by a broad range of factors. This includes a racialised understanding of his economic marginalisation as a member of the white working-class and the shame he associates with his poverty, the loss of trade union representation, deindustrialisation, common-sense interpretations of 'ethnic others', and claims to national belonging. This is compounded by a sense of rejection by his upwardly mobile children and shows how the relationality of class identities and struggles feed into the formation of political dispositions. The complexity and zigzagging of themes and foci is also evident within single extracts. An extended discussion from Andrew's account is presented in subsection 9.2; he stigmatises 'soft touch' social groups such as socialists and 'rich kids' who do not understand the effects of localised immigration as a way to talk about his own sense of political marginalisation as white and working-class. This is also the case for remain voters: in subsection 7.2, Hazel justifies her vote as being loathe to protect what is left of British industry, seeing the symbolic benefits of the EU and conceiving of leave voters as working-class and nationalistic.

ii) A parallel but separate contribution to knowledge is that I have developed a theoretical framework that brings into dialogue Marxist political economy and cultural class analysis as a way to correct their individual weaknesses. This is a response to Flemmen's (2013) claim that cultural class analysis neglects the economic dimension of class relations (Flemmen, 2013) and how Marxist political economy loses

sight of the role of micro-level experiences in forming political dispositions. I combine both positions by arguing that political-economic restructuring is a project to restore class domination over the working-class (see Jessop, 2015; 2017; 2018) and that the legitimacy of this is waged through the articulation of 'common-sense' which misrecognises the true causes of structural inequalities (Crehan, 2016; Hall and O'Shea, 2013; Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1999; Tyler, 2013). I build upon work by Tyler (2013; 2015; with Jensen, 2015) who synthesises Marxist political-economy with cultural class analysis. As part of the latter, Tyler (2013; 2015; with Jensen, 2015) brings together struggles over classification and Gramsci's 'common sense' as a way to understand how attempts to secure hegemony for neoliberalism are articulated through forms of symbolic othering. In order to understand how classed and symbolic struggles negotiated in the context of neoliberal hegemony inform the changing political subjectivities of the working-class, I add to this Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus and hysteresis. This allows me to understand how people generate their political dispositions and subjectivities from past experiences (habitus) of, for example, deindustrialisation or immigration and relatedly, how people adapt to changing structural contexts which may or may not align to these dispositions and subjectivities (hysteresis).

iii) Brexit is a starting point to work backwards (and forwards) to explore the longer-term processes and structural changes that shape the formation of working-class political subjectivities and dispositions about the present and the future. Brexit cannot be abstracted from its complex, historical roots. My analysis is about the reasons why people voted the way they did in the EU referendum, but it also shows how a series of different economic, social, political and symbolic processes have shaped political subjectivities, leading to different understandings of different groups and experiences. This has relevance to discussions of political realignment more broadly. For example, the EU referendum clearly constituted a different form of politics which seemed to encourage politically disenfranchised, largely – but not exclusively

white – working-class voters (see Evans and Tilley, 2017) to come out and vote because they felt as though politicians would have to listen to their interests and concerns (see subsection 9.4). But this is not just about Brexit and has a historical basis informed by the decline of class voting behaviour occurring in the 2000s (*ibid*).

iv) This study recognises the working-class as a diverse and multi-ethnic group (if predominantly still white); existing explanations of Brexit either overlook this (Ford and Goodwin, 2017; McKenzie, 2017a; 2017b), offer only theoretical accounts of the problems of doing so (Bhambra, 2017) or focus on counter-narratives to the left behind from multi-ethnic working-class people (Rhodes et al. 2019). In this study, seven interviewees from ethnic minority groups were recruited in total, all of whom live in the Sheffield research site (amounting to half of interviewees living there) and over half voted to leave. This enables a move beyond, and critique of, 'white victimhood' explanations of the leave voter and shows how the leave campaign was able to unite a more diverse range of voters than first thought. One of the complexities of this was that despite racial divisions being a key part of leave campaign discourses, some concerns over immigration seem to unite ethnically diverse sections of the working-class (see subsection 10.2).

10.3 Key Findings and Conclusions

The main overarching conclusions of this research project can be briefly summarised before moving onto a more detailed exposition of the key findings from each of the four analysis chapters (Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine) and a series of reflections on the spatial differences between the two case study sites.

10.3.1 Overarching Conclusions

1) Common-sense arguments were front, and centre of the way interviewees articulated their voting justifications, and more broadly, the way they tended to speak about and understand economic and political change and different social groups. This highlights the ways in which racialised/othering discourses and tropes have become dominant and internalised, raising questions about political education, personal values and media consumption (which could be areas of future study, see subsection 10.4). This study moves beyond the idea of working-class people as 'dupes' and emphasises that their susceptibility to common-sense may be explained by an increasingly neoliberal consensus and the related expunging of class from political discourse. Common-sense discourses take on potency among those who live marginalised lives because of the way they are intended to obscure the causes of this marginalisation and provide a way of understanding personal circumstances and insecurities. To stabilise hegemonic relations in times of political and economic crisis, common-sense is often racialised in a way which draws upon deeply rooted feelings about migrants, migration and 'internal others' (Virdee and McGeever, 2018). The way some white, and to a lesser extent ethnic minority, working-class participants framed their political subjectivities took from discourses of this kind.

One key reason why 'good-sense' cannot predominate may be because of political efforts to dismantle class institutions such as trade unions and industrial workplaces and exacerbate divisions along lines of "blood and nation" (Davidson and Saull, 2017: 5). In this study, good-sense explanations were more prevalent among those with experiences of working in unionised sectors (see subsection 9.2). In some cases, common-sense contradicts interviewees' practical experiences (such as how Paul and Steph received a council house in subsection 8.2) and this shows how powerful these discourses can be.

This is not limited to leave voters and findings show that remain voting is not the default ‘good-sense’ position which it is sometimes characterised as, either implicitly through the absence of sociological analysis interrogating remain voting positions or more explicitly, in the minds of interviewees (see subsection 6.5) and different political and media commentaries. What subsection 6.5 also highlights, is a parallel process of stigmatisation deployed by remain voter(s) which relies on common-sense understandings of the white, working-class, leaver as backward and insular (c.f. McKenzie, 2015; Skeggs, 2004) that is similarly denigratory, reductive and intolerant despite claiming to be the opposite.

2) The findings of this study show how the leave campaign was able to build a genuine coalition of voters with different justifications and demographic backgrounds. This challenges a dominant, popular interpretation of the referendum result as a cultural backlash against immigration by a group of white working-class voters who lived economically insecure lives. There is some truth to this: a small number of white working-class interviewees in this study evinced arguments of this kind as partial justifications of their vote (see Chapter 8) and other authors have found similar evidence (such as Ford and Goodwin, 2017). However, this thesis shows how some participants from ethnic minority backgrounds voted to leave the EU, including three interviewees who cited reasons related to immigration (Marlon, Nasir, Yasmin) while others, such as Fawzia, who is also young, did so for economic reasons (see subsection 8.3). This challenges the idea that voters from ethnic minority groups voted to remain because they associated leave with race and racism (c.f. Bhambra, 2017) or perhaps more accurately, racial discrimination directed at themselves, and highlights two other significant points. Common-sense understandings of migrants are used by people from ethnic minority backgrounds who have recent family histories of migration. These discourses are intended to, and do, divide people along racial cleavages but surprisingly, they also unite different groups together. For example, Marlon (Black British), Nasir and Yasmin (British Pakistani) are united with

White British participants in Sheffield in the way they denigrate Roma-Slovak migrants and seek to exclude them from conceptions of the working-class.

3) People in similar circumstances did vote to leave. This is not just about having similar volumes and compositions of capitals in a metaphorical social and political space (Atkinson, 2017), but how people with similar social characteristics tend to live in, and negotiate, similar *physical* spaces (Bourdieu, 2018) – such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, and social spaces – and this tendency is constituted by class relations (see Flemmen, 2013). This is not by chance: working-class people have access to similar opportunities, jobs, housing, wages and lifestyles because of shared economic interests and constraints which are consistently struggled against by a capitalist class with different and largely competing interests. However, at a more micro-level, interviewees' justifications are varied, complex and often contradictory, and we should avoid reductive and singular theoretical accounts which oversimplify these nuances.

4) There is a division between interviewees who have something to defend and those that have nothing to lose. Those with nothing to lose were more willing to take the 'risk' of voting for the unknown and change rather than the status quo. Interviewees' perceptions and understandings of different economic, social and political problems and groups tend to be more cynical, stigmatising and resentful (generally based upon common-sense discourses) when they think that they have already lost what they had from these processes and groups. Those that feel like they have already lost tend to be older (but not exclusively), have lower incomes and more insecure jobs or are unemployed and live in social/council housing. Those that feel like they still have something to defend (generally younger people, and/or those with higher incomes and more secure jobs), sometimes draw upon different types of common-sense (distancing from parts of the white working-class) and/or articulate good-sense explanations.

10.3.2 Chapter Conclusions

Chapter 6 used narrative analysis to focus on participants' historical experiences and show how their political subjectivities adjust to, or are maintained in, changing contexts. Hysteresis is the state of disjuncture which occurs when dispositions within habitus no longer correspond to the field of social relations (Bourdieu, 1977; Hardy, 2008). For some participants, 'hysteresis effects' occur in contexts of economic marginalisation and material poverty; post-industrial labour market restructuring has left older working-class people with skills, competencies and employment experiences which are no longer dominant in a more financial and service-based economy. Not only this, changes in the dominant social and political values guiding society (towards 'political correctness' and identity politics) have left some working-class voters experiencing political disenfranchisement, feeling as though their attitudes, in terms of valuing authority and working hard, for example, no longer matter.

Participants living in stigmatised neighbourhoods would sometimes rearticulate idealised images and recollections of the past as a way to mark out symbolic and cultural distance between their own values and those of demonised 'others', with those from Sheffield focusing mostly on Roma migrants (see below for an exploration of the differences and similarities between case study sites). This connects them to a time where they felt greater security and a stronger sense of belonging with the places where they live; the reasons why they voted to leave in the referendum reflected a desire to reverse these social changes.

Chapter 7 focussed on experiences of economic marginalisation shaped by economic restructuring processes such as rounds of deindustrialisation and, more recently, austerity. In some cases, these cleavages cut across and overlap within participants' accounts and have compounding effects upon the way they form their political subjectivities. For example, David and Howard (subsection 7.3) articulate their vote to leave because of their direct experiences of industrial job losses, resentment about how deindustrialisation has had disproportionate impacts on working-class people and how more recent rounds of restructuring are part of this ongoing story of decline. For many participants, manufacturing and extractive industries are seen as indicators of the UK's economic prosperity and symbolic value, and this seems to be partly because of how these industries

are traditionally the types of jobs working-class people occupy. This is a form of hysteresis where interviewees make claims to the certainties and securities of industrial jobs long after the economic conditions that generated this kind of work changed.

Chapter 8 shows how forms of anti-immigrant and anti-welfare sentiment are used by participants in classificatory struggles where a range of neoliberal restructuring processes have, over time, devalued working-class identities, widened inequalities and weakened opportunities to accrue a sense of value and purpose through work (Tyler, 2013; 2015). Neoliberal common-sense is formed from above in relation to the interests of capital. It is a technology to garner consent for, or at least subdue more significant challenges to, inequalities and policies which might otherwise be recognised as contravening the interests of a broader working-class, rather than one which has witnessed stigmatised 'others' purposefully excluded from it (Jensen and Tyler, 2015). The Leave campaign tended to straddle issues such as immigration, the NHS, jobs and borders through the lens of hostility to the EU in a way which aligned with, and extended, neoliberal common-sense discourses with longer histories.

Neoliberal common-sense encourages sections of the working-class to feel that immigrants and unemployment benefit claimants living in the neighbourhoods where they live are stealing their jobs and overrunning welfare services (Tyler, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Virdee, 2014). It derives its power and durability in the way it creates perceptions and feelings which can be confirmed by a (sometimes disparate) range of practical experiences. Some interviewees (Ben, subsection 8.2) voted to remain, despite arguing against immigration, because they thought Brexit would not change anything and may bring additional economic risks. Others, however, voted to leave and felt as though they were, for example, surrounded by benefit claimants or immigrants, when their own experiences and interactions with local people do not necessarily fit this stereotype (see subsection 8.2 and 8.4).

Political marginalisation was the focus of Chapter 9. Political marginalisation was felt most acutely by white working-class participants who suggested that mainstream political parties had done little to change the insecurities and inequalities they faced. The context to this is that many working-class participants

have largely experienced a ‘crisis of representation’ (Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1999) in that they have been abandoned by their traditional political home (see also Evans and Tilley, 2017) and this opens up possibilities for insurgent parties to make attempts to court their interests (Evans and Mellon, 2016). In some instances, participants thought mainstream parties ignored the ‘truths’ about the causes of their marginalisation – particularly migrants and benefit claimants – and instead prioritised the interests of various ‘internal others’ (Virdee and McGeever, 2018).

People in the most marginalised and insecure economic and social circumstances, who lack opportunities to encounter alternative political discourses tended to be more susceptible to common-sense. This was articulated through two processes of differentiation which occur at the same time: a horizontal one which involves the stigmatisation of marginalised ‘others’ in similar social positions and a vertical one from distant elite politicians who ignore their concerns. Participants saw Brexit as an opportunity for real social and economic change against the backdrop of long histories of uncertainty and decline. There are important implications from this and with Brexit having not lived up to the promises made by the Leave Campaign, it may be that voters having their hopes dashed once again leads to more apathy and populism.

10.3.3 Spatial and Methodological Reflections

Selby and Sheffield can both be considered to be ‘left behind’ (McCann, 2020) and ‘places that don’t matter’ (Rodriguez-Pose, 2017) and, in large part, there are similarities in the experiences, political subjectivities and voting justifications of interviewees living in both case study areas. However, some of the key points of differentiation between the two case study sites (as set out in Chapter 4) seem to have important impacts upon the way voters had different experiences and offered different views. In Selby, older interviewees experienced hysteresis effects in a town where their position within a less buoyant local labour market was declining and they voted to leave as an attempt to reclaim a more advantageous social position associated with the past (subsection 6.2). Interviewees also tended to express more explicit concerns over migrants coming

to the UK/Selby to work, and this exists in a local labour market context where low skilled manufacturing jobs are concentrated in the town, which both interviewees and migrants seem to compete for (subsection 8.4).

In Burngreave, living in an area where migration has a longer history, is more diverse and migrants are in greater number, and relatedly, is far more ethnically heterogenous (than Selby), led to a number of key differences in the way voting justification were articulated. This included interviewees justifying a vote to leave because of a common-sense perception that the arrival of Roma-Slovak migrants in the area had lowered house prices (subsection 6.3). Relatedly, Sheffield interviewees tended to think migrants lived in circumstances *worse* than they did, even if they thought they unfairly accessed benefits and healthcare. This contrasts to those in Selby who were more likely to think migrants had *better* access to services, jobs and housing than themselves. This seems to reflect the most recent type of migration in case study areas and the opportunity to have more direct and explicit local encounters with migrant groups in Sheffield.

Roma-Slovak migrants in Burngreave are both more visible and numerous than migrant groups in Selby; they are more stigmatised than Polish and Romanian migrants (the largest migrant groups in Selby). The fact that Burngreave has experienced a series of different waves of immigration also seemed to play into the articulation of symbolic hierarchies between longer settled groups (Asian/Asian-British and Black/Black-British groups) and more recent arrivals (Chapter 8). To summarise, in Selby leave votes tended to be articulated through the lens of industrial decline and competition for scarce jobs in a less buoyant labour market, whereas Sheffield interviewees' justifications centred more (but not exclusively) on the perceived material and symbolic decline of neighbourhood.

This project was informed by a critical-realist philosophical approach which helped me to understand Brexit as complex, historical and multi-levelled and influenced by a range of different structures (which exist in reality independently of consciousness) and processes which may not initially appear to underpin and inform the way people construct their voting proclivities. Neoliberalism as a structure has tendencies (towards decomposing the working-class, being crisis prone and unstable, and generating common-sense), which gives rise to different

causal mechanisms (political and economic marginalisation, widening inequalities) that lead to particular events at the 'surface level' (growing populism, decline in class voting, disenfranchisement, the Brexit vote). I did not convert my analysis into the language of critical realism because (albeit using slightly different terminology) language and concepts from both Marxist political economy (Bhaskar and Callinicos, 2003) and Bourdieu's theory of practice (Öğütle, 2013), are congruent with this approach.

10.4 Implications for Policy and Practice: Repairing the Divisions?

This research project has shown how working-class people's justifications for voting to leave and remain in the EU are intimately connected to a series of neoliberal restructuring processes, developments and changes which have had the effect of making their lives more precarious, insecure and uncertain. This subsection will explore a handful of policy proposals that might begin to address some of the problems that have emerged throughout interviews.

10.4.1 Economic Insecurity and Labour Market Precarity

Across the sample, economic insecurity is one of the key defining features of participants' lives: seven of the individuals involved in this study earned less than £10,000 per annum, and a further eight earnt no more than £15,000. This is because they work in low paid, often part-time jobs with insecure hours and have struggled to navigate the requirements of Jobcentre Plus to claim unemployment benefits. Some interviewees spoke about being unable to meet their basic needs and feeling embarrassed that they couldn't buy things they wanted. Reducing economic inequalities and labour market precariousness needs to begin with a renewed focus upon reinvigorating the trade union movement and reregulating the labour market more generally.

This is about restoring the use of collective bargaining as tool to, for example, reduce wage inequalities and raise wages, prevent the exploitation of all workers (including migrants and those subject to modern slavery), rebalance labour relations and power away from employers, and ensure that workers and unions

have a greater say in workplace decisions and policy (Ewing, Hendy and Jones, 2016). The Taylor report (Taylor et al. 2017) makes a series of persuasive recommendations in terms of improving the *quality* of work, including fairer pay, allowing workers more autonomy over their work and their working hours, and having access to better training and educational opportunities. These are useful provisions, but they must be centred upon a radical departure from a labour supply and demand model of wages to one led by trade unions which sees a Minimum Income Standard introduced which is reflective of *workers'* needs to enjoy life rather than simply survive (Trades Union Councils, 2016).

To reduce precarious work, there needs to be employment protections for all workers and not just a focus on those deemed to have 'full employee' status in permanent roles (Grimshaw et al. 2016). The Labour Party *Workers' Rights Manifesto* (2019) argues for a single 'worker status' which covers all groups other than those that are genuinely self-employed with a series of universal rights to, for example, sick pay and parental leave. This is a useful recommendation, but unemployed people also need to have access to representation, and this could be through an Ombudsman to resolve disputes and unfair treatment (Trades Union Councils, 2016). The Equality Act (2010) can and should also be extended to include 'caste' and 'socio-economic status' along with additional protections against religious discrimination (Ewing, Hendy and Jones, 2016). Ending economic marginalisation and labour market insecurity also requires better welfare. This means redesigning the unemployment benefits system to not push people into jobs using punitive sanctioning practices but supporting them to find good work (Trades Union Councils, 2016) and raising benefits (alongside raising wages) to ensure that unemployment does not mean poverty and destitution.

10.4.2 Political Marginalisation

Interviewees frequently cited political marginalisation as a key factor in their lives and in some cases, this was part of the reason why they voted to leave in the EU referendum (see Chapter 9). Across participants' accounts, political parties and politicians were thought of as ignoring their interests and concerns, making their lives more insecure while others gained, and receiving large incomes which they

did not deserve. This is, I argue, related to the dealignment of class voting – which is the tendency for class groups to vote for parties 'traditionally' representing their interests. Class voting dealignment is a consequence of the ideological realignment of mainstream political parties' (particularly around the time of New Labour) against the backdrop of persisting class inequalities (Evans and Tilley 2017), elite groups dominating party personnel (*ibid*), and the rise of national-populist parties, such as UKIP (see also Ford and Goodwin, 2014). These, and other related issues, are not isolated to the UK.

Jansen et al. (2012) found that between 1960 and 2005, across Western Europe, the United States and Australia, class declined as a predictor of voting behaviour in all countries[9] other than the US. The authors find that the greater the polarisation of mainstream political parties across the left-right continuum of social and economic issues in a nation, the greater the level of class voting (*ibid*). This seems to be supported by Rennwald (2014) who finds less party choice is the most important factor in declining class voting in Switzerland. Other research by Achterberg (2006) shows how the rise of new cultural and environmental issues and the decline of traditional class political issues has contributed to the decline of class voting in twenty Western countries. In the context of Canada, Polacko et al (2022) find that increasing working-class support for the Conservative Party – Canadas' main centre-right political party – is linked to growing support for anti-immigration and traditionalist attitudes.

In subsection 9.4, it was shown how the referendum was politically empowering in that it gave marginalised groups the opportunity to vote for what they perceived to be real social and economic changes. There seems to be a wider lesson from the referendum that more direct and participatory forms of politics can engage and inspire people if it is seen to make a difference in their daily lives. For example, the success of the Citizens' Assembly in Ireland – having helped achieve breakthroughs in legalising abortion and gay marriage – demonstrated how bringing the public directly into the political process can have significant effects on policy and practice. However, the Ireland case may be somewhat of

[9] The authors studied Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, (West-) Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

an outlier and citizens assemblies can be prone to failure, with policy recommendations from them generally ignored (Courant, 2021). At a more local level, participatory budgeting could be a useful form of citizen participation which allows local residents to have a say over what is happening in their communities and how resources are being allocated. Participatory budgeting has been shown to improve individuals' confidence in tackling local issues, bring a range of people from different backgrounds together, encourage participation of residents in local issues and act as a catalyst for the development of local community and voluntary organisations (DCLG, 2011).

10.4.3 Low Income Neighbourhoods: Place-Based Solutions

Participants frequently spoke about a series of problems within low-income neighbourhoods which are, I argue, the uneven effects of urban deindustrialisation and neoliberal political and economic restructuring processes occurring over the last forty years. The UK has some of the greatest inter-regional inequalities in Europe (Carrascal-Incera et al. 2020; McCann, 2020; McCann and Ortega-Argiles, 2021; Rodriguez-Pose, 2017) and these tend to be most pronounced in ex-industrial regions, towns and cities. Regeneration policy was seen as a way to reverse the decline witnessed in industrial towns and cities – which are predominantly in the north of England and Midlands – and surmount the inequalities gap between the north and south. Urban regeneration policy in the UK has had limited effectiveness at redressing the material dimensions of poverty, such as income inequality or deprivation, in 'left behind' places (Crisp et al. 2014) and local government underfunding has compounded a hollowing out of ex-industrial towns and cities. However, regeneration initiatives have not been completely ineffective and have been found to have more significant effects on the non-material aspects of poverty – such as health, educational attainment and the subjective experience of living in low-income areas (Crisp et al. 2014). In Burngreave, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme (2002-2008) had substantial and significant positive effects on the physical environment and showed that "projects which enhance community safety and provide diversion and engagement for young people can contribute significantly to reductions in crime, and to improvements in area satisfaction" (Pearson et al. 2012: 54).

One crucial suggestion as to how we can improve the lives of working-class residents living in low-income neighbourhoods is to reverse the Local Authority cuts made under austerity that have had disproportionately negative effects on the least affluent towns and cities (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013) and make the local government funding formula more redistributionist than it currently is. Under Tory government, this does not appear attainable. The recent Levelling Up white paper (LUWP) (February 2022) has been met by a series of criticisms from academics and commentators. This includes a tendency to fall back on market- and GDP-focussed frameworks to address 'capital shortages' in left-behind places which overlook more inclusive forms of growth for low-income groups (Crisp, 2022). Not only this, the LUWP offers a narrow understanding of the relationship between belonging and place, which thinks in terms of new investments in the built environment, and neglects proposals to create greater security in people's lives by, for example, making housing more affordable (Dobson, 2022).

Alternative economic development frameworks such as Community Wealth Building (CWB) may be able to address some of the shortcomings of more traditional economic development and wealth extraction. CWB offers a more place sensitive approach to regeneration which focuses on the use value rather than the exchange value of places. It seeks to maximise economic opportunities for local people by generating and capturing wealth locally e.g. through progressive procurement policies for goods and services; 'good work' frameworks including the promotion of more democratic and egalitarian forms of economic ownership (e.g. co-operatives); and maximising the social value generated by land and assets e.g. through allocated underused public sector land for social housing or community use. Advocates claim this approach makes places more resilient to, and able to deal with, precarity and insecurity and people's experiences of it (CLES, 2020a; 2020b).

10.5 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In what follows are a series of reflections on some of the limitations of the study and potential directions for future research.

Firstly, I could have done more to ask questions explicitly exploring gender, however, its omission is justified on the basis of the importance of class, race, ethnicity and nation as key vectors of interest, given the popular, political and academic discussion of Brexit. Not only this, in this project gender seems to be a less significant cleavage than class, age and ethnicity/race. This contradicts what was witnessed across the UK more generally, in that women were less likely to vote to leave (Statista, 2016). Given that this project was predominantly focussed on leave voters, my sample was not intended to be representative of the overall vote and therefore it is not possible to reflect on gender-based patterns.

Nonetheless, this thesis has illuminated some key findings which demonstrate important gender differences in relation to EU referendum voting justifications.

a) A broader point is that female participants did not seem to be any more economically or socially secure despite accounts which problematise more masculine narratives of industrial decline because of the rise of feminine service sector work, which is often argued to have benefitted women and disadvantaged men (Jefferson, 2021; McDowell, 2001). The closure of the mines in places like Selby and Sheffield has not explicitly benefited women in the sense of interviewees feeling as though they had greater opportunities to enter a more diverse range of sectors or no longer feeling as though they are excluded from male-dominated industries and sectors which used to predominate in the places they lived.

b) Leave voting articulations which draw upon typically masculinised hatred for ‘soft touch’ groups and policy issues (see Jefferson, 2021) such as immigrants arguing for better human rights (Alan), the younger generation (Kay and Mabel), politicians (Andrew, Marlon, Sarah), liberals (Kay and Mabel), socialists (Andrew) and snowflakes (Howard), are expressed by both men and women. Findings such as this highlight the dominance of masculine common-sense discourses associated with Brexit, of which implicated a range of ‘others’ as opposed to, and holding back, the economic, social and political interests of the British working-class.

c) Concerns over the physical threat of immigration and migrants (particularly migrant men who were thought of as violent and dangerous) tended to be more prevalent in the accounts of male rather than female interviewees (subsection 8.3). What this might highlight is the intersection of a crisis of masculinity and a crisis of ethnicity and immigration (Jefferson, 2021) in the sense of younger working-class men feeling increasingly unable to compete with Eastern European migrants who have a growing (localised and symbolic) presence in more masculine semi-routine and routine jobs.

A second limitation was related to ideology. Ideology was a significant part of this thesis in terms of its manifestation as (neoliberal) common-sense. However, I could have asked more questions to understand the personal dimensions of ideology, in terms of how people were brought up, the values they were socialised with, and how they consume different media sources. There was still, however, some evidence to suggest that the personal values of ideology played a part in how people living in similar circumstances articulated forms of good-sense (subsection 6.4.1), and in other cases, media consumption did shape attitudes to welfare claimants and political dispositions (subsection 8.2).

Thirdly, as mentioned in the Chapter 4, a quota sampling method was used in this project with partial representativeness. However, young people in Sheffield and people from ethnic minority backgrounds in Selby were underrepresented. Extensive efforts were made to redress these imbalances throughout the fieldwork process.

Where finally, more research is needed which focuses on the voting justifications of middle-class leavers who live in more affluent neighbourhoods. Research of this kind can help to understand why those who have access to better paying and 'high status' jobs, and do not require support through welfare benefits, may have voted for change.

10.6 Final Thoughts

The different narratives uncovered throughout this study are not only related to the Brexit referendum but are indicative of the wider landscape of changing

working-class political subjectivities which has implications for the slide towards national-populist forms of politics in the future. This is both a national and international problem. The economic geography of deindustrialisation has created a series of inter-regional inequalities across Europe (Carrascal-Incera et al. 2020; McCann, 2020; McCann and Ortega-Argiles, 2021; Rodriguez-Pose, 2017). These are neighbourhoods, towns and cities that 'don't matter' and are 'left behind' (McCann, 2020; Rodriguez-Pose, 2017) and those living there express their resentment through populist politics because of the abandonment of socialism by centre left parties (Evans and Tilley, 2017; Goodwin and Eatwell, 2018). This is not limited to the UK. In Germany, the rise of support for the AfD (Alternative for Germany) is prevalent in eastern regions where average income and wealth are lower than in the west, where anti-immigration attitudes are stronger and a sense of political disenfranchisement more widespread (Weisskircher, 2020). Similarly, the National Front vote in France tends to be concentrated in regions where unemployment rates are higher and wages lower, adding to the argument that populist political parties tend to galvanize support in unequal and declining regions where common-sense explanations of structural problems appear to offer hope of change.

Processes, changes and developments identified in this thesis as contributing towards more divisive, stigmatising and less solidaristic articulations of politics show no signs of abating. Since fieldwork was conducted in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to job losses and widening inequalities, although the economy has recovered to some extent. Compounding this, significant rises in the costs of goods and energy bills as part of an ongoing cost-of-living crisis in the UK have had profound effects on the most marginal groups. Data from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's (JRF) cost-of-living tracker[10] shows that 7.2 million people living in low-income households are going without the basics, 4.7 million are behind on their bills and over 3 million have not been able to heat their home since June 2022 because they can't afford it (JRF, 2022). With inflation rates set to remain well above the Bank of England target of 2% throughout 2023 and with energy prices not expected to drop to pre-crisis levels until at least 2024, the

[10] This report is the third in a series of large-scale studies of households in the bottom 40% of incomes, conducted by the JRF in October 2021, May / June 2022 and October / November 2022.

outlook is worrying. However, one of the tasks of sociology is to better understand how structural changes are perceived and experienced in the lives of marginalised groups, in the hope that this can provide the foundations for developing effective solutions that bring real change to those most in need. This can only be remedied by a fundamental shift in political and economic power towards the working-class and their interests.

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Appendix 1: Participant Profiles

Selby Residents

Ben: is a 26-year-old White British man who voted to remain in the EU. He works as a roofer and earns between £15,001-20,000 per annum.

Carol: a 57-year-old White British woman who works as a teaching assistant, earning between £15,001-20,000 per annum. She voted to remain in the EU.

Danielle: is 31 years old and the daughter of Carol. She is a White British woman who voted to remain the EU and works as a graphic designer, earning £15,001-20,000 per annum.

Eddy: is a 60-year-old White British man who voted to leave. He has a part-time delivery driving job which earns him between £5,001-10,000 per annum. He lives with his wife, Mary, who is another participant in this project.

Hazel: is 55-year-old White British woman who is currently unemployed because of ill-health, having formerly worked as a secondary school teacher. She has an income of £10,001-15,000 per annum. Hazel voted to remain in the EU.

Howard: is a 60-year-old White British man who voted to leave the EU. He took an early ill-health retirement because of a lung condition sustained as a coal miner. He has an income between

Kay: is a 54-year-old White British woman who works as a part-time passenger assistant, providing her with an income between £10,001-15,000 per annum. She voted to leave the EU. Her interview was conducted with her friend, Mabel.

Kyle: is a 25-year-old White British man who voted to leave the EU. He is the joint owner of a small landscaping company and has an income between £20,001-30,000.

Mabel: is a 59-year-old White British woman who is a part-time carer. She has an income between £10,001-15,000 and voted to leave the EU.

Margaret: is a 62-year-old White British woman who voted to leave the EU. Margaret is currently unemployed because of her ill-health and has been since 1997, having formerly worked as a care assistant. Her income is between £5,001-10,000 per annum.

Mary: is a 60-year-old White British woman who is currently unemployed, having last worked as a cleaner. She has an income of £0-5001. Mary voted to leave the EU.

Paul: is a 39-year-old White British man who is a stay-at-home dad for his children having formerly worked as a painter and decorator. Paul's income is largely dependent on his wife, Steph, and her employment. He voted to leave the EU.

Steph: is a 39-year-old White British woman who voted to leave the EU. She has a part-time job as a customer service advisor and earns between £10,001-15,000 per annum.

Tony: is a 74-year-old White British man who voted to leave the EU. He is retired, having formerly worked as a lorry driver. Tony did not disclose his income.

Sheffield Residents

Alan: a 65-year-old White British man who voted to leave the EU. He is currently unemployed because of an accident at work and his last job was as a roofer in 1998. He currently earns around £5001-10,000 per annum.

Alice: a 64-year-old White British woman who voted to remain. She is currently a part-time care worker and earns between £15,000-20,000 per annum.

Andrew: a 43-year-old White British man who voted to leave. He is currently unemployed and stays at home to care for his children, having last worked in a warehousing role.

David: a 44-year-old White British man who currently works as a 'roller' in a steel mill, a job which earns him £40,001-50,000 per annum. He voted to leave the EU.

Fawzia: a 22-year-old Black-African woman who is currently a student. Fawzia lives at home with her parents and earns (herself rather than as a household) between £5001-10,000 per annum. She voted to leave the EU.

Genevie: is a Black British woman who is approximately 30-50 years old (she only provided an age range when asked in her interview). She currently works as a library coordinator – which earns her between £20,001-30,000 – and voted to remain in the EU referendum.

Hassan: is a 36-year-old British Asian man who voted to remain. He owns two small businesses in the local area but would not declare how much he earnt in a year.

Helena: is a 48-year-old White European woman who voted to remain in the EU. She is self-employed as a cultural events coordinator and earns between £10,001-15,000 per annum.

Jean: a 67-year-old White British woman who voted to leave the EU. She is retired and last worked as a children's nurse; Jean now earns between £15,001-£20,000 per annum.

Marlon: is a 49-year-old Black British man who works in retail as a part-time store assistant. This earns him between £10,001-15,000 per annum. Marlon voted to leave the EU. He also lives with his wife, Sarah, another participant in this study.

Nasir: is a 46-year-old British Asian man who voted to leave the EU. He is a part-time support worker and earns between £10,001-£15,000 per annum.

Ralph: is a 69-year-old White British man who is currently retired, having formerly worked as a librarian. He has an income of £15,001-20,000 and voted to leave the EU.

Sarah: is a 45-year-old White British woman who voted to leave the EU. She works as a part-time store assistant and earns between £10,001-15,000.

Yasmin: is a 55-year-old British Pakistani woman who is a stay-at-home housewife. Her household income (with her husband) is between £15,001-20,000. She voted to leave the EU.

Appendix 2: Example Interview Transcript

Joe: The first little bit is just a map of the ward if you could just mark on it where you live #00:00:30-7#

Alan: Oh yeah that's good #00:00:30-7#

Joe: It is a bit small isn't it #00:00:32-4#

Alan: Err...oh yeah where are we. #00:00:44-6#

Joe: [REDACTED] #00:00:45-7#

Alan: [REDACTED], that is where I live there then because my street isn't name is it, what do you want me to do circle it? #00:01:05-9#

Joe: Yeah just put a mark on it yeah and the second bit just circle what you see as your neighbourhood. #00:01:20-9#

Alan: That is my neighbourhood all that. #00:01:27-2#

Joe: Right the first question is can you tell me about what it has been like to live in this area? How long have you lived there? #00:01:37-4#

Alan: Eight and a half years now. #00:01:37-4#

Joe: Where did you live before that? #00:01:37-5#

Alan: Erm I have been in Sheffield seventeen years, I have been in my house now for eight and a half years erm its nice quiet area. There are no problems in the area, well there are problems in the area but not where I am on the estate there has been a few stabbings, drug dealings and that. But where I am it is nice and quiet. #00:02:04-6#

Joe: So, has it changed at all in the eight years you have lived there? #00:02:07-6#

Alan: Yeah, it has got a bit noisier on a night but that is only local people, that are only people around that have moved in recently, last year or so. Apart from that it is really quiet. Only one problem I have is outside on the road which is not near my house there

is cars parked with radios, loud music blaring I think they are drug dealing some of them as well (laughs) I think they are. But yeah, it is quiet. #00:02:42-5#

Joe: What about the wider area, is that alright? #00:02:46-5#

Alan: Ooo no. When you get down [REDACTED] and that where you get all the Slovakians, they are all fighting among themselves on a night time, they all gather in crowds fifty, sixty of them around the shops and things, it is not safe for anybody around there when they are down. No. #00:03:02-1#

Joe: Do you ever walk around there? #00:03:03-8#

Alan: I don't go out on a night. No. No. I walk down that area during the day but it's not so bad there is only small groups do you know what I mean but nighttime when they all get drinking and on drugs and things they start arguing and fighting among themselves yeah. About three of four weeks ago one of the streets I think it was [REDACTED] there was about thirty or forty of them fighting. I think it was about one or two o'clock in the morning. I got told about that because I have got a friend who lives on there like and he was telling me about it. #00:03:37-8#

Joe: He lives in [REDACTED] #00:03:37-0#

Alan: Yeah. #00:03:40-9#

Joe: How long has he lived there? #00:03:41-6#

Alan: Oh, he has been there I don't know over ten years at least. It was a nice quiet area at one time, it was just an Asian community at one time then of course they opened the borders up to the Eastern Europeans and the Slovakian, the Roma is the problem. I am not racist or out like that I am saying it's the Roma's that are the problem they're coming over here for the free benefits that's all they come for. And it is the Asians who are moaning about them, but it is the Asian's who are renting them properties. The Pakistanis are renting them their properties. They are the ones complaining about the area now saying it has fetched our area down, but they are renting properties so (laughs). It's crazy yeah. #00:04:26-7#

Joe: When did it start getting like that? #00:04:26-7#

Alan: Err oh when they opened the borders up to the Slovakians and 2014, I think wasn't it, I think it was 2014. Five or six years ago. Up to then it was not so bad, it was Asians a lot of Asians down there, but they have been here since the sixties and seventies a lot of Asians around. Of course, the council, well it is not the council it's just they are renting the properties. It's like where I am at the moment, where I am just down the road from me there is a flat there that has been rented out, I have been there eight and a half years, and it has been rented out five or six times. Each time to Slovakians and each time they damage the property. Doors off and all the units out, gas boiler out and sold and all that yet the Asian guy who owns the flat he's renting them out. They don't seem to learn. #00:05:26-8#

Joe: What is it about this group, what are they doing? #00:05:35-0#

Alan: They are just causing a general nuisance around the area, fighting and...they have been threatening the shop owners down at [REDACTED] one fish and chip shop they threatened to break his wife once [really?] fish and chip shop down [REDACTED] yeah, I don't know if the bloke is still there or not now but also throwing litter about just general causing a nuisance really you know what I mean, that is what they used to do in their own country they used to ruin their own country, because their government they bulldozed all their houses down, the Roma Slovakians, so they were just roaming the country making it a mess. Of course, when they joined the EU, they were rubbing their hands, come to England free benefits and all that and that is what they are getting. It is like my local doctors, now they have got a receptionist who can speak Slovakian but up to then, up to about a year or so ago they used to interpreters on about £60 an hour interpreters on a Tuesday because that is when they go to my local doctors on a Tuesday the Slovakians but it is just one of them things, immigration is not working basically (laughs). #00:06:41-8#

Joe: Have you found it harder to get an appointment at the doctors? #00:06:45-3#

Alan: If I want to see my main doctor, I have got to wait three, four, five weeks for him. Oh yeah, the doctors is overcrowded, all doctors, the whole NHS service is overcrowded erm, but it never used to be. #00:07:03-1#

Joe: What do you think has made it like that? #00:07:04-5#

Alan: The immigration again. It is all down to immigration; I am not racist you know what I mean that's what it is it is all down to the immigration. They open the borders up to everybody without actually vetting them. But those Slovakians they will openly tell you they have only come here for the benefits, there was a programme on television about it in Sheffield and they were interviewing some Roma Slovakians but erm they were saying they had come here for the benefits and a better way of life. Which I don't blame them do you know what I mean but my view is if you haven't paid into the system, you don't get nothing out end of story. And it would stop all of these economic

migrants coming over but that is just one of them things that is just the way it is. #00:08:02-0#

Joe: So, I know you said [REDACTED] is a bit quieter, obviously [REDACTED] is quite close by, has it affected your life in any way the changes in [REDACTED]? #00:08:14-6#

Alan: No because it is far enough away from me where I am. #00:08:17-6#

Joe: Are you tucked away a bit? #00:08:18-6#

Alan: Yeah, I am in amongst some houses on my estate, where I am where I live there is houses, there is an English bloke where his wife has just died, English woman and her Albanian husband, then some Somalis moved in there, they are ok around our area. But the wider area there is a lot of, what do they call them, Yemenis. They just keep themselves to themselves, everybody keeps themselves to themselves on the estate basically, and you know what I mean. I talk to there is a guy he is from the Czech Republic, and I talk to him he has got about, there is him and his wife and his daughter and grandson and I talk to them all the time, they are alright they are nice people and that. Most of them will say hello to you but a lot of them like the Yemenis they don't they just get on with their day, keep themselves to themselves, if you walk past them if you smile at them, they don't smile back or out, they don't say hello or nothing. #00:09:15-6#

Joe: How long has the Yemeni population been there? #00:09:19-5#

Alan: Longer than I have yeah, longer than I have. I don't know how long exactly as I say I have been up there eight and a half years and they have been up there longer but a few years ago the estate, about ten or twelve years ago I was told by a guy who has been up there since the seventies he said there was a lot of burglaries at one time, but now it is just quiet, not where I am but on the street a couple of houses they are drug dealers. Somebody got stabbed on there about 18 month ago. #00:09:54-4#

Joe: I think I heard about that yeah #00:09:55-8#

Alan: But yeah... #00:09:59-8#

Joe: So, is there any sort of sense of community where you live, do you get on with your neighbours? #00:10:03-9#

Alan: I say hello to them that is it, I don't invite them around, and I am not one of them people who invite people around for coffee. When I am in that is my space and I want to be there. If I want to go to sleep in the afternoon I go to sleep or whatever you know what I mean. I have been like that all my life so, I am sociable you know I can meet people go for coffee and things, when I used to drink, I used to go to the pub all the time, but I don't drink now. #00:10:30-9#

Joe: Have you stopped? #00:10:30-9#

Alan: 1991. #00:10:31-9#

Joe: Stopped all together? #00:10:34-1#

Alan: Yeah, I had to stop. #00:10:40-5#

Joe: Do you do anything else do you go to any social things do you meet up with people? #00:10:45-3#

Alan: [REDACTED] #00:10:59-4#

Joe: Bloody hell #00:11:00-0#

Alan: You can't go wrong at that. Anybody can go, there are younger people who go than me and there is a lot of older people go as well and that's on a Thursday. I go to the odd cafe [REDACTED] I have been going there on and off with my now ex-wife for about five or six years now I just go up there for coffee and a chat. I am always in town, I talk to the Jehovah Witnesses a lot I have been talking to them for about five or six years, they keep getting me to join them but it is not my sort thing that you know what I mean, I am not religious but I am not against it. I talk to them. I walk into town quite a lot because I like walking. I used to do walking football at one time but now I get out of breathe. #00:12:23-4#

Joe: Frustrating then. #00:12:27-1#

Alan: I used to do a lot of sport when I was younger, but I don't now because I can't. I had an accident 21 years ago, fractured three vertebras, fell 30ft (laughs). I am surprised I am not in a wheelchair I am lucky. It is one of them things, things happen don't they, larking about on a wet roof and I went over the edge didn't I. I was a roofer

wasn't I you see on a three-story building we was working and that was it straight over the edge larking about (laughs) on to the soil. #00:13:15-2#

Joe: How long was you a roofer? #00:13:20-1#

Alan: Oh, about five years. [REDACTED].

Joe: What has that been like? #00:13:54-5#

Alan: Because I had my accident I was on the sick for a while they took me off the sick so I had to sign on the dole, I couldn't get a job. [REDACTED]. #00:14:25-7#

Joe: And what happened to that have you split up? #00:14:26-4#

Alan: Yeah. She just left me. [REDACTED].

Joe: Bloody hell, that is a bitter one to take isn't it. #00:14:43-3#

Alan: One of them things isn't it. It is like nearly two years ago now and I have not seen her since, I have not seen her. I have not seen her in here I have not seen here. Because we used to be in here all the time, but I have not seen her in here, I don't think she comes in now, I had to get her name taken off the joint account. That took me about 9 months to do that, I kept coming in will you take her name off, oh yeah fill all the thing, then a few weeks later has the name been taken off? No. Why? Because we need her signature, so I come in one time one of the lads who knows me said your wife has left a form here now signed all you have to do is sign and her name is off, great stuff boom.

Joe: How have you found been on job seekers? #00:16:08-4#

Alan: 73 quid a week, hard. I have had to sell loads of stuff just to pay the council tax and things like this to keep afloat yeah to buy food. #00:16:18-6#

Joe: How are you managing now? #00:16:16-9#

Alan: I am alright. That was at the start it took me a few month to get adjusted from going from 400 pound a week to 73 pound a week it took me time to get adjusted but I

have got adjusted now. In two weeks', time I am going to get my old age pension, so I am going to be a 100 pound a week better off than I am now and a free bus pass (laughs). So yeah, I was like 65 in February, but I have had to wait an extra four months and twenty-nine days and I get it in two weeks. #00:16:54-8#

Joe: That will be helpful then #00:16:53-4#

Alan: [REDCATED]. Oh yeah extra 100 pound a week. I have no council tax to pay on that either. I have to pay council tax now on my 73 pound a week I have to pay council tax on that, 21 quid a month it is ridiculous. But yeah 100 pound a week I will be able to save 50, 60 quid of that a week if not more. #00:17:19-1#

Joe: You could go away. #00:17:24-2#

Alan: I could go on holiday again yeah. Been to Turkey twice, Malta. In this country as well, but I like Malta though that was nice yeah. Little island. #00:17:36-6#

Joe: So, what were the jobs you did; did you enjoy doing the jobs you did when you worked? #00:17:42-9#

Alan: Nah I was only doing it for the money. Especially in the late seventies early eighties I was earning four five hundred pound a week, but I was working seventy eighty hours a week for it. So basic rate wasn't very good, but it was the overtime, time and a half and double time where you made money up and bonuses and things which was good. So, I was earning four five hundred pound a week and my first wife left me then as well. #00:18:06-0#

Joe: Bloody hell. #00:18:09-2#

Alan: Come back from working a twelve-hour shift, seven at night while seven in the morning, opened the front door and nothing in the house (laughs) she had cleared off. #00:18:19-0#

Joe: Not what you need. #00:18:22-9#

Alan: Not after a twelve-hour shift. #00:18:27-9#

Joe: What was it like working in that time the seventies and eighties? #00:18:27-2#

Alan: I have not worked for twenty odd years so I don't know what it is like but yeah nowadays I think everything is stricter you know more health and safety than there was then you know, we used to walk about with no hard hats on the building sites just with shorts on and trainers and shorts in if it was hot weather. Can't do it now you have got to have high vis jackets on and hard hats on erm steel toe caps shoes. #00:18:59-6#

Joe: It has all changed hasn't it #00:18:59-6#

Alan: Yeah it has all changed but there was a lot of accidents then wasn't there that's why it has changed the health and safety because of all the accidents which is understandable, but I think though it has actually gone over the top now though most of it has gone over the top now with this health and safety lark now. Oh yeah it was easy getting jobs then [yeah] I started a few jobs only been there an hour or two and not liked it and walked off went to another building site and said have you got any jobs and they said yeah you can start in the morning. That was it. There were no application forms and CVs then, the foreman asked you what you had done and yeah start in the morning and that was it (laughs). #00:19:38-2#

Joe: Not now #00:19:40-1#

Alan: Oh no not now it is all qualifications you see. I used to make angler feed, you no pellets bagging it up and that and if you wanted anything moving, they would say go and jump on the forklift move us that from here to there and nowadays you have got to have a forklift license. When I was driving spraying insecticide, pesticide oh you have to have a license for that as well now. Grass cutting machinery you have got to, but that is the way life is nowadays, so you have got to accept it haven't you. #00:20:13-1#

Joe: True. #00:20:16-7#

Alan: Now I have retired now I will be alright now. No more signing on that is one thing. #00:20:22-1#

Joe: Did you not like signing on? #00:20:20-4#

Alan: I have to do it; I have got to do it haven't I. I have got to apply, I have applied for 15, 20 jobs a week, there is loads of jobs out there like order picking and things like that that's easy anyone can do that. I applied for 15, 20 jobs a week and I don't hear nothing back. Over the last two years I haven't had one phone call offering me a job or an interview nothing, not a thing. #00:20:52-1#

Joe: And you have been applying consistently? #00:20:53-2#

Alan: Every week. I apply on all the job sites CV library, indeed, Reed erm what is the other Total Jobs, Find a job the government one. There are loads of jobs about these warehouse order picking and that they are crying out for people, but no. Think it is the age thing. #00:21:15-0#

Joe: Who do they tend to employ then? #00:21:20-2#

Alan: I have got a CV online on these websites but you see I haven't got my age but it has got when I left school on it so they can work out my age can't they. It is one of them things nothing you can do is there, so I have to manage on my £73.10 a week. #00:21:47-9#

Joe: Only two weeks to go #00:21:50-9#

Alan: I have only got one more signing day. Erm the women who signs me now she has been signing me for about 6 months now the same woman she knows my situation that I am going to retire so she lets me sign and go. The jobs I have applied for she used to write them down in a booklet and she signs it and then go. So yeah... #00:22:18-6#

Joe: Have you had any bad experiences when in the job centre, have you ever felt like the staff are looking down at you? #00:22:24-5#

Alan: Oh, all the time yeah. Oh yeah, they do yeah, a lot of them do. The worst ones are the security guards [really], I had a go at one once; he gave me attitude when I asked him a question do you know what I mean. Because I go and sign on downstairs for the orange team, I showed him my thing and said orange team and he said, 'oh no you have got to wait here' (foreign accent to start with) I said no I said I have been going down there for months now 'oh no you can wait' so I had a right go at him. Just his general attitude, but most of them are alright. Some of the staff they do look down on you as though they think you ought to be working sort of thing but there is nothing you can do about it you have to follow their rules and regulations, or you don't get no money end of story. Because they can sanction you if you're late they can sanction you, stop my money for a couple of weeks. [Of course they can] oh aye yeah. I just follow their rules that is it, play by their rules that is all you have got to do, that is all you can do. #00:23:30-6#

Joe: So, what did you leave school with any qualifications? #00:23:31-8#

Alan: Nope. Well, I left school at 15 and I went to technical college on an engineering course, doing engineering for the first six months that was using metal work and then next six months specialise in electrical. But in them days there was an entrance exam and I had to take an entrance exam and if you didn't pass the entrance exam you wasn't in that was it. It is not like now where anybody can go to college from school now. I passed the entrance exam, and I went there and the last 6 months I got erm after 6 month electrical I got a job as an apprentice electrician. I had to go to college for another year on an electrical course so I was there earning my £5.18 shillings in old money that is £5.90 in new money my mate was gardening for 25 quid a week so what did I do, packed up my apprentice electrician ship and went gardening for 25 quid rather than 5 pound a week, which is daft in hindsight I was only 17 at the time so...that's all I was doing so. #00:25:24-6#

Joe: What was it about the jobs, why did you keep moving? #00:25:23-3#

Alan: I got bored, I got bored. The jobs were OK I could do the jobs alright, but I got bored, boredom was the problem. #00:25:41-3#

Joe: So, you kept moving? #00:25:41-3#

Alan: Yeah, I kept chasing the big money as well, the larger wages like erm I did two campaigns at the sugar beet factory and that was really good money, really good. I was taking home five or six hundred pound there because of all the bonuses and double time and time and a half. #00:26:07-6#

Joe: Money makes the world go around. Moving on to a bit about politics, do you want to tell me about your political views more generally before we move on to the EU? #00:26:24-8#

Alan: What exactly do you want to know? #00:26:26-7#

Joe: Do you support any particular parties? #00:26:30-5#

Alan: No #00:26:30-5#

Joe: Do you vote in general elections? #00:26:28-5#

Alan: Yes. #00:26:33-4#

Joe: Who do you vote for? #00:26:31-6#

Alan: The last time I voted for UKIP in the general election. In local election this time I voted for the Brexit party you know. I voted for Brexit party because I want us out of Europe basically because I knew what it was like before we joined Europe, I knew what it was like, a lot better off. #00:26:51-6#

Joe: When did we join? #00:26:55-2#

Alan: 72 or something. In my last year at school, we had to learn decimal currency, we had to go to pounds to pence but that was easy. #00:27:08-0#

Joe: Was that part of what the EU wanted? #00:27:08-0#

Alan: Yeah. We had to learn the decimalisation, everything was ten, our pennies were in 12 and they wanted us into 10 didn't they so but that was easy to learn. I used to vote the labour party at one time but... #00:27:26-9#

Joe: How long have you voted UKIP for? Do you always vote? #00:27:28-8#

Alan: No, I have only started voting again the last three times. But I never voted for years because I thought it was a waste of time. #00:27:44-0#

Joe: So, what was the first vote back in...? #00:27:53-9#

Alan: I voted labour my first vote, which was in then Harold Wilson, I think. Seventies. Harold Wilson yeah. #00:28:02-4#

Joe: Never vote for the Conservatives? #00:28:03-2#

Joe: What do they tend to do, what the Tories tend to do? #00:28:18-4#

Alan: Well, I don't know; I know they are all for private enterprise so that's erm making the shareholders richer rather than the working class. I think they exploit the working

class really. But erm they fetched this minimum wage in, but it is not enough for people to live on. It needs to be more. #00:28:47-1#

Joe: It is not a lot really #00:28:50-9#

Alan: I was earning more in the late seventies early eighties than what people can earn now on basic wage and things, there is not much overtime now a days is there, not much overtime. And it is not double time, time and a half. #00:29:06-5#

Joe: What was it like before...I have a few questions so I will write them down? I will do that one in a minute. So, since you started voting again, what vote was it? Was it Brexit when you started voting again? #00:29:24-9#

Alan: No, I voted for the Labour party before... #00:29:30-8#

Joe: No, I know I mean after your spell of not voting. #00:29:29-7#

Alan: Oh yeah erm UKIP and the Brexit party yeah, I only voted for UKIP because who is it was leader that only why I am voting for Brexit party because I think he is the man; he is the way forward for our country. #00:29:51-0#

Joe: Farage? #00:29:51-0#

Alan: Yeah, I think so. #00:29:52-0#

Joe: What is it about Farage that you like? #00:29:54-2#

Alan: Just that he speaks for the ordinary working man I think, for this country. #00:29:58-8#

Joe: Do you listen to him on telly? #00:30:02-9#

Alan: I haven't got a telly; I sold it when she left. #00:30:06-0#

Joe: Do you hear out of him? #00:30:08-5#

Alan: Oh yeah, I am on the internet all the time. Laptop that is where I watch all the programmes on my laptop. #00:30:12-8#

Joe: Right. What is it about what he stands for that you like? #00:30:17-7#

Alan: He can do the best for this country where the Conservatives are leaning towards the EU, favouring the EU than this country. They want us in the EU, because all the MEPs they have got they get money off them and...I know the EU give us grants over here and things but if we didn't have to pay the EU X amount of pounds every year our government would be able to finance more things for this country rather than giving it to the EU. So, the EU they decide what our farmers grow and how much. Our government should be doing that like they did before. You alright? #00:31:13-6#

Joe: Chocking on my own breathe. I have had a right bad cough #00:31:24-6#

Alan: I woke up yesterday morning with a sore throat. #00:31:24-9#

Joe: I have got one still. #00:31:28-5#

Alan: Do you want a locket? I bought them this morning #00:31:30-0#

Joe: It's alright I have been eating too many of them. Trying to think where was, so you voted to leave. You said you wanted it to be like it was before, what was it like before we joined? #00:32:32-5#

Alan: It was good, better. Our pound was a lot stronger against other currencies. I know times have changed and things, but I think we were better off; our government controlled our country our laws there was none of this human rights crap that there is now. (Stares at the recorder). You know what I mean it has gone too much. Our farmers could grow what they wanted, like our farmers what they used to do in the fields was make potato pies. Right, they harvest the potatoes and what the factories didn't need all what was surplus, they put in a field. They put straw over the pile of potatoes and earth, kept it in layers until January February when there is no potatoes about and then they sold them to the factories again which was good. But there was an abundance of everything then, I can remember I used to work at a corn merchants in the early eighties and we used to go up to an intervention grain to stock pile. Our farms could produce what they wanted; they weren't told what they could produce. They might say to the farmer well you can only grow 50 acres of taties now then you could grow 100 acres if you wanted. Err same with sugar beet, oil seed rape and all that, they

are told how much they can grow now whereas in the past they weren't, they could grow what they wanted. #00:34:29-6#

Joe: So, what effect do you think that has had on the country? #00:34:32-7#

Alan: Less food, well we aren't producing the food we are importing rather than producing which is wrong. It is probably because I can remember in the eighties, eighties again here we go, when chickens were cheaper to import from France than they were over here, but with that is there health and safety all the hygiene things weren't as good as ours so there chickens might have been contaminated with salmonella or anything else. So, because our hygiene standards are really good over here. #00:35:27-3#

Joe: What about immigration what was that like back then? #00:36:07-0#

Alan: Was none. #00:36:08-3#

Joe: None? #00:36:08-3#

Alan: Well yeah there was some in the fifties and sixties we needed the workers from the West Indies, the commonwealth they used to come over here because the British workers would not do the menial jobs like bus driving, dustbin men things like that road sweeper they wouldn't do them so they got commonwealth countries people over just to do that and that's when a lot of Indians came over in the fifties and sixties as well for that sort of thing as well. But it was good then, that was fine because they integrated well because they wanted to integrate but all these foreigners that are in here now Romanians, Slovakians, Bulgarians they don't want to integrate with the British people, they don't want to abide by our laws they think they have got the...they think they don't have to abide by our laws and that. They don't integrate into society now. #00:37:03-8#

Joe: Why do you think that is? #00:37:03-8#

Alan: Because they don't want to. #00:37:05-9#

Joe: Why do you think the Commonwealth migrants did? #00:37:08-2#

Alan: Because they were part of the British Commonwealth, I think. They thought of themselves as British you see you know and that's the thing but nowadays these

Eastern Europeans they just come here for the money and that is all they want basically they don't want to abide by our laws, our rules anything. They just want everything free given to them. #00:37:30-6#

Joe: Do you think that has what has been happening? #00:37:34-7#

Alan: Oh yeah definitely been happening, that is what our government has done isn't it, but you know the proper asylum seekers that are coming from war torn countries, they are fine, it is all the ones that are economic migrants that are only coming here for the benefits. Which needs stopping? And I think when we come out of Europe that will, if we get a decent prime minister or a decent party in power, I think that will happen. I think they are going to have to curb it aren't they because the problem started with the labour government but that is the labour government isn't it. #00:38:24-9#

Joe: The New Labour government did increase migration to 350,000 or something #00:38:24-5#

Alan: Yeah, yeah, yeah, which we are only an island, we haven't got the housing, we haven't got the resources there for NHS or anything, housing…everything. We have nothing for them have we. #00:38:37-2#

Joe: So, do you think these issues were created from the Labour government or made worse? Or when do you think the growth of immigration started? #00:38:43-8#

Alan: When the opened the EU to most of these Eastern European countries like Poland, Romania, Bulgaria. You know they always said they wouldn't get the Romanians in until they sorted their orphanage situation out. They never sorted it out, yet they let them in the EU. Because they are poor countries. They are taking money out of the EU, and we are paying it in all the rich countries like UK, France, Italy, Germany and they are taking money out and I can't blame the country, I blame the EU for it, for letting them in in the first place. #00:39:35-5#

Joe: Why do you think they let them in? #00:39:38-1#

Alan: Because the EU wants as many countries in as they can and that's all they want you know what I mean it is like a bit like Hitler isn't it he wanted all of Europe to be under Germany and the EU want all of Europe to be under them. Similar thing really. If the EU had their way, they would have an EU army rather than a French, English [separate one yeah] they would all be in a new army, so... #00:40:10-4#

Joe: Making like a power bloc then #00:40:10-4#

Alan: But I don't know... #00:40:14-6#

Joe: So, if you were to put in a list of priority your reasons for voting leave what would they be? #00:40:17-7#

Alan: Immigration for one, get our laws back another, the human rights because there is too many people think oh well it's infringing my human rights well there is too many people saying that, not English foreigners they are saying that, oh well they are illegal not supposed to be here, oh it is infringing my human rights, that's all you get nowadays. #00:40:41-4#

Joe: What sort of things is it that they are concerned about? What sort of things are they saying are infringing on their human rights? #00:40:49-2#

Alan: Well, there right to stay here even though they are illegal immigrants (laughs) you know what I mean it is infringing their human rights. They think they have a right to stay here even though they are illegal a lot of them which is wrong really. I saw we are only an island we can only take so many people in. #00:41:11-9#

Joe: So, what is it about immigration that you don't like? #00:41:15-2#

Alan: They are letting too many people in. But too many people in for the wrong reasons. Not the wrong reasons err how can I say it, it's this freedom of movement in the EU so all the poor countries there people are coming here for the benefits [yeah], which I don't blame the people because they are just trying to better themselves which is understandable... #00:41:48-6#

Joe: There is a strike there for climate change, that youth strike. #00:41:48-6#

Alan: Oh, them lot again. They are not going to do any good they can demonstrate all they want. But erm I don't blame the people because they are just trying to better themselves aren't they but, my way of thinking is if they haven't paid anything into the system, they don't get nothing out. #00:42:14-2#

Joe: So, about contributions really? #00:42:16-9#

Alan: A lot of people wouldn't actually come here then because they come here for the benefits because they know if the come to England they are going to get benefits. They are going to get free schooling, free housing well not yeah free housing because housing benefit cover it, free health care they get free everything. And that's why they come which I don't blame them because if I was in the same situation, if this was a poor country and I went to France, Italy a better country to get more money. I would do that. Anybody would it is just natural isn't it you have got to do what's best for your family, your children and that. #00:42:57-2#

Joe: Did your experiences of immigration locally effect your decision? #00:43:18-9#

Alan: No, it is just immigration in general. Because I don't think they should give them any money when they come if they haven't paid anything into the system that's my way of thinking. I have got forty odd years national insurance contributions on mine, and you know what I mean I can't get a job. But erm that's just my way of thinking if you haven't paid anything in you don't get nothing out which is fair enough, I think. Because I went to abroad now anywhere, I wouldn't get no money off anybody, off their government, I wouldn't get any money so why should we? That's what I think anyway (laughs) that are what a lot of people think, I think. #00:44:12-6#

Joe: It has come up before; it seems to be quite a common... #00:44:12-6#

Alan: But I can't blame the people because they are trying to better themselves it is the government letting them in. It is the EU. I don't like freedom of movement. They come to work and integrate into our society that is fine you know but they keep in their own groups, and they don't integrate with anybody that is the problem. But... #00:44:41-5#

Joe: Do you think leaving the EU has had an effect on how well different groups get on? #00:44:49-8#

Alan: What do you mean? #00:44:49-8#

Joe: Sort of like between what might be perceived as migrants and British people, do you think tensions have risen? #00:44:54-7#

Alan: Oh yeah, I think they have because British people don't want them here because they are draining the system they are draining all the National Health Service and things like that nothing, we have to wait longer for appointments, there is not enough money to go around everything else. Schools, look at the schools. The school there, they are always fighting there with the...it's the Slovakians and the Asians. The Asians

have been here like fourth fifth generation Asians they are fighting the Slovakians, I don't know why but there is always tensions. #00:45:36-8#

Joe: Yeah #00:45:37-9#

Alan: It is like last year or the year before one of the schools they were fighting, the Slovakians and Asians were fighting, and all the Slovakian parents were trying to climb the fence with baseball bats going to hit the kids and all sorts. #00:45:55-2#

Joe: Really? #00:45:55-2#

Alan: Oh yeah, yeah, they were trying to climb the fence to get into the school and everything. There were loads of police cars there at that time and loads of...but that's what they do. #00:46:06-8#

Joe: Bloody hell. #00:46:09-4#

Alan: It is like the other day when was it Tuesday there was two girls fighting (laughs) police cars come, police van come... #00:46:20-7#

Joe: Was they Asian, Roma? #00:46:26-8#

Alan: They weren't English, but I don't know what nationality they were. But the two of them fighting one of them got pinned down took five coppers to get her into the van. Handcuff her and get her in the van she was kicking flailing her arms about and that saying getting off me get off me and all that yeah. But there is a lot of tension like that you see, the Asians they are like fourth and fifth generation kids now and they are resenting the Eastern Europeans for coming over, I think. #00:46:58-9#

Joe: Why do you think that is? #00:47:00-0#

Alan: I don't know I don't know what it is really, but I think a lot of it is causes by the actual Eastern Europeans causing trouble even though they, they are thinking they are entitled to everything when maybe they shouldn't be. #00:47:20-1#

Joe: So, their behaviour? #00:47:24-1#

Alan: So, it is their behaviour, even in the schools it is like where we are we have…school I used to know dinner lady there she said there is only three white kids there and they were picked on all the time by the Roma's. That's just the way they are, they are bullies basically. Because they were bullied in their country by their government and they are proper Slovaks so, because they are Roma's, they have got a bad name but... all down the years they had a bad name the Roma's you know Gypsy's and that. When I was going to my village every erm July there used to be a caravan that used to come to the village you know Gypsies you know with the horses, you know those caravans all nicely decorated and painted they used to come and stay in the village for about a month. They used to work in the village sharpening knives and things like that you know what I mean but that was great, they were proper Gypsies them not like they are now (laughs). #00:48:39-0#

Joe: Do you think they are different now? #00:48:39-6#

Alan: Yeah, they are different because they wanted to work, it was their way of life travelling around the country looking for odd jobs which is fair enough I would like to do that. Erm but these they don't want to work they just want to... if you go into the betting shops how many Roma's are in there, they are all in their betting. Wife and four kids, five kids outside waiting for them. Because they are in the bookies having a bet, where are they getting all their money from? From benefits. #00:49:15-9#

Joe: Have you known many to work? #00:49:21-4#

Alan: I have been going to the job centre for two years now and I haven't ever seen one in their yet signing on. So, what they do I don't know I haven't the foggiest how they do that, but I have not seen any sign. I have seen erm Yemeni, Asians; I have never seen any Roma Slovaks. You can only tell them because they are all big (laughs) they can't move, hardly walk most of them. But yeah, erm I have not seen any of them signing on. #00:49:54-7#

Joe: Well, they must get money from somewhere then... #00:49:54-7#

Alan: What I have seen in there though is a section where the new people to the country they go in there to get their national insurance card, number card, every time there is always about eight or nine people in their getting their national insurance number card yeah. #00:50:10-5#

Joe: Interesting. #00:50:17-0#

Alan: Every time I have been to the job centre I have not seen any Slovakians signing on in there. Not seen any signing on so where they get their money, if they just pay them automatically, I don't know where they get it, how they get their money. #00:50:29-2#

Joe: I don't know I haven't really looked into it. #00:50:34-8#

Alan: But they are always in the bookies, always drinking, always smoking. The latest one now is the scam for the Roma Slovak, the latest one now is telling the doctors their kid is really ill they give them DLA and they get a brand-new car. Mobility vehicle. There are loads of them driving about in these four-wheel SVUs and that, mobility cars. I think there is one or two of them been caught. Caught out on that. They are always looking for an angle to scam people (laughs) it is easy money isn't it. #00:51:23-2#

Joe: Do you think Great Britain is fair? Do you think it has got fairer or less so? #00:51:24-9#

Alan: It is not fair on us British people I don't think. We are leaning more towards the immigrants; they get everything more than we get, basically. [When do you think that started?] That started coming in again when they opened the borders up to the Bulgarians, Romanians, 2014 was it? Or was it earlier than that I can't remember exactly. Oh no 2014, yeah because they joined the EU before that, but they were told they can't actually have any people move into the country until 2014 I think it was. #00:52:03-4#

Joe: Why do you think the country is leaning that way, what do you think it is? #00:52:07-0#

Alan: Because we are in the EU. We haven't got our own laws we have got to abide by EU rules and EU freedom of movement and all this and there laws. If country had all of our laws back again, we could do something about it if they would or not, I don't know. But you see a lot of these people have been in this country 6, 7, 8, 9 years so but they haven't adapted to the British way of life they have kept to their own way of life, their own group of people which I don't know... they should integrate really but they don't. Because we have to see them as scroungers, they don't want to work they just want benefits. I am not saying all of them there is some good among, good and bad among everybody but the majority of them are scroungers and they always have to try and scam something, or somebody get easy money they don't want to work for it. But if they were made to work...because I thought there was an EU rule that if you haven't got a job within twelve weeks three months, they can actually have you kicked out of the country. #00:53:36-3#

Joe: I am not sure #00:53:34-5#

Alan: I don't know if that is the case now, I am not sure but that was one of the things I don't know but our government don't do anything about it. I know they catch illegal immigrants right, what do they do? They take their name, photograph and let them go back into the country again and so they go and get a job somewhere else an illegal job somewhere in a different part of the country. What is that about they ought to be taken deported? It is the same as foreign criminals, if they are found guilty at court, they shouldn't jail them because that costs our tax payer money, they take them from court, detention centre and plane home end of story. And if they say they are Iraqi and they haven't got a passport they can't deport them, why? If they say they are from Iraq send them back if they are illegal without a passport let their country deal with them. Because as I say we are only an island we only have so much money can't give everybody everything really, that is my opinion. Take them from the court, rather than jail them deport them straight from court. Because we don't want foreign criminals in this country there is too many as it is. That hasn't even been court yet. #00:55:21-1#

Joe: So how did your vote make you feel when you found out we had voted to leave? #00:55:21-8#

Alan: Yeah, I voted leave, and I thought great let's get leaving. But then I thought this Conservative government they don't want us to leave. They're Remainers they don't want us to leave they want us to keep in. And this is what's happened so Boris Johnson will be next prime minister and he is a Brexiteer he wants to leave but I would rather leave without a deal than the deal that was on the table before, our economy is strong in the world so people will want to trade with us no matter what, whether we are in Europe or not they will want to trade with us still. So, leave without a deal and sort out all the trade deals after that. In the short term it might be hard for a few months, a year or so but after that it is going to be better again, that is my opinion. #00:56:18-8#

Joe: Who do you think we will end up trading with or who would you want to trade with? #00:56:25-5#

Alan: Trade with anybody, yeah. The people we are actually trading with now, but we will have our own trade deals. #00:56:33-6#

Joe: So, the last little bit is just about how you see yourself. You mentioned earlier that the Conservatives are for the rich not the working class; do you see yourself as working class? #00:56:45-1#

Alan: Well of course yeah. #00:56:48-1#

Joe: Do you want to tell me a bit about what you think working class is? #00:56:46-4#

Alan: People who work for a living. Erm I was just brought up...my father was a farmer then he worked for [REDACTED] for a low-loader driver, driving heavy machinery about. He had plenty of money because he bought [REDACTED] for £600 and did it all up spent thousands on it. But so, we were brought up in a village working class erm there was people in the village that thought they were better than us, that they were middle class even though they were just working class, might have had a better job or something so classed themselves as middle class. #00:57:35-0#

Joe: What sets working class people apart from middle class people do you think? #00:57:37-8#

Alan: We are actually better people. #00:57:47-3#

Joe: The working class? #00:57:47-3#

Alan: Yeah, the working class are better people than the middle class because they are so up themselves, they think they're better than anybody else even though they are normal working class, in my opinion they are working class do you know what I mean. Upper class to me is royalty, lords, earls and barons they're the...upper class. But middle class are just working-class snobs. That's what I think they are but... (Laughs). #00:58:14-5#

Joe: Do you think they look down on working class people? #00:58:16-9#

Alan: Not all of them but the majority I would think so yeah. #00:58:23-4#

Joe: And what about ethnicity? #00:58:33-1#

Alan: What? #00:58:33-1#

Joe: Ethnicity? Do you ever mark it on a sheet? #00:58:31-7#

Alan: White English not White British, White English! Because British means England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland I am White English because I am born in England. #00:58:41-6#

Joe: Do you not like being seen as White British? #00:58:41-6#

Alan: No. Coz British implies I might be Welsh, Scottish or Irish. #00:58:49-2#

Joe: What do you think it means to be English rather than Scottish, Irish or Welsh? #00:58:52-1#

Alan: Born in England, you're English. I class myself as English always will. #00:59:00-0#

Joe: Ok yeah. What do you think Englishness is about what does it stand for? #00:59:07-4#

Alan: Being English. #00:59:13-6#

Joe: You don't think there are any values with it? #00:59:18-7#

Alan: Not now when we had the Commonwealth probably yeah, well British Commonwealth then wasn't it but not now being English is just being English. #00:59:26-6#

Joe: Ok. My last question is about national identity but that kind of fits in with what you said. Do you think any of those things played a part in how you voted in the referendum? #00:59:42-5#

Alan: No, I voted to leave because we want our country back (laughs). I don't want Europe to be saying what we can and can't do basically. Back to what it was like before, our government, our laws, our farming policies everything, fishing policies everything. I know times are different since the sixties and seventies when I was growing up, but things were better, I think. #01:00:23-8#

Joe: Well, that is the beauty of the vote, everyone gets a say don't they. #01:00:25-5#

Alan: Oh yeah everybody has got a different opinion. #01:00:35-3#

Joe: I don't have any more questions for you, but I am happy for you to carry on telling me about your views. This form is just a little get to know you... #01:01:05-4#

END #01:02:49-4#

Appendix 3: Recruitment Flyer

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

Did you **vote** in the **EU Referendum (2016)**?

I am a researcher at Sheffield Hallam University and I am looking to speak to **local people** about their views upon and experiences of:

- Living in the local area
- Work, jobs and unemployment
- Politics and the European Union

This would involve a discussion lasting around 45 minutes (individually or with a friend/partner), which can be carried out in a place of your choice.

For your time in participating, **a £10 high-street voucher would be provided**.

Everything we talk about would remain **confidential** and your name would not appear in any research publications.

If you are interested or would like some more information, please contact:

Joe McMullan -

Appendix 4: Participant Attribute Questionnaire

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

Participant Attribute Form

Name:

Age:

Highest level of education:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Occupation:

Income:

£0-5000 £5001-10,000 £10,001-15,000

£15,001-20,000 £20,001-30,000 £30,001-40,000

£40,001-50,000 £50,001-75,000 £75,000+

Appendix 5: Burngreave Messenger Recruitment Advert

Did you **vote** in the **EU Referendum**?

If so, then I need your help!

I am a researcher at Sheffield Hallam University, and I am looking to speak to **local people** about their views upon and experiences of:

- Living in the local area
- Work, jobs and unemployment
- The European Union

This would involve an interview lasting around 45 minutes, which can be carried out in a place of your choice.

For your time in participating, **a £10 high-street voucher** would be provided.

If you are interested or would like some more information, please contact:

Joe McMullan -

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

Appendix 6: Research Information Sheet

RESIDENT INFORMATION SHEET: Exploring neighbourhood change and voting patterns.

1. Invitation and Purpose

You are invited to take part in a research project about neighbourhood change and voting patterns based in your local area. This study is being conducted by Joe McMullan, who is part of The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University. Please read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not to take part.

2. Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been approached about this study because you live within the local area, and I want to understand how factors such as jobs and services may impact people's identities and voting intentions.

3. What will taking part involve?

The interview will take place in a venue of your choice; this could be in your home, walking around the neighbourhood and local area or a public venue (such as a café or community centre). The interview should last approximately 45 minutes. I will ask you questions about certain topics such as jobs, the economy or politics and your experiences of living within the area.

4. Do I have to take part?

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be given this *Information Sheet* to keep and will be asked to sign a *Consent Form*. You are free to withdraw from the study within 14 days of the interview date by contacting Joe McMullan without any negative consequences. If I withdraw after this point, then I understand that my data may be retained as part of the study.

5. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no direct benefits of taking part although some people enjoy the opportunity to share their experiences. You will receive a £10 high-street shopping voucher to thank you for your time. You will still receive the voucher even if you choose to withdraw from the research.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We do not anticipate that there are any risks in taking part. You will not be under any pressure to answer questions or talk about topics that you prefer not to discuss, and you can choose to halt or withdraw from the interview at any point.

8. How will my confidentiality be protected?

We usually prefer to record the interview, with your consent. This allows us to accurately reflect what is said. The recording will be transcribed (written out), with any names or identifying information removed. Any quotes used within the research reports will be anonymised (using pseudonyms). Confidentiality will only be broken in

circumstances where the researcher is concerned that there is a risk of harm to you or someone else. In this instance, the researcher must report this information to the relevant agency that can provide assistance.

9. What will happen to my data during the study and once the study is over?

Any information which you provide will be strictly confidential and stored on an encrypted hard-drive and the University's Research Store. After the project has finished, your information and interview data may be retained on the University's Data Management System for up to 10 years and may be made publicly accessible (but only in an anonymised format).

10. How will the data be used?

I will use data from your interview to inform my final PhD report – as well as presentations and academic publications. If you are interested, you can contact Joe McMullan for a summary of the research findings on completion of the project.

11. What is the legal basis for this research project?

All University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately, and their rights respected. This project has been approved by Sheffield Hallam University's Ethics Committee. Further information can be found at: https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice. Within the research, any data you provide is protected in accordance with the guidelines of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

If you have any questions or queries before, during or after participation within this study, please use the contact options provided below…

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if...

a) you have a query about how your data is used by the University.

b) you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately).

c) you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data.

DPO@shu.ac.uk

Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB Telephone: 0114 225 5555

For general enquiries about the project or your participation within it please contact either myself, or my director of studies, Rich.

Joe: [redacted]

Rich: R.Crisp@shu.ac.uk

You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill) if...

you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated.

A.Macaskill@shu.ac.uk

Appendix 7: Participant Consent Form

RESIDENT CONSENT FORM: Exploring neighbourhood change and voting patterns.

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies.

		Yes	No
1.	I have read the *Information Sheet* for this study and / or had details of the study explained to me and understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
2.	I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. If I change my mind, I should contact the researcher up to 14 days after the interview date. If I withdraw after this point, then I understand that my data may be retained as part of the study.	☐	☐
3.	I understand that I can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any particular questions and this will not have any impact on me or the support I am receiving.	☐	☐
4.	I understand that the information collected will remain confidential, unless I say anything that makes the researcher concerned that there is a risk of harm to me or someone else. In these circumstances I understand that the researcher must report this information to the relevant agency that can provide assistance.	☐	☐
5.	I understand that my personal details such as my name will not be shared outside this project.	☐	☐
6.	I agree that the data in anonymised form can be used for any other research purposes.	☐	☐
7.	I understand that the data from this study may be retained by Sheffield Hallam University for up to 10 years after the study has finished and may be available to the public (but only if it can be sufficiently anonymised to protect your identity).	☐	☐
8.	I agree to take part in the interview for the above study.	☐	☐
9.	I agree for the interview to be audio recorded and to quotes being used. I understand my name won't be used.	☐	☐

Participant: Name________________ Signature________________ Date_________

Researcher: Name________________ Signature________________ Date_________

If the researcher is taking verbal consent: "*I confirm that verbal consent has been recorded and that the consent form, information sheet and privacy notice have been read/explained verbally to myself, the participant*" (researcher signs below).